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## ***Absolute Priority 1 - Strengthening Charter School Authorizing and Oversight***

### ***Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Building Capacity in the Authorizing***

#### ***Process for Educational Agencies with the Most Need***

## **Introduction**

The National Charter Schools Institute plans to have a profound impact on *Absolute Priority 1 – Strengthening Charter School Authorizing and Oversight and Competitive Priority - Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process for Educational Agencies with the Most Need* by bringing a fresh approach to the strategic and tactical work of authorizing. Although chartering began 25 years ago in Minnesota, the purpose and role of charter school authorizers (sometimes referred to as sponsors) is a mystery to the general public and authorizer’s ability to serve as innovative change agents, forces for quality and accountability, and catalysts for excellence continues to be untapped by both policymakers and practitioners alike. This must change!

Alternative education campuses (AECs) serve atypically high percentages of the highest-risk students in our public education system and provide unique learning environments for those most vulnerable students. However, as is detailed later in this proposal, those atypical populations served by AECs result in their schools being outliers when compared to more typical public schools with respect to their academic outcomes. The atypical performance of AECs then pose significant accountability challenges for AEC charter authorizers. As performance outliers, AEC charter schools are the most susceptible to the inflexibility of one-size-fits-all accountability and are; therefore, ideally suited for more personalized, customized approaches to charter school authorizing.

The project described in this proposal improves opportunities for those highest-risk students by demonstrating how AEC charter authorizing can be strengthened, serving in turn as a catalyst for strengthening authorizing in general. Through this project, we intend to propel this change by advancing a nation-wide strategy to strengthen authorizing and oversight beyond the traditional compliance-based, one-size-fits-all approach by helping authorizers evolve both their thinking and their practices towards a performance-based, personalized approach that holistically evaluates schools and focuses on the ultimate goal of ensuring all students are receiving the education they need to pursue and achieve their dreams. Our vision is to expand and develop the capacity of authorizers to bring their “A-game”, transforming education so it works better for all kids in our country. Thus, the project name: *Advancing Great Authorizing and Modeling Excellence – The A-Game*.

*The A-GAME* project team is composed of passionate professionals who have dedicated their careers to improving educational opportunities for all children. The project team includes three members of the National Charter Schools Hall of Fame (Jim Goenner, Jim Griffin and Nelson Smith) and also has the support of former Minnesota State Senator, Ember Reichgott-Jung, who led the passage of the nation’s first charter school law and is currently working with the Institute to collect and digitize the documents and oral histories of the founders who led the passage and implementation of state charter school laws for access and dissemination through the National Charter School Research Library. We have also assembled a geographically diverse National Authorizer Leadership Team (NALT) composed of some of the most respected authorizers in the country who will serve as thought leaders, pathfinders, resource builders, and dissemination agents for this project.

Moreover, the project team's commitment to excellence for all is illustrated by its willingness to undertake the significant challenges associated with strengthening and supporting new and small authorizers, along with those that charter a significant number of low performing schools as identified in *Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process for Educational Agencies with the Most Need*. In fact, our knowledge and research indicates that alternative schools are most often chartered by small authorizers that do not have the systems or capacity in place to properly evaluate these alternatives schools against their missions of serving students with the highest risk of failure. The following two examples illustrate this point:

- 1. Small Authorizers:** As presented below the nation's 684 alternative charter schools are authorized by more than 200 authorizers and both our primary and secondary means of dissemination provide vehicles to reach the wide range of authorizers represented. Specifically, however, of the total 204 identified authorizers, 133 only authorize one alternative school and 127 of those are local districts. This project specifically targets a known quantity of small authorizers.
- 2. Improving Performance:** This project is aligned with prioritized efforts to improve authorizing among authorizers with significant low performance issues. Across the nation, alternative schools are overrepresented on the lower end of state accountability rating systems – especially where states have failed to incorporate appropriate differentiation into their rating systems. For example, a recent review of ratings in Georgia illustrates this point, where over 90% of state designated alternative schools (meeting the working definition used herein) are F rated. While we would respectfully suggest Georgia's prevalence of F rated alternatives is more about a one-size-fits-all

rating system than actual school quality, it serves to highlight a purpose of this project. While respectfully taking issue as to whether that really means those school are lower performing or whether Georgia maintains an inadequate system, the point remains that alternative schools, charters included, are disproportionately represented on among state and district low performing schools. The examples of Georgia and New Mexico, stand out, where accountability differentiation is non-existent or inadequate, meaning all or virtually all of the states' designated alternative schools are F schools – precisely why this project is so important.

## **Selection Criteria**

### **I. Significance**

#### **A. Generalized results - the potential for generalizing from the findings or results of the proposed project**

Every charter public school in America receives its charter to operate from an authorizer. Currently there are approximately 1,000 charter school authorizers in America. Together, these authorizers have chartered over 7,000 schools serving over 3 million students. Interestingly though, 90% of these authorizers are classified as small authorizers – meaning they charter 10 or less schools. Ideally, a school issued a charter is operating via a performance-based contract that establishes clear and measurable performance goals, including academic, financial, and operational targets.

Unfortunately, the quality of the charter school contracts and the performance goals they contain vary greatly by authorizer. The good news though is that every charter school in America goes through what is commonly referred to as the “renewal process,” whereby authorizers have the opportunity to replace or upgrade their charter contracts with a more holistic

approach using performance-based, personalized agreements that evaluate school performance using academic, financial, operational, governance, and mission-related performance measures. By helping authorizers improve the quality, relevance, and rigor of their charter contracts, along with sharing processes and systems and developing their capacity to implement best practices, we will help authorizers bring their “A-Game” (*Advancing Great Authorizing and Modeling Excellence*) to conducting reviews of charter applications, expansions and renewals, thereby facilitating the replication and expansion of high-quality charters and providing the grounds for closing persistently underperforming charter schools.

This project is designed to immediately involve the National Authorizer Leadership Team, composed of eleven established and respected authorizers, representing eight states and the District of Columbia who have AEC charter schools as part of their portfolio. The project will then expand to include an additional 30-45 authorizers in three regions; and will conclude with an extensive nationwide dissemination effort designed to reach every authorizer in the country.

By improving how AEC charter schools are held accountable, this grant will increase the number of quality AEC charter options for our country’s highest-risk students and decrease the number of quality charter AECs to be unduly closed or non-renewed. Furthermore, the policies, systems of support, customizable accountability frameworks, and best practices associated with this project will have applicability for all charter authorizers and public school districts across the country.

To understand why AECs, need a differentiated system of accountability, one needs to first understand the schools that are being discussed. Therefore, the next several paragraphs will lay out both the definition of an AEC and (out of necessity for the definition of the school) the

definition of the students that AECs serve. This definition was arrived at through a review of all 50 states, and Washington, D.C.'s, statutory and regulatory language for defining alternative schools (also called second chance schools, opportunity schools, transfer high schools, and the like). Included in the definitions are two components: the target student population(s), and the educational unit (i.e., schools or programs). Two additional components that are found, but less often than the former two, include a specific school mission and/or a minimum percentage of students meeting the target population necessary to be considered an AEC.

Target student population: State alternative education policies tend to outline a list of student characteristics that could or should be enrolled in an AEC. **Table 1** shows the students characteristics more commonly cited. These factors tend to be specified because of they have been linked, empirically, to an increased likelihood of students dropping out of high school. Therefore, they are referred to throughout this proposal as High Risk Students or High Risk Youth.

**Table 1: Most Commonly Identified Student Factors Defining High-Risk Youth across the 50 States and DC, in 2016-2017**

High-Risk Characteristics Specified by States' Alternative School Policies	# of States
Poor academics (retained, failure of state assessments, poor grades)	22
Prior Dropout	17
Disruptive or problem behaviors in school	16
Pregnant or parenting teen	15
Truant, chronic absentee, poor attendance	13
Over-age, credit deficient	11
Criminal activity, juvenile delinquent, court involved youth	10
Alcohol, substance abuse	10
Experienced trauma or abuse	8
Limited English Proficient	8

**Table 1 cont.,**

<b>High-Risk Characteristics Specified by States' Alternative School Policies</b>	<b># of States</b>
Homeless	7
Student in foster care or ward of the court	7
Poverty, TANF, FRL eligible	7
Parent with addiction, alcoholism, or incarceration	5
Special education or IEP	5
Mobile or child of migrant family	4

Source: Momentum Strategy & Research

It should be noted that the definition of High-Risk is not the same as the definition of “at risk” as outlined by Federal Adequate Yearly Progress language, where students qualifying for free meals and/or identified as English language learners are considered “at risk”. However, it is also worth noting that at-risk students may be disproportionately represented among High-Risk Student populations within AEC charter schools.

Educational Unit: States’ vary in whether AECs are defined as schools and/or programs. However, states that define AECs as schools tend to also include more robust systems of alternative accountability in state law. In addition, these state laws tend to specify a minimum threshold of High-Risk Students needed to qualify for alternative accountability (**Table 2**).

**Table 2: Minimum Percentage of High-Risk Students to Qualify as an AEC**

<b>State</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Arizona	70%
California	70%
Colorado	90%
Florida	51%
Ohio	51%
Nevada	75%
New Mexico*	10%
South Carolina	85%
Texas	75%
<b>Average % Needed</b>	<b>64%</b>

\*At least 10% over the age of 19 or at least 20% classified as special education students (Momentum Strategy & Research)

Given our goal of increasing quality authorizing practices and personalizing accountability for mission-oriented schools like AECs, but also recognizing the need to allow for local variation, we will focus on alternative charters serving a “disproportionately high percentage” of High-Risk Youth [3]. AECs serve as an ideal starting point and target population for differentiated accountability. They represent a nationwide, significant, and traditionally underrepresented population of charter schools without being so many as to make systemic change prohibitive.

School Mission: Finally, while only a few states’ mention the need to have a specific mission to qualify as an AEC, charter schools need to have a specified mission in their applications. Generally speaking, practitioners in the field have also tended to agree that a school’s mission to serve High Risk Students impacts staffing models employed by the school.

Taking all of these items into consideration our Project Team determined that the following definition will be used to identify an AEC charter school:

***A charter school with a stated mission to serve High-Risk Youth and, as a result, serves a disproportionately high percentage of High-Risk Youth.***

As of December 2017, there are over 5,000 alternative schools and programs in the United States, information for which Momentum Strategy & Research (Momentum)[1] holds in its Alternative School and Policy Databases. These schools and programs serve approximately 650,000 of the nation’s most challenged and difficult to reach youth—adjudicated teens, former dropouts, pregnant and parenting teens, students that are at least one year behind in high school credits and those that have been held back one or more grades during their K-12 education.

Among the 5,000 AECs in Momentum’s Database, 684 are charter schools which are authorized by more than 200 authorizers.

Momentum is an organization that has worked with schools, school districts, charter school authorizers, and state departments of education on the research and development of alternative frameworks for approximately a decade and is part of the Project Team for this grant. Momentum’s research has repeatedly shown both in specific locations (such as Colorado [4] and Arizona [5]) and nationally [6-11], that High-Risk Students—the target population of AECs—perform differently than their “same grade level” peers enrolled in more tradition public schools [2]. Therefore, the use of measures developed and typically used by charter school authorizers do not accurately reflect the growth and achievement of students attending alternative schools.

Whether developed as a statewide system of alternative accountability or as part of their own strategic objectives, authorizers that have adopted a differentiated accountability system for their AECs have been more certain in performing their duty of holding all charters accountable, while still meeting the needs of all students. Regardless of authorizer type (e.g., higher education entities, local education agencies, or independent chartering boards) or state, as authorizers feel more confident in their ability to hold AECs accountable they have been more willing to consider and approve charter applications from groups looking to serve more high-risk students.

Utilizing the deep content and process knowledge of this project team, and with the guidance and support of the National Authorizer Leadership Team, this project will provide findings and results that will be generalizable to AEC charter school authorizers across the country—the majority of which are LEAs that also frequently operate alternative schools and/or programs themselves.

**B. Dissemination - the extent to which the results of the proposed project are to be disseminated in ways that will enable others to use the information or strategies.**

This project has tremendous potential for generalizing its findings beyond the primary aim of *Absolute Priority 1 – Strengthening Charter School Authorizing and Oversight*. For example, the findings/results from this project will be extremely useful for strengthening the ability of charter school governing boards to wisely, effectively, and efficiently fulfill their responsibilities of ensuring the schools they govern fulfill their mission-related goals, achieve meaningful and rigorous academic, fiscal, and operational goals (including school safety), and comply with all applicable legal, regulatory and contractual requirements. Charter school governing boards will also be able to use the results of this project to strengthen their ability to establish, monitor, and evaluate the performance of their school leader and/or the performance of an educational management company.

Moreover, the findings and results for this project will also be generalizable to public school districts who oversee both charter and non-charter AECs. The strategic and tactical lessons from this project will also be very beneficial to all governing bodies and leaders who want to transform their organizations from the compliance-based, one-size-fits-all approach to the performance-based, personalized approach that evaluates performance holistically against meaningful and rigorous mission-related goals, along with key academic, financial, and operational (including school safety) performance measures.

The National Charter School Institute and Momentum Strategy & Research have large networks of charter school and traditional public school colleagues that provide for additional wide spread dissemination. For example, NCSI has had national impact through training and support for individuals and organizations in the charter community, from policymakers to

authorizers to school operators. Epicenter, the NCSI digital compliance platform, is working in 27 states and the District of Columbia, helping streamline the oversight and reporting process for over 1,500 schools. Similarly, Momentum actively works with state education agencies, school districts, charter school authorizers, and alternative schools (charter and non-charter alike) for over a decade, helping to shape both alternative accountability policy and practice across the spectrum of K-12 public education.

The tools and resources developed throughout this project will be disseminated in a number of ways and are designed to impact authorizers nationally. Dissemination will take place through a variety of strategies: 1) through the collaboration with the National Authorizer Leadership Team (NALT) as they develop cutting edge authorizing tools and resource materials and provide professional learning experiences on the use of those tools within their own authorizing work; 2) through web-based data tools to aide authroizers in setting targets for success with their AEC charter schools; 3) through the A-GAME website which will contain open source documents, house an extensive resource library and on-line training materials; and 4) through national, state and local conference networking and formal presentations. Formal conference presentations will be proposed yearly for the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, the National Association of Charter School Authorizers, and the Alternative Accountability Policy Forum. In addition, Project Team Members and well as members of the NALT will provide presentations at state charter school association conferences within their regions. Materials will be disseminated to a broad national audience—extending outside charter specific audiences—through these conference presentations and through the presentation materials that remain on the national organization websites following the conferences.

**C. System change - the likelihood that the proposed project will result in system change or improvement**

Change and improvement will take place under this grant by providing a multi-year, concerted national focus on the topic, and supplying authorizers with customizable tools and resources that would be nearly impossible for authorizers to access working on their own.

Based on years of experience in the field, the Project Team has seen that the primary barriers to improved alternative school accountability involve a lack of focused attention leading to the field being inadequately resourced. As mentioned elsewhere in this document, alternative schools are small percentage of any state or authorizer's public school portfolio – and arguably the most challenging to evaluate. Momentum's Database shows that fully 133 of the 204 known AEC charter authorizers have only one AEC charter in their portfolio [1]; perhaps too few to deem worthy of considerable time and resources, and certainly too few to have a knowledge base to get it right.

This project addresses those challenges by creating open source authorizer tools and resources to inform how authorizers can work to create data-based goals and targets for AEC charters. In so doing authorizers will be able to effectively evaluate both new and renewal applications as well as creating alternative frameworks that focus on mission critical aspects of student growth and performance that are empirically backed and incentivize charter AECs to continue serving the county's highest risk students. In addition, the availability of these tools will drastically reduce the cost of developing authorizer specific frameworks.

The charter school authorizers Momentum has previously worked with are some of the early adopters of alternative charter school accountability, and many of them are part of the National Authorizer Leadership Team selected for participation in this project. Not only have the

early adopters developed alternative frameworks, they have lived with them for several years and can share with other authorizers' the key considerations, pain points, and lessons learned along the way.

As a result of the project, authorizers will have access to templates and tools that have been costly for other authorizers to have developed. To the extent that limited resources have kept authorizers from working on the development of separate systems, this work will drastically lower cost as a barrier.

By disseminating resources and tools through Regional Capacity Building Networks, where each region's authorizers will meet several times throughout the grant period, we will create the habit of networking and collaborating among regional peers. A habit of practice which can continue, whether through fact-to-face meetings or web-based meeting and collaborations. In addition, with members of the National Authorizer Leadership Team participating in the regional meetings, authorizers with less experience will gain a contact and connection with 1-3 experienced authorizers, which they can call for advice or technical assistance in the early stages of development and implementation.

As more and more authorizers begin using the resources and tools developed through this project, and changing their practices, momentum will also build through networking and the availability of the products in perpetuity. The initial hands on work with regional authorizers, combined with the wide spread dissemination of user friendly tools and resources, will create a synergistic effect spreading change out to still more authorizers in the future.

**D. Building local capacity - the extent to which the proposed project is likely to build local capacity, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target audience**

The *Advancing Great Authorizing and Modeling Excellence* project has the ability to build local capacity, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target audience through a combination of a strong national project and leadership team, a diverse national advisory board, the dissemination and transferability of grant results, capacity building through a regional network structure and the widespread dissemination plan. The key components designed as part of the A-GAME project to expand and improve authorizing practices to address our target audience include:

**National Authorizer Leadership Team**

The Project Team has selected a National Authorizer Leadership Team that is reflective of the three regions in which the projected resources will be disseminated. Members of the National Authorizer Leadership Team (**Table 7 & Appendix E**) will take part in the meetings and training sessions that occur in their own region. These Leadership Team members will act in a mentor-like capacity—offering advice and technical assistance as authorizers in their region adopt the new practices. In addition, authorizers will have access to the open source materials throughout the grant period and beyond.

**Dissemination and Transferability of Policies, Practices and Tools**

The A-GAME open source materials and information that are easily transferrable and designed to build local capacity, improve and expand services for authorizers include:

- Sample state and local policies for authorizing Alternative Education Campuses

- Authorizing tools to use in oversight, compliance and annual reviews
- User friendly, interactive data visualization tools
- Rubrics and alternative metrics to use in reviewing and approving new charter applications from AEC charter school operators
- Accountability frameworks
- Document and data management system

### **Capacity Building Strategies**

- Use of a national authorizer leadership team to develop, share and disseminate best authorizing practice
- Coaching support from the National Authorizer Leadership Team
- Use of a three region network structure to provide professional development and technical assistance for authorizers
- Providing access to on-line resource materials and to a document and data collection system

### **National Dissemination Strategies**

- The National Authorizer Leadership Team of 11 authorizers representing 8 states and 4 unique authorizer types. This highly respected team of authorizers have extensive national, regional and local networks from which both formal and information dissemination will occur.
- A website devoted to housing all documents and tools developed as part of this grant. Websites of key charter school organizations will also link to the A-GAME website for further dissemination.

- Publications in newsletters, journals, blogs and white papers.
- Presentations at national and state charter school conferences as well as conferences for traditional public schools

## **II. Quality of the Project Design**

### **A. Rationale - the extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale**

In *Good to Great for the Social Sectors*, Jim Collins discusses the challenges associated when it is difficult to “quantify your results.” Collins says, “It doesn’t really matter whether you can quantify your results. What matters is that you rigorously assemble evidence--quantitative or qualitative--to track your progress. If the evidence is primarily qualitative, think like a trial lawyer assembling the combined body of evidence. If the evidence is primarily quantitative, then think of yourself as a laboratory scientist assembling and assessing the data.”

Collins’ advice is particularly relevant to this project and its groundbreaking work with authorizers that have chartered alternative schools serving our nation’s highest-risk students. These alternative schools are mission-driven and do not fit the standardized one-size-fits-all approach that is too commonly used by authorizers. However, even authorizers who understand and value the specialized focus of alternative schools struggle with how to fairly and credibly evaluate their performance. Through this project, we intend to assist authorizers of alternative schools identify, develop, and disseminate strategies and best practices for collecting and assembling the “body of evidence” needed to fairly evaluate the performance of these schools serving our most vulnerable youth and make high-stakes decisions related to whether or not these schools should have their charters renewed, expanded, or closed.

More AECs are needed to serve our country's High-Risk Students and charter schools are well suited to meet this need. However, charter authorizers must first become better at overseeing and holding AEC charters accountable to ensure that only quality AECs remain in operation. Through this project, *Advancing Great Authorizing and Modeling Excellence*, we will expand and build upon the best practices in authorizing and will specifically strengthen and grow the capacity of authorizers to properly oversee and make high-stakes decisions regarding the approval, expansion and renewal of AEC charter schools.

For the purposes of this grant, and commensurate with states' policies [1], as well as the Federal Department of Education [12], AECs will be defined as charter schools with a stated mission to serve High-Risk Youth and, as a result, serve a disproportionately high percentage of High-Risk Youth.

There is a growing need for schools to better serve High-Risk Youth. Opportunity Nation estimates that 1.2 million students drop out of high school each year and over 5.5 million U.S. youth are neither employed nor attending school. The cost to taxpayers for young adults who are not in school or working is \$93 billion annually and \$1.6 trillion over the young adults' lifetimes in lost revenues and increased social services [13]. Early in the charter movement many new charter applicants sought to start schools with the mission of serving High-Risk Youth. Many of the early alternative education charter schools served as credit recovery schools, dropout recovery schools, or schools specializing in serving specific high needs students, such as pregnant teens or students with substance abuse issues.

Also in the early years of the charter movement, accountability systems and evaluation were more often compliance-based measures (e.g., teacher student ratios, clear financial records,

maintaining minimum enrollment, etc.), than performance-based measures like student engagement, growth, and proficiency.

This began to change nearly a decade after the first charter schools were opened when Congress passed the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) act. NCLB began to shift the focus away from compliance-based accountability and towards an almost singular focus on reading and math scores as measured by one-size-fits-all standardized tests. Unfortunately, the High-Risk students served by Alternative Education Campuses (charter and non-charter alike) did not compare well under this approach. In fact, alternative schools typically predominate the bottom of states' accountability rating systems due to low proficiency rates and abysmal 4-year cohort graduation rates.

Studies by Momentum Strategy & Research show that there is important context that needs to be considered when evaluating student proficiency and graduation rates in alternative schools. First, students typically enter an AEC in 10<sup>th</sup> grade with an average age of 17.5[2,3] putting them 2 or more years behind their graduation cohort when they first enroll. In addition, Momentum's studies of alternative students using nationally normative assessments have shown that on average, students enter an AEC 2-3 years behind in academic skill in the areas of reading, math, and writing [2, 10]. High-Risk Students have also been found to grow more slowly than their same grade peers on grade level assessments. These findings have been consistent across individual state studies in Arizona [7] and Colorado [6], as well as in studies that include students and schools from more than 30 states in the US [8-11]. On the other hand, when measuring the academic growth of High-Risk Students based on their starting point (i.e., grade level skill) rather than on their age-based grade level, their growth rates can show dramatic improvement [10, 11].

**Thus, by simply changing the starting point from which growth is measured, one can change the outcome by which the school is evaluated. In addition, the data is a more accurate reflection of the progress being made by students. Through this project authorizers will receive guidance and solutions for how to effectively evaluate the performance of alternative schools.**

By working with AEC charter school authorizers to incorporate measures that more accurately reflect the progress and accomplishments of students enrolled in AEC charter schools of the A-GAME participants, we will increase the quality practices of authorizers. With more confidence in their ability to oversee and monitor the performance of AECs, authorizers will be more likely to authorize additional AEC charter schools therefore expanding high quality school choice options for some of our country's highest risk students.

As of the proposal submission date, Momentum Strategy & Research has identified 204 authorizers that provide oversight to 601 alternative charter schools.<sup>1</sup> These authorizers vary greatly in the number of AEC charters they oversee , with 133 authorizing just one alternative charter, 55 authorizing between two and four AEC charters, and 15 authorizing between five and 10 AEC charter schools (**Table 3**). Of note, are the two authorizers that serve more than 100 AECs, which include the Arizona State Charter School Board and the Texas Education Agency.

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<sup>1</sup> The authorizing entities for the other 83 alternative charter schools have yet to be identified since the management company or operator was indicated in the NCES and state fields where other states have indicated the district or authorizing entity.

**Table 3: Authorizer Type and Number of AECs Authorized**

Authorizer Type	AEC Charters				
	1	2 - 4	5 - 10	11 - 20	> 100
Higher Education Entities	0	3	3	0	0
Independent Charter Board	1	3	1	0	1
Local Education Agencies (including BOCES, ISD)	127	40	7	1	0
Non-Profit Organizations	4	1	2	1	0
State Education Agencies	1	5	2	0	1
<b>Total AEC Charter Schools in Portfolio</b>	133	52	15	2	2

Perhaps more relevant is the finding that 95% of the authorizers with only one AEC in their portfolio are LEAs (127 out of 133). Given the typical roles and responsibilities of LEAs, it is not likely that they have a lot of time or resources to spend on ensuring that their single alternative charter school is being held accountable in a way that is relevant to their mission and takes account of the student population being served by the school. Even with respect to authorizing in general, the National Association of Charter School Authorizers has found that LEAs lack the capacity to commit to quality authorizing. The following are two quotes from their *2015 State of Charter Authorizing Report* [14]:

*“Many districts have not developed the capacity to effectively oversee charter schools in addition to their other duties.”*

and

*“School district authorizers—by far—use fewer nationally recognized authorizing best practices (what NACSA calls “Essential Practices”) compared to any other type of charter school authorizer.” (p5)*

This lack of authorizing capacity may be especially true for small and/or rural school districts where staffing, capacity, and resources tend to be sparse, and there are a number of

alternative charter schools that operate in small towns and rural areas of the country. (Table 4). Therefore, the *Advancing Great Authorizing and Modeling Excellence* project’s widespread dissemination strategy will meet the intent of **Competitive Priority 1** by having a concentrated focus on LEAs in general, but also LEAs in small and rural areas.

**Table 4: Number and percent of Alternative Charter Schools Located in each of the NCES Designated Locales<sup>2</sup>**

Locale Type	Number	Percent
<b>Cities</b>	356	59%
<b>Suburbs</b>	141	23%
<b>Towns</b>	58	10%
<b>Rural</b>	46	8%

Source: Data retrieved from the National Center of Education Statistics and analyzed by Momentum Strategy & Research

Regardless of authorizer type, Momentum’s experience working with charter school authorizers over the last decade has led to the conclusion that authorizers with only one or two alternative charters tend to spend less time and energy to work on customizing alternative schools’ accountability frameworks and have a more difficult time assessing the quality of the outcomes for those schools when making renewal decisions. This can result in one of two outcomes: 1) a quality alternative programs being closed, or 2) poor quality alternative schools remaining open—neither of which is a good outcome for students.

In addition to the issue of uninformed renewal decisions, Momentum has seen that the less certain authorizers are about the comparability of their alternative charter school outcomes to other alternative schools, the less likely they are to authorize additional alternative charter schools. Thus, alternative charter schools are at threat of closure with no feasible options for students to turn to, which lends to students dropping out of the educational system all together.

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<sup>2</sup> For simplicity we consolidated the NCES Locale types into four, rather than 12 types. For example, large, mid-size, and small cities were summed to arrive at the number of alternative charter schools located in a city.

There are, however, a handful of authorizers that have been considering how to hold their alternative charter schools accountable in rigorous and relevant ways for several years now. Those that have been considering alternative methods of measuring success for their alternative charter schools for many years tend to be those that have multiple alternative schools in their portfolio. The DC Public Charter School Board and Buckeye Community Hope, in Ohio, are prime examples of charter authorizers that have a number of alternative schools and that have successfully developed alternative methods of assessing alternative charter schools' student outcomes.

There have also been a few thoughtful authorizers with just one or two alternative charters that have either recently developed (with the help of Momentum) or are considering the development of alternative frameworks for the renewal of their alternative school(s). The Audubon Center of the Northwoods, the Nevada State Charter School Authority, and SUNY's Charter School Institute are three such examples.

Each of the aforementioned authorizers will serve as part of a National Authorizer Leadership Team (NALT) providing sample documents and sharing practices that will enable authorizers with limited capacity and resources to adopt quality review, renewal, and accountability systems for their own alternative charter schools.

In addition, other national authorizing leaders will join the NALT, rounding out the representativeness of the group with respect to authorizer type and geographic region. The table below identifies the NALT members and provides details regarding the total number of charters and the number of those charters classified as AECs.

**Table 5: National Authorizer Leadership Team – Charter Data**

<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>AUTHORIZER TYPE</b>	<b># CHARTERS AUTHORIZED</b>	<b># AEC CHARTER SCHOOLS AUTHORIZED</b>
<b>Alameda County Office of Education</b>	County Office of Education	11	3
<b>Audubon Center of the North Woods</b>	Non-profit	32	1
<b>Buckeye Community Hope</b>	Non-Profit	50	7
<b>DC Public Charter School Board</b>	Independent Charter Board	120	8
<b>Central Michigan University</b>	Higher Education Institution	58	7
<b>Chicago Public Schools</b>	Public School District	140	40
<b>Ferris State University</b>	Higher Education Institution	20	3
<b>Hillsborough County Public Schools</b>	Public School District	50	2
<b>Nevada State Charter School Authority</b>	Independent Charter School Board	28	1
<b>SUNY Charter Schools Institute</b>	Higher Education Institution	186	3
<b>New York State Department of Education</b>	State Department of Education	87	6

The A-GAME project has been designed to expand on quality authorizer practices from those in the National Authorizer Leadership Team and develop and disseminate open source tools and resources to increase the number of authorizers using quality oversight for alternative charter schools. Specifically, this project will meet the goals laid out in the *Absolute Priority 1* areas as defined in the *Expanding Opportunity Through Quality Charter Schools Program – National Dissemination Grants* by:

- i. Conducting charter application reviews - through the development of new rubrics designed to assist authorizers with the review, rating and approval or denial of charter applications from charter school operators seeking to open new schools.
- ii. Promoting and monitoring the compliance of charter schools and authorized public chartering agencies with Federal, State, or local, academic, financial, operational, or other applicable requirements - new strategies and frameworks will be developed in concert with the National Authorizer Leadership Team (**Tables 5 & 7**) and effective monitoring and compliance practices will be shared through the National Authorizer Leadership Team and the Regional Capacity Building Networks. The use of cutting edge compliance monitoring and document management system will be used to streamline compliance and will house the resources for building model accountability frameworks for AECs.
- iii. Evaluating the performance of charter schools or authorized public chartering agencies - Oversight and evaluation of the performance of alternative charter schools will be an essential element of the accountability frameworks that are developed and implemented as part of this project. Authorizers will use the tools to develop their own frameworks to evaluate the performance of AECs. For LEA authorizers that also run non-charter AECs, these frameworks will have applicability in the evaluation district alternative education schools and programs.
- iv. Facilitating the replication and expansion of high-quality charter schools - This grant will ultimately facilitate the replication and expansion of high quality charter schools and will specifically expand high-quality charter schools that serve the highest needs students in an alternative education setting. The

population of students with some of the highest needs will benefit from the expansion of high quality AEC charter schools in their communities.

The four specific areas of *Absolute Priority 1* identified above as well as the objectives of *Competitive Priority 1* will be achieved through a strategically designed and sustainable dissemination plan and through the implementation of the following four project goals:

### **Advancing Great Authorizing and Modeling Excellence Project Goals**

1. Support authorizers of alternative schools with identifying, developing, and disseminating mission-related performance measures that are credible, relevant, and rigorous for schools that serve students who have special needs and/or are at extreme risk of failure.
2. Encourage and assist authorizers in transforming their work from compliance-based, one-size-fits-all approaches to more rigorous and personalized approaches that harness the power of technology and focus on ensuring students are ultimately prepared for success in college, work, and life.
3. Disseminate and encourage strategies and practices that support the art and science of authorizing, facilitate the replication and expansion of high-quality charter schools, improve the performance measures found in charter contracts, and share models of excellence with new and small authorizers, along with those that have a significant number of low performing schools.
4. Provide authorizers with better compliance and performance data that they can use to monitor and evaluate the academic, financial, operational performance of schools and strengthen their decision making related to charter renewals, expansions, and closures.

The collaboration between the National Charter School Institute, one of the country's foremost experts on charter school authorizing, and Momentum Strategy & Research, a non-profit organization whose leaders have been shaping policy and practice related to accountability for AECs charter schools for more than a decade<sup>3</sup> will ensure that all project goals are met.

The core purpose of the National Charter Schools Institute is to inspire and democratize excellence in education. The Institute believes in the transformative power of education and want all people to have the opportunity to learn, grow, and achieve their dreams. The Institute staff are comprised of passionate professionals who thrive on empowering people to grow and achieve more than they think possible. The Institute is a mission driven, non-profit Michigan corporation with federally recognized 501(c)(3) status. It is governed by a nine-member board of directors and is led by its President & CEO, Dr. James N. Goenner. Jim is highly respected in the education reform community and was inducted into the National Charter Schools Hall of Fame in 2010. Under his leadership, the Institute is focused on supporting charter school authorizers, schools and boards and influencing policy and practice, and delivering great programs, tools and services that help adults achieve more for charter school students.

Momentum's co-founders, Jim Griffin and Jody Ernst, have a combined experience in both charter school law and alternative charter school research and accountability of over 30 years. Jim Griffin, helped shape charter school policy in Colorado while president of the Colorado League of Charter Schools for 19 years. In 2002, Mr. Griffin helped enact Colorado policies that impacted how charter schools and alternative schools (charter or non-charter) are held accountable—policies that are still in place today. Jody Ernst began conducting research to inform accountability for charter schools in 2006, when providing evidence of how proposed

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<sup>3</sup> Beginning in 2002 while at the Colorado League of Charter Schools

policies would impact alternative charter schools in Texas, then moved to Colorado to continue her work with the League. Ms. Ernst’s research on the typical growth patterns have directly impacted how alternative schools (both charter and non-charter) are held accountable in Colorado and Arizona, and how charters are held accountable in DC, Chicago, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, and Ohio. Currently, Momentum is working in various states including California, Michigan, and New Mexico to impact change in alternative accountability. Momentum’s success in shifting policies at the state, districts, and charter school authorizer level is due in large part to two of their key strengths: 1) their depth of knowledge and experience in both the charter and alternative education landscapes and 2) their database of alternative education schools and policies. Their existing data, research, and field expertise will add to NCSI’s long time authorizing expertise and produce high quality resources and materials to help authorizers adopt best practices for alternative accountability.

In addition to the strong support provided by the collaborating organizations and the National Authorizer Leadership Team we have secured the support of the following individuals to serve on a National Advisory Committee. This committee has diverse representation from both charter schools, authorizers and non-profit organizations committed to quality authorizing.

**Table 6: Advisory Committee**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>STATE</b>
<b>Rob Kimball</b>	Associate Vice President for Charter Schools	Grand Valley State University	Michigan
<b>Corey Loomis</b>	Charter Schools Director	Riverside County Office of Education	California
<b>Dan Quisenberry</b>	President	Michigan Association of Public School Academies	Michigan
<b>Greta Roskam</b>	Former Director	New Mexico Coalition of Charter Schools/Gordon Bernell Charter School	New Mexico

**Table 6 cont.,**

<b>Lenny Schafer</b>	Executive Director	Ohio Council of Community Schools	Ohio
<b>Tony Simmons</b>	Executive Director	High School for the Recording Arts	Minnesota
<b>Amy Schlessman</b>	Founding President Board Member	Arizona Alternative Education Consortium National Alternative Education Association	Arizona
<b>Bill Toomey</b>	Executive Vice President & Chief Development and Innovation Officer	Learn4Life Concept Charter Schools	California

**B. Goals, objectives and outcomes – the extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable.**

The *Advancing Great Authorizing and Modeling Excellence* project has four overarching goals designed to meet *Absolute Priority 1 - Strengthening Charter School Authorizing and Oversight* and *Competitive Priority 1 - Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process for Educational Agencies with the Most Need* through a strategically constructed program and the far-reaching dissemination plan. These goals are designed to have a significant impact and to change the policies and practices of authorizers of Alternative Education Campuses, authorizers of charter schools and to ultimately impact traditional district schools as they provide alternative schools and programs at the district level.

The strategies and activities are purposeful, well-planned, necessary and measurable and are further outlined in the Management Plan. The targets for each goal are established using multiple data points. It is anticipated that A-GAME will directly impact 57 authorizers of AECs in 13 states. It is further believed that the widespread dissemination plan will contribute to the improvement of authorizer oversight and accountability for authorizers across the country.

The **first goal** is to support authorizers of alternative schools with identifying, developing, and disseminating mission-related performance measures that are credible, relevant, and rigorous for schools that serve students who have special needs and/or are at extreme risk of failure.

The objectives and outcomes associated with this goal are:

1. Convene the National Authorizer Leadership Team to identify and share best practices related to authorizing, monitoring, and evaluating alternative schools.
2. Develop new ideas, strategies, and practices that can be implemented and tested by authorizers of alternative schools.
3. Identify obstacles and recommend solutions for overcoming any legal, regulatory, and/or contractual barriers that stand in the way of supporting schools serving special needs students and those of extreme risk of failure.
4. Develop model policies and procedures that can be disseminated and used by other authorizers.

Building on the first goal; the **second goal** is designed to encourage and assist authorizers in transforming their work from compliance-based, one-size-fits-all approaches to more rigorous and personalized approaches that harness the power of technology and focus on ensuring students are ultimately prepared for success in college, work, and life. The **second goal** is designed to encourage and assist authorizers in transforming their work from compliance-based, one-size-fits-all approaches to more rigorous and personalized approaches that harness the power of technology and focus on ensuring students are ultimately prepared for success in college, work, and life. The **objectives and outcomes** associated with this goal are:

1. Encourage and increase the number of authorizers who envision their role as having a greater purpose than simply monitoring the compliance of the schools they charter.

2. Identify, develop, and disseminate examples and models of personalized authorizing that can be adapted and used by other authorizers who want to move towards a performance-based approach for authorizing, overseeing, and evaluating schools.
3. Provide access and support to authorizers who want to leverage the power of the “best in class” tools and data systems to personalize their authorizing and strengthen the capacity of their agency.
4. Disseminate approaches and provide support for authorizers who want credible ways for measuring impacts that are difficult to quantify with standardized measures.

The **third goal** is to disseminate and encourage strategies and practices that support the art and science of authorizing, facilitate the replication and expansion of high-quality charter schools, improve the performance measures found in charter contracts, and share models of excellence with new and small authorizers, along with those that have a significant number of low performing schools. The objectives and outcomes associated with this goal are:

1. Share information, models, and examples of how great authorizers use both art and science to authorize and oversee schools.
2. Assist authorizers with their ability to identify high-quality charter schools that are ready for expansion and/or replication.
3. Provide models and examples for a holistic set of performance measures that authorizers can incorporate to improve the quality of their charter contracts.
4. Support and strengthen the capacity of both new and small authorizers to authorize and oversee charter schools.

Finally, the **fourth goal** is designed to provide authorizers with better compliance and performance data that they can use to monitor and evaluate the academic, financial, operational

performance of schools and strengthen their decision making related to charter renewals, expansions, and closures. The objectives and outcomes associated with this goal are:

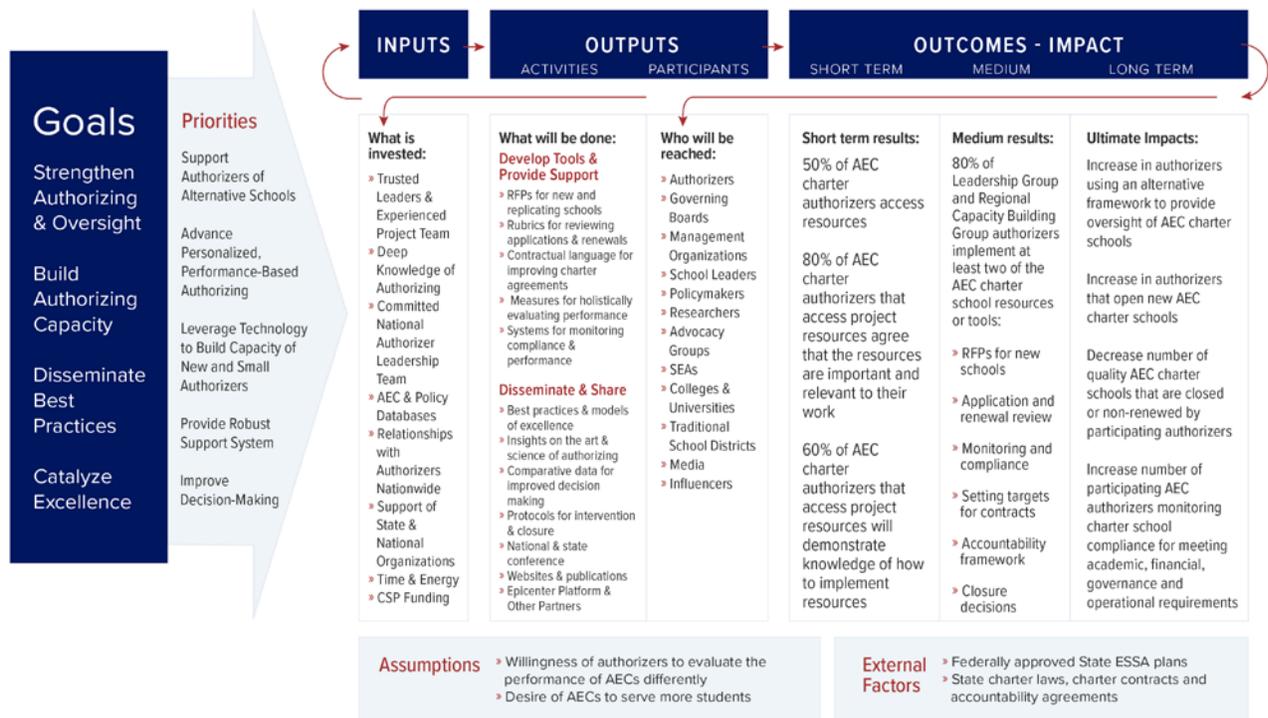
1. Educate and share with authorizers a holistic set of compliance and performance measures that they can personalize and adapt for use with the schools they charter.
2. Disseminate and share comparative data that will provide greater context and lead to more informed decision making by authorizers.
3. Provide models and examples of academic, financial, and operational performance measures that agencies can use for making decisions related to the renewal, expansion, and closure of schools.

As laid out in the evaluation plan, Basis Policy Research will evaluate whether the goals and objectives laid out in this proposal using process and performance measures and outcome performance measures. Both data collection and data analysis will be conducted to ensure a comprehensive evaluation process.

### **Logic Model**

The Logic Model, included below and provided in **Appendix E**, illustrates the interconnectedness of the project goals, resources, activities and outcomes of the *Advancing Great Authorizing and Modeling Excellence* project. As outlined in the Significance section of the narrative the Logic Model interconnectedness further displays the importance of this project and the need to improve authorizer practices for Alternative Education Campus charter schools. The Logic Model further demonstrates how each element of the project will ultimately lead to accomplishing the intent of *Absolute Priority I and Competitive Priority I* and leading to the expansion of high quality charter schools through building the capacity of authorizers and modeling excellence in accountability.

## Logic Model: Advancing Great Authorizing & Modeling Excellence



### C. Exceptional approach – the extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition.

This project represents an exceptional approach to meeting *Absolute Priority 1 – Strengthening Charter School Authorizing and Oversight* and *Competitive Preference Priority 1 – Building Capacity in the Authorizing Process for Education Agencies with the Most Need* because it is focused and relevant, desperately needed and is being guided, supported, and staffed by a diverse group containing some of the most experienced and respected people and organizations in the world of chartering, and it has the potential for transforming the work of authorizers individually and collectively away from a compliance-based, one-size-fits-all approach and towards a more rigorous and personalized performance-based approach.

For example, one of our goals is to assist authorizers in bringing their “A-GAME” to improving education by advancing great authorizing. Using leadership expert Jim Collins’

definition of “greatness” found in *Good to Great and the Social Sectors*, we are defining great authorizing for the purposes of this project as agencies that (1) produce superior performance; (2) make a distinctive impact; and (3) have a lasting endurance. We believe this broader vision for what makes a great authorizer is exceptional because it offers a more compelling and mission-oriented reason for authorizers to undertake the hard work associated with changing and improving their strategies, systems, and practices.

Another reason this project represents an exceptional approach is because it provides a robust system of supports for helping authorizers not only learn about the best strategies and practices, but is also designed to provide authorizers with the technical assistance they need to actually implement these best practices in their day-to-day work.

The National Charter Schools Institute’s ability to harness the power of technology and equip authorizers with its digital compliance and performance management platform – Epicenter – also makes this project truly exceptional. Epicenter is a proven tool that leading authorizers across the country are using to view and share information, automate workflow and reporting, monitor compliance, inform decision-making, and demonstrate results. Moreover, Epicenter is flexible, adaptable, and scalable so that it is easy for authorizers to customize goals and monitor compliance and performance requirements for different types of schools, whether they be alternative schools, turnarounds, new start-ups or established schools.

The National Charter Schools Institute works with authorizers across the country ranging from Washington D.C. to Hawaii. Over the years, the Institute has provided executive coaching, strategic and operational planning, technical support, board governance training and assistance with charter application, renewal, and closure processes, along with school turnaround expertise to hundreds of authorizers. Moreover, through the Institute’s web-based digital

platform – Epicenter – the Institute has a continuous and on-going relationship with over 75 authorizers, chartering over 1,500 schools serving more than 500,000 students. These authorizers range from school districts like Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, and Philadelphia, to special purpose authorizers like the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, to institutions of higher education like the University of Missouri, the State University of New York, and the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, along with state charter commissions like the Indiana State Charter School Board, the Ohio Department of Education, and the Nevada State Charter Schools Commission. In addition, members of the Institute’s leadership team frequently present on authorizing and accountability at state and national conferences and serve as executive coaches for the National Association of Charter School Authorizers Emerging Leaders Program, and the Institute annually hosts special event for authorizers in conjunction with the NACSA and NAPCS annual conferences.

Momentum staff members have directly impacted state, district, authorizer, and school board policies around the use of mission critical, rigorous accountability measures, metrics, and frameworks across the country-ensuring that high-stakes decisions regarding AECs (charter and non-charter alike) have been made using the best available data at the time.

The Project Team combines the deep knowledge and many years of experience of the National Charter School Institute regarding quality practices for charter school authorizing with the extensive research and experience Momentum Strategies and Research. This combination of experiences, knowledge and research allow for this project to extend exemplary authorizing policies and practices to authorizers who have alternative schools in their portfolios and to broaden the implementation of these practices to all authorizers through the dissemination structure. During the first year of the grant the National Leadership Group of Authorizers will

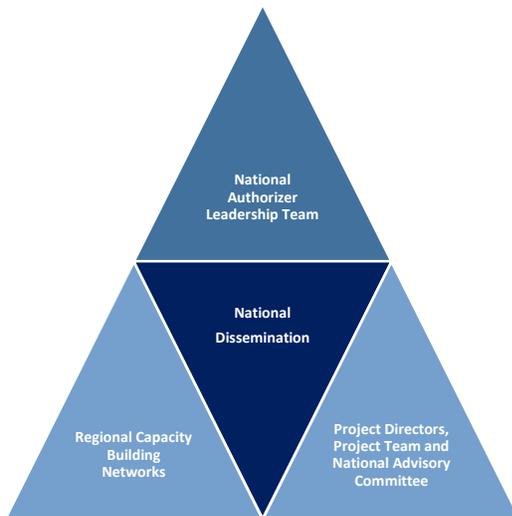
meet quarterly to share best authorizing practices, examine research, design new policies and create authorizing tools. The collaboration between these two organization, with the participation of leading edge authorizers and the guidance of a well-rounded and nationally representative Advisory Group ensure that the project will be successful.

**D. Dissemination through and beyond the grant – the mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.**

Dissemination of all policies, practices, frameworks and tools will occur through a strategically designed four tier approach. This approach was designed for maximum dissemination impact among authorizers of AEC charter schools and then to the broader authorizer community.

**Dissemination Strategy**

The Project Directors and Project Team have developed and will support the National



Authorizer Learning Team (NALT) comprised of a diverse set of authorizers that have alternative charter schools in their portfolio and are dedicated to supporting alternative education charter schools as an essential model. The Project Team will facilitate and contribute to the work of the NALT in the development of resources and tools to help

authorizers implement rigorous and attainable accountability systems and frameworks for authorizing AEC charter schools. Additionally, the NALT will disseminate and provide support to other AEC authorizers through the Regional Capacity Building Networks. The National

Authorizer Leadership Team and the Regional Capacity Building Networks will consist of charter school authorizers, school leaders of alternative charter schools and charter support organizations. The Advisory Committee (**Table 6**) consisting of 5-7 members of charter support organizations, state departments of education and non-profit organizations will provide guidance and additional dissemination support for the project.

### **National Authorizer Leadership Team**

The National Authorizer Leadership Team table provides detailed information regarding each participant on this team. As you can see from the information, the dissemination capabilities of this group are extensive and they will serve as both implementers and disseminators of the policies, practices and resources that are designed to meet *Absolute Priority 1* and *Competitive Priority 1*.

**Table 7: National Authorizer Leadership Team**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>AUTHORIZER ENTITY</b>	<b>AUTHORIZER TYPE</b>	<b>STATE</b>
<b>Mary Bradley</b>	Chicago Public Schools	Public School District	Illinois
<b>Susie Miller Carello</b>	State University of New York	Higher Education	New York
<b>Naomi Rubin DeVeaux</b>	DC Public Charter School Board	Independent Governmental Agency	Washington, DC
<b>David Frank</b>	New York State Department of Education	State Department of Education	New York
<b>Patrick Gavin</b>	Nevada State Public Charter School Authority	State Commission	Nevada
<b>David Greenburg</b>	Audubon Center of the North Woods	Non-Profit Organization	Minnesota
<b>Jenna Hodgins</b>	Hillsborough County Schools	Public School District	Florida
<b>Teresa Kapellas</b>	Alameda County Office of Education	County Office of Education	California
<b>Corey Northrup</b>	Central Michigan University	Higher Education	Michigan
<b>Ron Rizzo</b>	Ferris State University	Higher Education	Michigan
<b>Jennifer Shorr</b>	Buckeye Community of Hope	Non-Profit Organization	Ohio

## Regional Capacity Building Networks

The Regional Capacity Building Networks are the second tier of dissemination. These networks will be comprised of 10-15 authorizers per region and will be recruited for participation based on their interest in improving practices for authorizing their current alternative charter schools as well as their desire to develop recruitment strategies and new application rubrics for AEC charter school applicants. The table below provides the Regional Capacity Building Network structure. The data outlines the three Regions, the states comprising the regions, the number of authorizers in the state that authorize AECs, the total number of AEC Charters in the state and the total number of students enrolled in AEC Charter Schools. The authorizer participants that comprise the Regional Capacity Building Networks will be selected from authorizers in the states listed in the chart. The intentional selection process along with self-selection will be based on the desire to improve authorizing practices as well as an interest in expanding AEC charter schools. Thirty authorizers will be chosen from the pool of authorizers outlined in the table below.

**Table 8: Regional Capacity Building Network**

Region	State	Number of AEC Authorizers	Total AEC Charters	Total Students Enrolled (15-16)
Northern	Illinois	1	20	7,165
	Indiana	5	7	2,400
	Massachusetts	1	7	1,400
	Michigan	19	38	4977
	New York	3	11	1,353
	Ohio	46	84	15,174
Southern	Florida	20	61	15,735
	Georgia	4	8	4,255
Western	Texas	1	139	21,931
	Arizona	1	107	25,201
	California	73	102	49,973
	Colorado	10	21	7290
	New Mexico	4	17	3972
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>148,508</b>

Arizona and Texas present a unique dissemination challenge and opportunity. Both states feature large numbers of AECs (charter and district), the two largest authorizers in the nation (Texas Education Agency and Arizona State Board for Charter Schools), and two of the most comprehensive state alternative performance frameworks in the nation. As a result, both states have much of their alternative accountability system prescribed by their respective states. Thus, there is arguably less opportunity for them to learn from the proposed project's primary deliverables – yet both state authorizer's – and their respective AECs – have much to learn from the projects secondary deliverables and thus the project's dissemination plan for these two significant states, involves broader communications strategies involving AEC themselves as well as charter support organizations. To that end, representation from school groups and CSOs from those states will inform the Project Advisory Board and efforts in Arizona and Texas (support letter from Dr. Amy Schlessman, Arizona Consortium of AECs).

The need for the program that will be supported by this grant is staggering and the opportunity to make a difference for the some of the highest need students in our country by improving authorizing policies and practices for this segment of the charter school community. Quality authorizing will lead to improving the quality of AEC charter schools and expanding the opportunity for more high risk students to benefit from an AEC charter school in their community.

### **III. Quality of the Management Plan**

**A. Management plan - The adequacy of the management to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines and milestones for accomplishing project tasks**

The management plan presented for the A-GAME (Appendix E) clearly lays out the specific tasks that will be completed by quarter and outlines in a clear, easy to follow way the major achievement(s) that will be met in completing each quarter's tasks. The management plan was developed to ensure the success of the project—setting goals for completing tasks that are reasonable in the timeframe identified. In addition, the management plan clearly ties each task to the appropriate SMART goal presented as in the project's evaluation plan, where appropriate, as well as the people/groups responsible for completing each task.

The budget was set to include 1) Project Team time (including consultants) to prepare materials, presentations, and resources and to conduct the meetings and conference presentations and networking and to have regular team meetings to ensure the project remains on time and on target; 2) Stipends to members of the NALT; 3) Free Epicenter access for the alternative schools of the participating authorizers (both NALT and those participating in the Regional Capacity Building Meetings); 4) Reasonable estimates of travel costs that should align with federal allowances; and 5) Necessary resources for disseminations, including web hosting and development, report design, and supply costs. Finally, the Project Team selected a project evaluation team that is both well respected and cost effective.

In addition, the project is being co-managed by both NCSI and Momentum, to ensure that there is more than one individual or organization tracking the progress of the activities against stated goals and managing expenditures against the budget.

**B. Reasonable costs - the extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project**

This project has the potential to impact the authorizing practices of all authorizers across the country. Though we have identified 204 authorizers that oversee 601 AEC charters, which will

be the focus of the A-GAME project, we anticipate more authorizers will begin to open additional AEC charters after the end of the grant period. By creating regional networks of authorizers and open source materials that authorizers can access beyond the 3-year grant period this project can continue to influence change in authorizer practices and policies for years to come.

As noted previously, it is estimated that 1.2 million students dropout out of high school every year. Yet, our current estimate of students enrolled in an alternative schools or programs sit around 650,000 (including detention centers and treatment centers). That means that there remain over half a million students each year out of school. Charter schools are particularly well suited to serve High-Risk Students because of the flexibility charter laws allow. With the ability to make well-informed, empirically backed decisions about the effectiveness of AEC charter school authorizers can feel more confident in opening additional schools to meet this need.

Consider the figures presented earlier by Opportunity Nation: The cost to taxpayers for young adults who are not in school or working is \$93 billion annually and \$1.6 trillion over the young adults' lifetimes in lost revenues and increased social services. An investment of 2.1 million over the next three years, has the potential to save taxpayers hundreds of millions, or possibly trillions of dollars in the future.

**C. Demonstrated commitment - the relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project**

The National Charter Schools Institute works with authorizers across the country ranging from Washington D.C. to Hawaii. Over the years, the Institute has provided executive coaching, strategic and operational planning, technical support, board governance training and assistance

with charter application, renewal, and closure processes, along with school turnaround expertise to hundreds of authorizers.

The Institute also has a continuous and on-going relationship with about 75 authorizers across 25 states through its web-based, digital platform – Epicenter. These authorizers charter over 1,500 schools, serving more than 500,000 students. They range from school districts like Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, and Philadelphia, to special purpose authorizers like the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, to institutions of higher education like the University of Missouri, the State University of New York, and the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, along with state charter commissions like the Indiana State Charter School Board, the Ohio Department of Education, and the Nevada State Charter Schools Commission. In addition, members of the Institute’s leadership team frequently present on authorizing and accountability at state and national conferences and serve as executive coaches for the National Association of Charter School Authorizers emerging Leaders Program, and the Institute annually hosts special event for authorizers in conjunction with the NACSA and NAPCS annual conferences.

Momentum Strategy & Research staff have been actively involved in shaping charter school and AEC policies and practices for over 20 years. Committed to the need of alternative schools and the organizations that oversee them, Momentum has built an Alternative School and Performance Database, to provide data and analysis informing how states, school districts, charter school authorizers, and alternative schools measure success and set targets for performance.

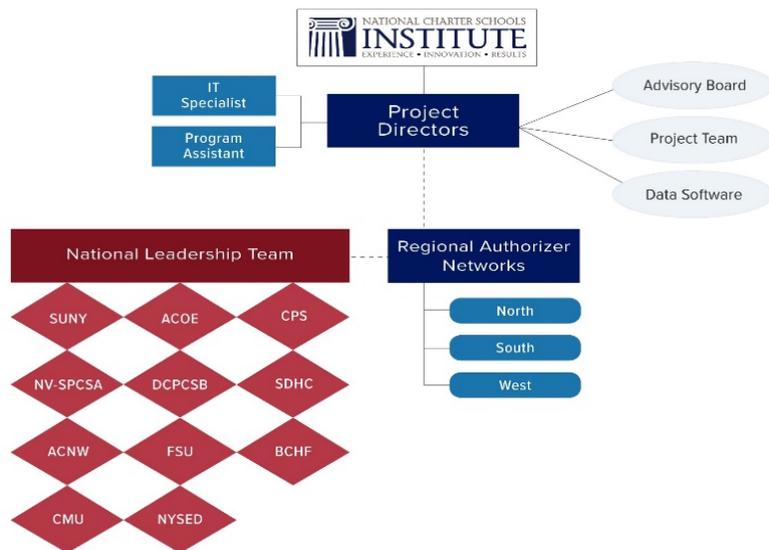
In 2017 the two organizations entered into a strategic partnership combining Momentum’s data and alternative school expertise with NCSI’s Epicenter based information management

system. The partnership provides a key step in automating access to alternative school performance data, part of the organizations shared commitment to strengthening authorizing.

The authorizers that comprise the project’s National Authorizer Leadership Team were carefully selected to represent a wide range of states and authorizer type, while simultaneously bringing together authorizers known for their high capacity, alternative school expertise and commitment, and leadership roles within their respective states. A number of the NALT participants head up or are active in their respective state authorizer groups and have ready access to peers for dissemination purposes.

The National Charter School Institute will serve as the fiscal agent with the Project Directors taking responsibility for collaborating with all project participants and coordinating the contract for

evaluation services. The Project Directors, with assistance from the Project Team, the IT specialist and the Program Assistant, will also be responsible for supporting the National Authorizer Leadership Team and the Regional Capacity Building Networks. The Advisory Board will connect national organizations to the project and will serve as a dissemination vehicle both during and beyond the grant.



#### **IV. Quality of the Project Personnel**

**A. Equal opportunity - the extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age or disability**

The National Charter Schools Institute and Momentum Strategy and Research, the organizations collaborating on this grant application, both welcome and seek applications for employment from all persons, including those who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. All qualified applicants receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender expression, national origin, age, protected veteran or disabled status or genetic information.

**B. Project directors' qualifications - the qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director or principal investigator**

##### **Project Directors**

The Project Directors, both members of the leadership team of the partner organizations, National Charter School Institute and Momentum Strategies & Research, described above, are thought leaders in the fields of charter school authorizing and alternative education accountability for alternative education campuses. Their experience is summarized below and full resumes are provided in **Appendix A**.

**Dr. Jody Ernst – Project Director:** Jody Ernst is the Vice President of Research and Policy Analysis for Momentum Strategy & Research. She earned her doctoral degree in 2006 from the University of Texas, at Austin and began her research into school performance and

appropriate measures of public school accountability at the Colorado League of Charter Schools in 2007. While at the Colorado League of Charter Schools, Dr. Ernst was the lead researcher on a federal grant project focused on measuring charter school quality. As part of the research agenda for the federal project Dr. Ernst worked closely with the developer of the Growth Percentile Methodology to study typical growth patterns of students enrolled in Colorado's alternative schools. Her surprising findings, showing that high-risk students grow more slowly than their same age peers attending traditional schools, launched her career as an expert in alternative student and school accountability. Over the last decade Dr. Ernst has replicated her research findings on the growth of high-risk students using a number of different assessments and across the majority of US states. She was contracted by the Colorado Department of Education to help them develop their first differentiated accountability system for alternative schools and has since assisted numerous schools, school districts, charter school authorizers, and state education agencies in their research and development efforts shaping their alternative accountability systems and policies. Dr. Ernst joined her colleague, and former President of the Colorado League of Charter Schools, to form Momentum Strategy & Research in 2013, where, among other research initiatives, she continues her research and development work to inform policy and practice for the appropriate measurement of success for schools that focus on serving atypical student populations.

**Cheri Shannon - Project Director**: Cheri Shannon is the Vice President of for Performance and Accountability at the National Charter Schools Institute. Cheri has dedicated her career to strengthening leaders, growing networks and impacting students. A steadfast believer in education reform, Cheri began her work in the reform movement in 1995, serving as Executive Director of the Coalition for Essential Schools. She was quickly tapped to serve in top

school leadership positions in the charter sector in Kansas City. Following 6 years of service within charter schools and being recognized as an emerging leader in the field, Cheri was chosen to lead the Missouri Charter Public Schools Association in 2009, followed by the Florida Charter Schools Association in 2011. In her tireless work to advance the charter movement and continue to make a difference in the landscape, Cheri founded and became the Executive Director of University Preparatory Academies, Inc., in 2012. Throughout Florida, Cheri's talents in new school development became widely recognized and she quickly gained a reputation for her instrumental work in growing and launching schools, inspiring her to serve as an educational consultant to others in this capacity. Most recently, in 2016, Cheri served as the Senior Director of Charter Development for Pathways Management Group in California. Cheri earned her Master of Science Degree in Educational Leadership and Policy from Arizona State University and Bachelor of Science in Education from Southwest Missouri State University. Cheri has completed the coursework for her Doctorate of Philosophy in Educational Leadership from the University of Nebraska and her Education Specialist Degree from the University of Missouri. Combined with her rich experience in public education, Cheri is recognized as an expert in the industry and has contributed much thought leadership through numerous roles and throughout the nation.

The Project Directors will be supported by an Information Technology specialist who will assist in creating the website and ensuring that all technology requirements are met and support is provided to all project personnel and all authorizers in the project. An Administrative Assistant will be provided by NCSI to the Project Directors and the Project Team. The Administrative Assistant will help with logistics, travel, document preparation and other tasks as required for dissemination.

**C. Key personnel qualifications - the qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel**

**Key Personnel**

The key project personnel supporting the Project Directors bring a wealth of added expertise from the fields of charter school authorizing, charter school operations, alternative education research, alternative education school support and advocacy, and grant management and leadership on state and national initiatives to improve educational outcomes for all students. Their resumes are included in **Appendix A** with brief bios provided below.

**Dr. James G. Goenner:** As President and CEO of the National Charter School Institute, Jim Goenner is leading the way toward a day when all students have access to a diverse array of exceptional schools where they can learn, grow and prepare for success. Jim joined the charter school's movement in 1995, and has played a prominent role in developing and strengthening the performance of the charter schools sector in Michigan and across the nation ever since. In 2010, Jim's pioneering efforts and commitment to excellence earned him an induction into the National Charter Schools Hall of Fame. Prior to joining the Institute, Jim served as the Executive Director of the Center for Charter Schools at Central Michigan University, where he led the first and largest university authorizer of charter public schools in the nation. Under Jim's leadership, CMU became known as the "gold standard" for charter school authorizing. Jim currently serves on the board of directors of the Charter Schools Development Corporation. He helped found the National Association of Charter School Authorizers and chaired its board of directors (2007-2010). He also helped found and chaired the board of directors of the Michigan Council of Charter School Authorizers (2002-2010), and served as the first President of the Michigan Association of Public School Academies (1996-1998). Jim earned his Doctorate in Educational Administration from Michigan State University, Master of Arts from Central Michigan University and Bachelor of Business Administration from Grand Valley State University

**Jim Griffin:** Perhaps better than anyone in the country, Jim Griffin understands the intersection of charter school accountability and alternative education options for students. Jim Griffin is a founder of Momentum Strategy & Research, a Colorado organization strengthening the nation's charter community through collaborative research. Mr. Griffin leads the strategy side of the organization leading policy and system development efforts in areas such as public sector accountability systems, performance measures for atypical students and schools, and charter school facilities challenges. Prior to founding Momentum Strategy and Research, Jim Griffin was the founding leader of the Colorado League of Charter Schools. He spent nearly 19 years in that position shaping Colorado's charter school policy. Over those years he also played a key role in launching a host of groundbreaking efforts and organizations, both locally and nationally – ranging from public school accountability, to legal advocacy, facilities financing, group purchasing, and food service.

**Jackie Mullikin:** Jackie has an extensive background in the financial and administrative sectors of business and non-profit organization and brings a wealth of knowledge to the fiscal and administrative operations of grant projects. She is responsible for managing the business functions for the National Charter Schools Institute and Institute for Excellence in Education and oversees the budgeting, internal controls, contracting and financial operations for both organizations. In this capacity Jackie has managed and overseen the fiscal components of innumerable state and federal grants awarded to the respective organizations. Prior to joining the Institute, Jackie launched her career in the hospitality industry, where she dedicated 22 years of service to LaBelle Management. Jackie earned her Associates Degree in Business Administration from Mid-Michigan Community College.

**Nelson Smith:** Nelson Smith is a consultant who advises clients on education reform issues including charter school oversight and governance-based school turnaround programs. He has held leadership positions in education policy for more than 30 years, including service as the first President and CEO of the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools; Senior Advisor to the National Association of Charter School Authorizers; the first Executive Director of the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board; Vice President for Education and Workforce Development at the New York City

Partnership; and Director of Programs for the Improvement of Practice at the U.S. Department of Education. He has taught at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and in 2010 was given a Career Achievement Award from New Schools Venture Fund. In June 2015, he was inducted into the National Charter Schools Hall of Fame. He has written extensively about education reform issues including alternative charter school accountability and oversight of virtual charters. His series on statewide school-turnaround efforts, for the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, is called *Redefining the School District in America*. A graduate of Georgetown University, he lives in Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

Additionally, the following leadership staff from the National Charter School Institute will serve in an advisory and support capacity as needed throughout the duration of the project:

**Dr. Darlene Chambers:** Dr. Chambers is a national leader in education reform is the Senior Vice President for Programs and Services at the National Charter Schools Institute. Darlene brings over 40 years of education experience working nationally and internationally with schools, boards, authorizers, universities and corporations. Prior to joining the Institute, Darlene served as the CEO of the Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools. Darlene also served as the Executive Director of the Ohio Council of Community Schools, one the first and largest authorizers in Ohio. In 2013, she was elected as the President of the Ohio Association of Charter School Authorizers and also participated in the National Association of Charter School Authorizer's (NACSA) leader's program. She is a highly sought after speaker, consults with authorizers around the country and serves as an executive leadership coach for NACSA. Darlene was also a member of the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools State Leader's Council and was a founding board member of the Cleveland Transformation Alliance, an advocacy group for the Cleveland Metropolitan School District and its partner charter schools. Recently, Darlene played an instrumental role in Michigan's Authorizer Accreditation Review program developed in conjunction with AdvancED and also developed a series of board training modules for the statewide Ohio charter

school board membership organization. Darlene did doctoral work in higher education and organizational development at Oregon State and Bowling Green State Universities. She received her Masters from San Francisco State University and Bachelors at Ball State University.

**Mark Weinberg:** Mark leads the National Charter Schools Institute's initiatives focused on measuring, supporting and helping people achieve breakthrough performance in the areas of leadership and learning. Mark has been an advocate and leader in the charter and larger public education community for over 20 years. Before joining the Institute, Mark was charged with leading U.S. operations for an international educational management company, served as the Director of Improvement and Accountability for a Michigan-based management company, and launched a virtual school. Prior to that, Mark worked at The Governor John Engler Center for Charter Schools at Central Michigan University for 10 years, leading their academic performance and accountability team, and serving as a school leader and teacher, nationally and internationally, prior to becoming an authorizer. Mark brings a wealth of experience and a steadfast commitment to ensuring those children in greatest need receive the quality education they deserve. Mark has played a key role in broadening the charter sector's capacity to influence practice and advance public education, impacting the educational opportunities for students in Michigan and throughout the nation. Mark earned his Master of Arts in Educational Administration from Central Michigan University and Bachelor's degrees from the University of Western Ontario and Brock University.

National Charter Schools Institute works with authorizers across the country ranging from Washington D.C. to Hawaii. Through the Institute's web-based digital platform – Epicenter – the Institute has a continuous and on-going relationship with over 75 authorizers ranging from school districts like Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, and Philadelphia, to special purpose authorizers like the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, to institutions of higher education like the University of Missouri, the State University of New York, and the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, along with state charter commissions like the Indiana State Charter

School Board, the Ohio Department of Education, and the Nevada State Charter Schools Commission.

Working with all types of authorizers – ranging from low-funded/well-funded to low-capacity/high-capacity, the Institute has gained deep insight into the different needs and approaches for supporting and assisting authorizers. For example, the Institute’s Epicenter support team works directly with authorizers to set-up their annual calendar of reporting requirements so that these expectations are clearly communicated to charter school governing boards and school leaders, enabling them to proactively anticipate and properly fulfill their reporting obligations. Another example, of how the Institute’s Epicenter support team assists authorizers and enhances their capacity is the support and technical expertise provided around their application, renewal, and annual reporting activities.

The National Charter Schools Institute has a long history of working with authorizers. In fact, the Institute’s President & CEO, Dr. James Goenner, led the Center for Charter Schools at Central Michigan University (CMU) from 1998-2010. During his tenure, CMU became known as the “gold standard” for her school authorizing, earning recognition from the U.S. and Michigan Department of Education. Goenner’s pioneering efforts earned him an induction into the National Charter Schools Hall of Fame. Jim understands the important role authorizers can play and serves as a trusted resource to authorizers around the country. He helped found and served on the board of directors of the National Association of Charter School Authorizers. He also helped found the nation’s first state based association of authorizers - the Michigan Council of Charter School Authorizers and chaired its Board from 2002-2010. Jim also has key relationships with many of the nation’s state charter schools’ associations, having founded and served as the first President of the Michigan Association of Public School Academies (1996-

1998). These relationships will be extremely valuable for generating buy-in and support for this project and for working with these various organizations and influence makers to disseminate the lessons, findings, and results from this project.

Although not directly an aim of this project, Jim also serves on the board of the Charter Schools Development Corporation which specializes in helping charter schools with facility and financing needs. He believes that by strengthening authorizing and oversight and better connecting the work of authorizers with the facilities financing community, there is an opportunity to improve the ability of charter schools to access and finance facilities.

Jim will be an exceptional asset to this project and its dissemination as he has experience testifying before numerous policymaking bodies, including the United States Congress, and was invited by the U.S. Department of Education to serve on the advisory board of the National Charter Schools Resource Center. He has received gubernatorial appointments from Governors John Engler and Jennifer Granholm and has authored numerous articles, including “Charter Schools: Revitalizing Public Education,” which appeared in *Phi Delta Kappan* and “Michigan’s Chartering Strategy,” which appeared in *Education Next*.

In addition to the Project Directors and the key project personnel, the grant applicants will benefit from the support, participation and sharing of best practices of a thoughtfully selected National Authorizer Leadership Team that is comprised of the leaders of eleven of the most innovative charter school authorizing agencies in the country. Leaders in each of these chartering agencies has committed through a Letter of Intent/Support (**Appendix B**) to participate through the three years of the projects and have committed time and resources focused on meeting the goals of the project. The breadth of experience that these eleven leaders bring to the project is provided in their bios included in **Appendix E**.

## V. **Quality of the Project Evaluation**

Basis Policy Research is prepared to conduct a rigorous and comprehensive evaluation of the implementation and impact of the A-GAME project. The evaluation will leverage data produced by the A-GAME Project Team and its partners, but the overall evaluation coordination and analysis will be led and conducted by Basis, an organization with strong experience in data analytics and strategy, policy research, program evaluation, and measurement design. Basis researchers have considerable experience in conducting large-scale program evaluations of federally funded education initiatives.

This evaluation plan has been designed specifically to determine and report on the extent to which program goals, objectives, and outcomes are met over the three years of the grant. For each of the four project goals to be evaluated, we present process performance measures with measurable performance targets. For the third goal that focuses on disseminating resources developed through this project, we present outcome performance measures in addition to the process measures. Given that the A-GAME Project Team will develop and disseminate resources during the grant period, the baseline for each of the process and outcome performance measures is zero. The performance targets identified in the performance measures are ambitious. They specify that authorizers overseeing meaningful percentages of AEC charter schools across the country will access the resources developed through the grant; agree that the resources are important and relevant to their work; demonstrate knowledge of how to implement resources; and implement policies, practices, and procedures based on the content of the resources.

Following the list of performance measures for each of the four goals, we describe the evaluation methods that will be used to measure and analyze data for the performance measures.

**Goal #1: Support authorizers of alternative schools with identifying, developing, and disseminating mission-related performance measures that are credible, relevant, and rigorous for schools that serve students who have special needs and/or are at extreme risk of failure.**

#### **Process Performance Measures**

1. In year 1, the A-GAME Project Team convenes a National Authorizer Leadership Team composed of 11 authorizers three times to collect example AEC related documents, policies, and practices and to develop 8 best practice resources.
2. In year 1, the A-GAME Project Directors conduct authorizer needs assessment with the 11 authorizers that are members of the National Authorizer Leadership Team.
3. In year 1, the A-GAME Project Team and National Authorizer Leadership Team complete an AEC Model Framework Components resource.
4. In year 1, the A-GAME Project Team and National Authorizer Leadership Team complete an AEC Data Standards framework resource.
5. In year 2, the A-GAME Project Team and National Authorizer Leadership Team complete a Rubrics for New AEC Applications and AEC Renewal Applications resource.
6. In year 3, the A-GAME Project Team and evaluator completes a final report that describes the best practices resources developed through the project and how authorizers with AEC charter schools have implemented the resources.

**Goal #2: Encourage and assist authorizers in transforming their work from compliance-based, one-size-fits-all approaches to more rigorous and personalized approaches that harness the power of technology and focus on ensuring students are ultimately prepared for success in college, work, and life.**

### **Process Performance Measures**

1. By year 2, the A-GAME Project Team identifies 30 authorizers with AEC charter schools to participate in three sets of Regional Capacity Building Teams for four meetings each.
2. In year 2, the A-GAME Project Team develops a technical assistance and coaching plan for Regional Capacity Building Team meetings.
3. In year 2, the A-GAME Project Team develops content for Regional Capacity Building Team meetings.
4. In year 2, the A-GAME Project Team and authorizers from NALT conduct three sets of Regional Capacity Building Teams for three meetings each.

**Goal #3: Disseminate and encourage strategies and practices that support the art and science of authorizing, facilitate the replication and expansion of high-quality charter schools, improve the performance measures found in charter contracts, and share models of excellence with new and small authorizers, along with those that have a significant number of low performing schools.**

### **Process Performance Measures**

1. In year 1, the A-GAME Project Directors develop a website that will be used to provide information and access to best practices resources from the project.
2. In each year, the A-GAME Project Team disseminates information about updated Epicenter data and document management systems that incorporates best practices resources for AEC charter school authorizing.
3. In year 1, the A-GAME Project Team attends national conferences relevant to charter school authorizers and state charter school conferences to network and outreach with authorizers of AEC charter schools about the project.

4. In years 2 and 3, the A-GAME Project Team disseminates best practice resources at a minimum of three national conferences relevant to charter school authorizers.
5. In years 2 and 3 the A-GAME Project Team disseminates best practice resources at a minimum of five state charter school conferences.
6. In year 2, the A-GAME Project Team disseminates best practice resources and tools through 4 webinar presentations.
7. In year 3, the A-GAME Project Directors develop a widespread dissemination plan to reach 95% of authorizers with AEC charter schools.
8. In year 3, the A-GAME Project Team engages in concentrated outreach strategies for district authorizers with one to two AEC charter schools.
9. In year 3, the A-GAME Project Team verifies NCES school contact information for mailing best practices resources from the project.
10. In year 3, the A-GAME Project Team develops a plan for sustainability and ongoing dissemination of project resources to authorizers with AEC charter schools.
11. By year 3, the A-GAME Project Team disseminates best practice resources to 95% of authorizers with AEC charter schools through email, web content, Epicenter information, webinars, conference presentations, social media, and external partner networks.

#### **Outcome Performance Measures**

1. By year 3, 50% of AEC charter authorizers to whom A-GAME disseminated resources on best practices in authorizing AEC charter schools access the resources.
2. By year 3, 80% of AEC charter authorizers that access resources on best practices in authorizing AEC charter schools agree that the resources are important and relevant to their work.

3. By year 3, 60% of AEC charter school authorizers that access resources on best practices in authorizing AEC charter schools demonstrate knowledge of how to implement resources.
4. By year 3, 80% of authorizers participating in the National Authorizer Leadership Team implement at least two of the AEC charter school resources or tools developed through the A-GAME project.
5. By year 3, 80% of authorizers participating in the Regional Capacity Building Teams implement at least two of the AEC charter school resources or tools developed through the A-GAME project.

**Goal #4: Provide authorizers with better compliance and performance data that they can use to monitor and evaluate the academic, financial, operational performance of schools and strengthen their decision making related to charter renewals, expansions, and closures.**

#### **Process Performance Measures**

1. In each year, the A-GAME Project Team collects and analyzes publically available performance data for AECs, from state department of education websites, to feed into data visualization tools.
2. In each year, the A-GAME Project Team develops new visualization tools for disseminating national and local AEC performance outcomes through Epicenter.

#### **Evaluation Methods**

##### **Data Collection**

Basis will collect data on the process performance measures from: a) interviews with A-GAME Project Team staff and partners involved in the development and dissemination of

resources and b) review of materials, deliverables, and online content generated by A-GAME Project Team staff and partners through the development and dissemination of resources.

Basis will collect data on the outcome performance measures from: a) resource access data, including email open rates, email click rates, and email bounce rates; website page views, website click rates on links, website time stayed on page, and website downloads; and content sharing; b) surveys of individuals who access resources online or through Epicenter; and c) interviews and document review with authorizers who participated in National Authorizer Leadership Teams and Regional Capacity Building Teams to determine if changes in policies, practices, or procedures were made.

### **Data Analysis**

To evaluate the process and outcome performance measures in the four goals, Basis will use mixed methods consisting of qualitative analyses of interviews and resource materials and quantitative analysis of resource access and survey data. The primary source of information for determining whether process performance measures were met will come from interviews with A-GAME Project Team staff and document review of materials the A-GAME Project Team develops through the project. The qualitative analyses will look for evidence that the A-GAME Project Team systematically developed resources on best practices for authorizing AEC charter schools and disseminated through multiple channels to the target audiences.

A variety of information will be used to determine whether outcome performance measures in Goal #3 were met. For outcome measure #1, authorizer awareness will be measured as the percent of unique authorizers with AEC charter schools where at least one staff member not only received the resource through the A-GAME Project Team's dissemination strategies, but did at least one of the following activities: a) clicked through an email link to a webpage

devoted to resources on authorizing AEC charter schools, b) downloaded resources on the objective's topic area from the A-GAME project webpage or Epicenter, or c) attended an in-person convening or conference session where resources were shared. For outcome measures #2 and #3, authorizers that access resources through the A-GAME project webpage or Epicenter will be given a short survey asking about the relevance of the resources and knowledge of how to implement the resource. The survey question and administration protocols will be developed during the first year of the grant. For outcome measures #4 and #5, a variety of methods will be used to determine whether authorizers that participate in National Authorizer Leadership Teams and Regional Capacity Building Teams change policies, practices, or procedures related to best practices for authorizing AEC charter schools, including interviews and document review to assess and analyze changes.