Instructions and Timeline
New Community School Sponsorship
Contract Starts July 1, 2027

Deadline	Responsibility	Items to Be Completed
06/15/2026	School	Application for New Community School Sponsorship is submitted
06/16/2026 – 09/15/2026	ESCLEW	Review and interview period
10/15/2026	ESCLEW	School is notified of recommendation to the ESCLEW Governing Board and, if approved for sponsorship, a preliminary agreement is issued to the school
10/31/2026	School	Signed preliminary agreement is returned to the ESCLEW
12/01/2026	ESCLEW	School is sent a contract packet for completion
04/30/2027	School	Contract negotiations are finalized and all contract attachments are submitted
05/31/2027	School	School governing authority approves and signs the sponsorship contract and the original, signed contract is returned to the ESCLEW
06/30/2027	ESCLEW	Contract is signed by the ESCLEW Superintendent and executed
09/30/2027	School	School year begins or contract is void **Exception for dropout prevention and recovery programs*

Sponsoring Priorities
Sponsorship encompasses a great deal of legal responsibility and the ESCLEW Community Schools Center takes its responsibilities seriously. At the core, it upholds its mission of being a student-centered authorizer of charter schools, advancing quality educational opportunities throughout the state of Ohio.

Adhering to the *Principles and Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing* as established by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA), the ESCLEW Community Schools Center uses the principles and standards as the foundation of its strategic plan for quality school sponsoring.

Principles
Maintain High Standards
Uphold School Autonomy
Protect Student and Public Interest

Standards
Agency Commitment and Capacity
Application Process & Decision-Making
Performance Contracting
Ongoing Oversight and Evaluation
Revocation and Renewal Decision-Making

In accordance with the sponsoring priorities, principles, and standards, this application includes prescriptive requirements and evaluation criteria. In order to preserve the highest standard of quality sponsorship, the school must provide sound evidence of meeting the selection criteria. All startups seeking new sponsorship must apply through this application. *Only schools that earn at least 75% of possible points will be considered for a preliminary agreement.*

There are significant consequences for poor performance in academics, finance, operations, and governance. If a school does not perform well, it may be closed automatically by law or by the sponsor, and could be subject to civil liability. It is imperative the school demonstrates it has a clear understanding of community school operations before the ESCLEW Community Schools Center would offer a preliminary agreement.

Step One: Application for Sponsorship

To begin the process of applying for new community school sponsorship, follow the timeline and application instructions. Resources are also available on the ESCLEW Community Schools Center website and from state and local organizations. To discuss any questions, contact the ESCLEW Community Schools Center at (419) 246-3137.

All essay portion questions must be answered within the provided template. Any supplementary materials must be clearly labeled as separate attachments. Should a certain criterion not apply, a response stating why it is not applicable is required. No question should be left unanswered. The application must be received by the ESCLEW Community Schools Center no later than **June 15, 2026**.

Step Two: Review and Interview Period

The ESCLEW Application Review Team includes a core group from the ESCLEW Community Schools Center and external reviewers with expertise and sponsoring experience to make informed application decisions. Annually, and prior to reviewing applications, the Application Review Team is trained on the application process and materials; reviewer protocols; and the vision, mission, and strategic goals of the ESCLEW Community Schools Center. All reviewers sign a Conflict of Interest Disclosure form. Any reviewer found to have a real or perceived conflict of interest will be excused to ensure impartially in the review.

The rubric contains the application framework and evaluation criteria that are used as the primary factors for decision-making. Therefore, the school must present a comprehensive and evidence-based case for approval. The Application Review Team will conduct research into the applicant's history with community schools, interview the applicant, and discuss the viability and appropriateness of the school with the ESCLEW Governing Board.

After evaluating and discussing all the data, each reviewer will individually complete a rubric. The combined scores and comments will be provided to the school in the final evaluation rubric. Should the Application Review Team need additional information to make a determination, the school will be contacted during the review period.

Step Three: Preliminary Agreement and Contract Term Length

In order to guarantee the most comprehensive and appropriate decisions are rendered, the ESCLEW Community Schools Center only provides evidence-based recommendations to its Governing Board regarding applications for sponsorship. *Only schools that earn at least 75% of possible points will be considered for a preliminary agreement.*

If the application is approved, an in-person interview will be scheduled. After the interview, the Application Review Team and the ESCLEW Governing Board will make a decision whether to authorize a preliminary agreement. The school will be notified of the decision no later than **October 15, 2026**.

Should the ESCLEW Community Schools Center choose not to approve the application for sponsorship, the school will receive a notice that includes detailed reasons for the action and the effective date of denial.

Should the ESCLEW Community Schools Center choose to approve the application for sponsorship, the school and the ESCLEW Community Schools Center will execute a preliminary agreement describing the intent of the sponsor and the school to work in good faith towards the execution of a contract. The preliminary agreement will also be submitted to the Ohio Department of Education.

The ESCLEW Governing Board currently offers sponsorship contracts for a maximum of five (5) years. The following table outlines the final evaluation rubric score and corresponding contract term length recommendations.

Final Evaluation Rubric Score	Recommended Contract Term Length
90.0% - 100%	Five (5) Year Recommendation
85.0% - 89.9%	Four (4) Year Recommendation
80.0% - 84.9%	Three (3) Year Recommendation
75.1% - 79.9%	Two (2) Year Recommendation
75.0%	One (1) Year Recommendation
74.9% or Lower	Not Recommended for Sponsorship

Step Four: Contract Negotiation and Attachments

The ESCLEW Community Schools Center will send the school a contract packet no later than **December 1, 2026** which will include a contract template and attachment cover pages. The school must submit clean FBI/BCI criminal background checks for all applicants and governing authority members. In addition, the school's governing authority members must complete five (5) hours of training on board governance and open meetings law.

The school's governing authority, leader, management company (if applicable), and attorney should review the contract to ensure accuracy of all terms. Should the school find any errors or wish to negotiate any contract term, it should discuss the proposed changes with the ESCLEW Community Schools Center as soon as possible.

All contract attachments must be received by the ESCLEW Community Schools Center no later than **April 30, 2027**. The attachments will be reviewed for accuracy, completeness, and appropriateness. Should any adjustments be required, the ESCLEW Community Schools Center will notify the school in a timely manner and convey specific instructions for the adjustments.

Step Five: Contract Approval and Execution

After all contract terms are finalized, the contract must be approved by the school's governing authority. The school should prepare a resolution for the governing authority president to sign once the contract is approved. This signed resolution must be included in the contract, so it is best to have a separate resolution signed that day rather than having approval reflected in the unapproved, draft minutes.

Once the school's governing authority has approved the contract resolution, the governing authority president must sign and date the contract. Then, the original, signed contract must be sent via postal mail and received by the ESCLEW Community Schools Center no later than **May 31, 2027**.

All negotiations must be complete and the contract must be signed by both parties prior to **June 30, 2027**. The ESCLEW Superintendent will only sign the contract once all requirements have been met. The ESCLEW Community Schools Center will send a copy of the fully executed contract to the school and the Ohio Department of Education. The contract will also be available for reference in Epicenter. The contract will go into effect on **July 1, 2027**.