

Appraisal Methodology Overview

Five domains · Five maturity levels · Three appraisal tiers

Twenty practice areas · Governance Maturity Score (0–100)

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This document provides an overview of the CGMI appraisal methodology — the governance maturity framework for charter school boards. For the full specification, visit www.cgmi.institute/framework.

1 Framework Overview

CGMI — Charter Governance Maturity & Integration — is a staged governance maturity framework built specifically for charter school boards. It measures governance across five domains and twenty practice areas. Each school earns a CGMI maturity level from 1 (Emerging) to 5 (Exemplary), determined by the lowest of its five domain ratings.

The framework supports three tiers of appraisal — from continuous, data-driven self-assessment through formal certified evaluation — so schools at every stage of maturity have a clear, actionable path forward. Ratings map directly to NACSA principles and CSP rubric sections, making them immediately legible to authorizers.

A school's overall CGMI level is determined by its lowest domain rating. This staged approach prevents strong areas from masking weak ones and ensures balanced governance capability across all five dimensions of board effectiveness.

5 Domains	20 Practice Areas	5 Maturity Levels	3 Appraisal Tiers	GMS 0–100
Board composition, processes, oversight, finance, transparency	Four per domain — the operational units of governance	Emerging through Exemplary	Self-Assessment, Guided, Certified	Composite governance health metric

2 The Five Domains

CGMI organizes charter school governance into five independent domains. Each domain contains four practice areas and is measured independently at each maturity level. Together, the five domains provide comprehensive coverage of every dimension of board governance.

D1	Board Composition & Competency	NACSA: Governing in the Public Interest — Board composition and independence A governance body is only as capable as its members. This domain measures whether the board has the right people, in the right roles, with the right knowledge.
D2	Governance Processes & Compliance	NACSA: Compliance indicators across all five performance domains Processes are the engine of governance. This domain measures whether governance operates through repeatable, documented processes that meet legal requirements and best practice standards.
D3	Strategic Oversight & Accountability	NACSA: Ongoing oversight and evaluation — school quality accountability Boards govern strategy, not operations. This domain measures whether the board provides meaningful strategic direction, evaluates school leadership, and maintains accountability for the charter's promises.
D4	Financial Governance & Sustainability	NACSA: Financial performance domain — fiscal oversight and auditing Charter boards are fiduciaries of public funds. This domain measures whether the board provides meaningful financial oversight — not just receives reports, but actively understands, monitors, and acts on financial health.
D5	Transparency & Stakeholder Accountability	NACSA: Transparency and public accountability standards Charter schools are public institutions. This domain measures whether the board governs transparently — making information available to the public, engaging the community, and fulfilling its obligations as a steward of public education.

3 Twenty Practice Areas

Each domain contains four practice areas — the operational units of governance measurement. Every practice area is scored 0–5 during an appraisal, and the scores roll up into domain scores and the composite Governance Maturity Score.

D1 Board Composition & Competency

Practice Area	Name	Key Measures
D1.PA1	Board Composition	Board size, seat count, required positions, vacancy management, term limits
D1.PA2	Member Competency	Role-specific knowledge, certification completion, professional development, skill gap identification
D1.PA3	Succession Planning	Officer election cycles, recruitment pipeline, transition protocols, knowledge transfer
D1.PA4	Diversity & Independence	Composition diversity (skills, background, community), independence from management and EMO/CMO

D2 Governance Processes & Compliance

Practice Area	Name	Key Measures
D2.PA1	Meeting Management	Notice compliance, quorum achievement, agenda structure, open meetings law, closed session protocols
D2.PA2	Records & Documentation	Minutes quality, completeness, timeliness, retention, public records compliance
D2.PA3	Policy Framework	Policy library completeness, currency, state law alignment, conflict of interest enforcement
D2.PA4	Legal & Regulatory Compliance	Charter agreement adherence, state/federal compliance (IDEA, FERPA, Title IX), authorizer reporting

D3 Strategic Oversight & Accountability

Practice Area	Name	Key Measures
D3.PA1	Strategic Planning	Existence and currency of strategic plan, board role in development, milestone monitoring
D3.PA2	Leadership Oversight	Executive evaluation process, performance metrics, accountability mechanisms, management separation
D3.PA3	Academic Accountability	Board oversight of academic data, response to underperformance, charter mission alignment
D3.PA4	Charter Promise Fidelity	Monitoring charter commitments, enrollment targets, grade expansion, program fidelity

D4 Financial Governance & Sustainability

Practice Area	Name	Key Measures
D4.PA1	Financial Oversight	Budget approval/monitoring, fund balance management, Treasurer engagement, board financial literacy
D4.PA2	Audit & Internal Controls	Annual audit process, audit committee function, response to findings, internal control policies
D4.PA3	Financial Sustainability	Revenue diversification, reserve fund management, multi-year planning, facility cost management
D4.PA4	Procurement & Compliance	Procurement policy compliance, conflict of interest in contracting, grant management

D5 Transparency & Stakeholder Accountability

Practice Area	Name	Key Measures
D5.PA1	Public Transparency	Meeting notice publication, agenda/minutes availability, annual report, public access compliance
D5.PA2	Community Engagement	Parent/community input mechanisms, stakeholder communication, public comment processes
D5.PA3	Authorizer Relationship	Authorizer communication quality, proactive disclosure, renewal readiness
D5.PA4	Continuous Improvement	Board self-assessment practice, governance review cycles, learning from failures, peer benchmarking

4 Five Maturity Levels

A staged maturity model where each level represents a meaningful threshold of governance capability, with cumulative gate requirements. A school's overall level is the lowest of its five domain ratings.

1**Level 1 — Emerging****Reactive. Ad hoc. Dependent on individuals.**

Governance exists nominally but is not systematically practiced. The board meets minimum legal requirements inconsistently. Success depends on individual heroics rather than repeatable processes.

2**Level 2 — Developing****Aware. Basic processes in place. Compliance-focused.**

The board has established basic governance processes and consistently meets legal compliance requirements. Governance is predictable at a minimum level but practices are compliance-driven rather than quality-driven.

3**Level 3 — Established****Proactive. Documented standards. Governance-driven culture.**

The board governs through well-defined, documented processes that go beyond minimum compliance. Governance quality is consistent regardless of which individuals are serving. The board is proactive and anticipates issues.

4**Level 4 — Advanced****Data-driven. Measured. Benchmarked. Continuously improving.**

The board manages governance quality through quantitative data and proactive benchmarking. Governance decisions are evidence-based. Year-over-year improvement is demonstrated and measured. Governance is a competitive advantage.

5**Level 5 — Exemplary****Systemic. Institutional. Adaptive. A governance model for others.**

Governance is deeply embedded in the school's organizational culture. The board continuously improves its practices, contributes to sector-wide knowledge, and adapts governance systems to meet evolving needs. Level 5 schools are governance exemplars.

5 Gate Requirements

Each level has explicit, cumulative gate requirements that must all be met to achieve that level. Requirements are behavioral and evidence-based — not self-reported.

Level 1 — Emerging

- ✓ School is legally incorporated as a nonprofit
- ✓ Board has minimum required seats (per bylaws)
- ✓ School has an active charter agreement
- ✓ Board has met at least once in the past 90 days

Level 2 — Developing

- ✓ All Level 1 gates met
- ✓ Meeting notice compliance $\geq 85\%$ over trailing 6 months
- ✓ Minutes approved within 30 days for $\geq 80\%$ of meetings
- ✓ No unresolved Critical policy audit findings
- ✓ Annual audit completed within required timeframe
- ✓ At least 50% of board members completed foundational training

Level 3 — Established

- ✓ All Level 2 gates met
- ✓ 100% of board members certified in role-specific training
- ✓ Board self-assessment conducted within last 12 months
- ✓ Strategic plan current (adopted within 3 years, reviewed annually)
- ✓ Formal executive evaluation documented and executed annually
- ✓ Policy audit: zero unresolved Advisory findings older than 90 days
- ✓ Governance Maturity Score ≥ 70

Level 4 — Advanced

- ✓ All Level 3 gates met
- ✓ GMS ≥ 80 for two consecutive appraisal cycles
- ✓ Year-over-year improvement documented across ≥ 3 of 5 domains
- ✓ Peer benchmark comparison conducted and acted upon
- ✓ Board composition skills matrix current and actively used
- ✓ Multi-year financial model maintained and reviewed quarterly
- ✓ At least 2 board members advancing to intermediate/expert training

Level 5 — Exemplary

- ✓ All Level 4 gates met
- ✓ GMS ≥ 90 for two consecutive appraisal cycles
- ✓ Active contribution to charter governance sector
- ✓ Expert-tier training completion for at least one member per role
- ✓ Zero compliance incidents across any domain in trailing 24 months
- ✓ Authorizer has cited school as a governance model or best practice
- ✓ Full year-over-year improvement across all 5 domains

6 Appraisal Methodology

CGMI maturity ratings are assigned through a three-tier appraisal system ranging from self-assessment to formal, human-certified evaluation. Each tier serves a different need at a different level of rigor and cost.

Three Appraisal Tiers

Tier	Description	Conducted by	Level Cap	Rigor
SA Self-Assessment	Manual, point-in-time assessment. Board and school leadership independently gather governance artifacts and evaluate each domain against CGMI criteria.	Board members + school administrators	Level 2	Foundational
GA Guided Appraisal	Structured annual appraisal facilitated through a governance management platform. Automates evidence collection across all five domains and maps evidence to CGMI criteria.	Platform-facilitated using automated tools + evidence analysis	Level 4	High
CA Certified Appraisal	Formal appraisal conducted by a trained, CGMI Certified Appraiser. Combines platform data with structured interviews, document review, and direct observation.	CGMI Certified Appraiser (human)	No cap	Highest

Six-Step Appraisal Process

Every CGMI appraisal — regardless of tier — follows a standardized six-step process that ensures consistent, evidence-based evaluation.

- 1. Intake** — School confirms state, fiscal year, and appraisal scope. Evidence collection period defined.
- 2. Evidence Collection** — Governance data collected: meeting records, training completions, policy audit findings, financial data, compliance events.
- 3. Domain Analysis** — Each domain analyzed against CGMI level criteria. Evidence mapped to practice areas. Gaps identified with specific references.
- 4. Level Determination** — Domain ratings assigned (Level 1–5 per domain). Overall maturity level determined by lowest domain score.
- 5. Report Generation** — Governance Maturity Appraisal Report: domain ratings, evidence citations, strengths, gaps, advancement recommendations.
- 6. Action Planning** — Prioritized advancement plan: specific actions per domain, estimated improvement potential, timeline for next level.

7 Governance Maturity Score

The GMS is a 0–100 composite score calculated from practice-area-level assessments across all five domains. Each domain contributes up to 20 points (4 practice areas × 5 points each). The GMS serves as a diagnostic tool at Levels 1–2 and becomes a formal gate requirement at Levels 3–5.

Score Calculation

$GMS = D1 (0-20) + D2 (0-20) + D3 (0-20) + D4 (0-20) + D5 (0-20)$. Each practice area is scored 0–5 based on the maturity level achieved in that area. Scores are assigned from objective evidence.

Practice Area Scoring Scale

Score	Level	What It Means
0	Not assessed	Practice area has not been evaluated or school is non-compliant with foundational requirements.
1	Emerging	Governance activity exists but is ad hoc, inconsistent, and dependent on individuals.
2	Developing	Basic processes in place. Minimum compliance requirements met consistently.
3	Established	Documented, repeatable processes that go beyond compliance. Proactive governance culture.
4	Advanced	Data-driven, measured, benchmarked. Year-over-year improvement demonstrated.
5	Exemplary	Systemic, institutional capability. Continuous improvement. Sector model.

Score Interpretation

GMS Range	Label	Interpretation
0–29	Critical	Critical governance gaps. Immediate attention required across multiple domains.
30–44	Foundational	Foundational governance in place but inconsistent. Significant improvement needed.
45–62	Compliant	Basic processes established. Compliance-focused. Room for proactive governance.
63–69	Approaching	Governance culture emerging. Approaching Level 3 gate threshold.
70–79	Strong	Strong governance culture. Proactive, documented, consistent across domains.
80–89	Distinguished	Data-driven governance. Measurable improvement. Benchmarked against peers.
90–100	Exemplary	Institutional governance capability. Sector model. Sustained excellence.

GMS as Gate Requirement

Level	Type	GMS Threshold	Note
L1 · Emerging	Signal	0–45	Diagnostic indicator only
L2 · Developing	Signal	45–62	Diagnostic indicator

L3 · Established	Gate	≥ 70	Must be met in a single cycle
L4 · Advanced	Gate	≥ 80	Sustained for two consecutive cycles
L5 · Exemplary	Gate	≥ 90	Sustained for two consecutive cycles

8 Integration Layer

CGMI's Integration layer extends a school's maturity rating into the broader charter ecosystem — connecting schools, authorizers, network partners, and compliance programs under a common governance standard.

Profile	For	Purpose
CGMI-A Authorizer	Charter authorizers	Formally recognize and use CGMI ratings in oversight, renewal, and portfolio management. Portfolio-level maturity distribution and trend reporting.
CGMI-P Partner	CMOs, EMOs, network operators	Portfolio-wide maturity tracking across network schools. Systemic gap identification and network benchmarking. Governance anchor school designation.
CGMI-C Compliance	Schools, state associations, grant programs	Pre-mapped CGMI criteria to CSP grant rubrics, NACSA standards, and state-level requirements. Appraisal reports serve as compliance evidence artifacts.

Integration Designations

Designation	Awarded to	What It Signals
CGMI-A Recognized Authorizer	Charter authorizer	Has formally adopted CGMI-A protocols in oversight and renewal
CGMI-P Recognized Network	CMO / EMO / network operator	Has implemented CGMI-P portfolio governance tracking
CGMI-C Aligned Program	State association / grant program	Has formally mapped program requirements to CGMI criteria
CGMI-CA Certified Appraiser	Individual practitioner	Credentialed to conduct official CGMI Certified Appraisals

Integration Outputs by Appraisal Tier

Tier	Maturity Output	Integration Output
Self-Assessment	Self-attested domain ratings (capped at Level 2)	CGMI-C diagnostic: which compliance frameworks current level satisfies
Guided Appraisal	Maturity Appraisal Report + Level Certificate (capped at Level 4)	CGMI-A evidence package (authorizer-formatted) + CGMI-C compliance exhibit
Certified Appraisal	Official level rating + signed appraiser report (any level; required for Level 5)	Full CGMI-A, CGMI-P, and CGMI-C artifact set — complete integration-ready package

9 Core Design Principles

Staged Model

A school's overall CGMI level equals the lowest of its five domain ratings. The staged model ensures balanced governance capability — strength in one area cannot mask weakness in another. This forces holistic governance improvement across all five dimensions.

Cumulative Gate Requirements

Each level has explicit gate requirements that must all be met — cumulatively — to achieve that level. Gates are behavioral and evidence-based: meeting notice compliance rates, certification completion, GMS thresholds, policy audit status. You cannot skip levels.

Capability Level Profile

In addition to overall level, every appraisal produces a capability profile across all five domains, exposing strengths and advancement targets. A school may be Level 3 overall but Level 4 in Financial Governance — the profile shows this nuance.

Evidence-Based Assessment

CGMI ratings are assigned from objective evidence — meeting records, training completions, policy audit findings, financial data — not from self-assessment questionnaires. This eliminates the primary flaw of all prior governance assessment approaches.

Authorizer Legibility

CGMI ratings map directly to NACSA performance framework principles and CSP rubric sections. Authorizers can understand a school's governance maturity without translation — the framework speaks the language of the charter accountability ecosystem.

Open Specification

CGMI is published as an open specification with a machine-readable JSON schema, a structured public comment process for revisions, and a versioned changelog — the governance infrastructure charter schools have needed but never had.

How CGMI Compares

	CGMI	Board Self-Assessment	General Governance Tools
Evidence-based, behavioral data	✓	✗	~
Charter-school-specific criteria	✓	✗	~
Staged maturity levels (1–5)	✓	✗	✗

Cumulative gate requirements	✓	✗	✗
Domain-level capability profiles	✓	✗	✗
Continuous + formal appraisal tiers	✓	✗	~
Authorizer-legible ratings	✓	~	~
Maps to NACSA & CSP standards	✓	✗	✗
Machine-readable schema (JSON)	✓	✗	✗
Public comment governance process	✓	✗	✗

CGMI · Charter Governance Maturity & Integration

For the full framework specification, JSON schema, and public comment process, visit www.cgmi.institute

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