

How to Start a Charter School in Florida

Florida Department of Education

**Office of Independent Education
and Parental Choice**



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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

A driving force behind Florida’s Charter Schools Movement is to provide an educational experience uniquely different from traditional public schools and to be willing to try bold new ideas to change the way we educate our children.

In our continuing mission to support the growth of quality education choices for Florida’s communities, the Florida Department of Education would like to reach potential charter school developers with information on starting and funding charter schools.

If you have a vision for an academic alternative to the traditional public schools in your community, a commitment to educational excellence, and a willingness to be held to high standards of accountability, then the charter school sector may be the vehicle to make your vision a reality.

*This booklet, **How to Start a Charter School in Florida**, outlines critical steps and resources for the community leaders, concerned parent groups and innovative educators who will bring the next wave of change to Florida education.*

Welcome to the world of Charter Schools—

Sincerely,

Adam Miller
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Disclaimer: The information provided in this booklet is meant to serve as a resource guide. Nothing contained in this booklet can be construed as regulatory in nature.

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS A CHARTER SCHOOL?

A charter school is a public school of choice that is developed by a private, usually nonprofit, group using public funds to serve public school students in a given community. Charter schools are guided by a governing board and operate under a contract (or charter) with their sponsor which frees them from many of the regulations for traditional public schools. Under * [s.1002.33, F.S.](#), the district school board in which the charter school is located is the sponsor, or authorizer. District staff provide support and monitor compliance.

Charter schools may be started by an individual or group of parents, community leaders, teachers, businesses, municipalities, community colleges, or other legal entities organized under the laws of the state.

Charter schools are often designed to target specialized or underserved populations. A charter school may offer a specialized curriculum (such as arts, science or career education), focus on at-risk students, students with disabilities, drop-out prevention, or take an innovative approach to teaching or program design.

While largely free to innovate in program design and delivery, Florida charter schools operate under certain constraints. The charter school must:

- be nonsectarian in its policies, practices and operations
- not charge tuition or fees
- be accountable to its sponsor for its academic and financial performance
- comply with requirements pertaining to: the provision of services to students with disabilities; civil rights; and student health, safety and welfare
- comply with requirements governing public records and public meetings
- maintain all financial records that constitute its accounting system in accordance with current law
- annually conduct a financial audit
- fully participate in the Florida's education accountability program.

TYPES OF CHARTER SCHOOLS

- **New start-ups** – Most charter schools opening in Florida are new start-up schools.
- **Conversion charters** – Conversion charter schools are traditional public schools that have been converted to charter schools. The school must have operated for at least two years as a traditional public school before conversion. Application to convert to a charter school may be

* *Links may be viewed by accessing this document online from the Charter Schools page of the School Choice website:*
WWW.FLORIDASCHOOLCHOICE.ORG

made by a parent, teacher, principal, district school board or school advisory council. The application must be supported by a majority of the teachers and a majority of the parents as demonstrated through the required [ballot process](#). A majority of the parents must participate in the vote. The charter for a conversion charter school must identify the alternative arrangements that will be made to serve current students who do not choose to attend the school after its conversion. Conversion charter schools are not eligible for capital outlay funding if the conversion charter school operates in facilities provided to them by the school district.

- **Charter schools in the workplace** – Charter schools in the workplace are sponsored by local school districts in partnership with a company or business. Such charter schools usually target the children of the employees of the company or business.
- **Charter schools in the municipality** – Charter schools in a municipality are sponsored by local school districts in partnership with a municipality. Such schools enroll students based on a random lottery that involves all of the children of the residents of the municipality and according to the racial/ethnic balance reflective of the community or other public schools in the same school district.
- **Community college charter schools** – Community college charter schools are statutorily authorized when a public community college, in cooperation with the school board or boards within the college’s service area, develops a charter school that offers secondary education and allows students to obtain an associate’s degree upon graduation from high school.
- **Virtual charter schools**– In 2011, legislation was passed permitting the operation of virtual charter schools to provide full-time online instruction to eligible students. A virtual charter school must contract with an approved provider of virtual instruction services in accordance with s. 1002.45, F.S.

THE START-UP PROCESS

Developing and opening a charter school is a long-term commitment. Founders should allow at least two years from vision to reality. (**Appendix A** lays out an approximate timeline for a typical charter school startup.) Building a strong founding group and ensuring sound research, planning and implementation will take considerable time and dedication from all involved.

The process may be divided into the following phases.

1. Vision/Team Building
2. Research and Development
3. Application and Approval
4. Preparing to Open
5. Moving Forward

The considerations, actions and requirements involved in each step are described in the next sections.

PHASE 1: FORMING YOUR VISION, BUILDING YOUR TEAM

GET THE LAY OF THE LAND

Starting a successful charter school requires an in-depth understanding of many issues, along with an enormous degree of commitment. Before starting out, you will want to get a sense of what is involved, both short term—during planning and start-up, and longer term—in successfully operating and growing your school in the years ahead.

To understand the issues, responsibilities and commitment involved, we recommend exploring a variety of resources including those listed below. Once you and your partners have a feel for the undertaking, and you then decide to move forward, you will be returning to many of these resources in greater depth.

Research

The following links will give you a good overview of the major issues and processes involved.

- [FLDOE Charter School page](#) – Provides Florida-specific resources. Study the [statutes and rules](#) relating to charter schools, along with the [TAPs](#) (Technical Assistance Papers) and guidelines on various issues.
- Your [school district](#)'s charter school Web page. Be sure to review the written school board policies on charter schools. If full information is not available online, call the district to learn about their application process, new applicant support and charter processes.
- [National Charter School Resource Center](#) – A comprehensive site with extensive resources for charter school developers and operators.
- [Florida Consortium of Public Charter Schools](#) (FCPCS) – The website of this non-profit association for Florida charter schools provides links and guidance on starting and operating a charter school in Florida.
- [Florida Charter School Alliance](#) (FCSA) - This non-profit association website also provides links and guidance on starting and operating a charter school in Florida.
- Study the websites of successful Florida charter schools.

Network

You can learn a great deal from others involved with charter schools:

- Visit a variety of charter schools. Talk to the principal and others active in the development and running of the school.
 - Attend charter school governing board meetings. They are open to the public.
 - Attend school board meetings when charter school issues are on the agenda.
-

Get Training

Attend conferences and trainings related to charter schools, including:

- The Florida Charter School Conference is held each November.
- New Applicant Orientation Webinar – Held July 2011. The presentation maybe accessed by clicking [here](#).
- New Schools Training—Schools which have applied and are approved or pending must attend training provided by the Department. Training is scheduled in the spring.
- [Governing Board Training](#) – This training is required of all governing board members. Charter developers will find it worthwhile during the planning phase in order to understand the role and responsibilities of the governing board.
- Charter orientation workshops held by some districts for potential charter applicants.
- Other charter-related organization meetings or trainings.

As you and your partners develop an understanding of the process, you will begin to establish a vision for your charter school and build the team that will make it a reality.

FORM YOUR VISION

In order to achieve your vision, you must first define it. Consider the following questions. When you can answer them, you will be ready to create your mission statement.

Why do you want to start a charter school?

1. Who will your school serve? Is there an unmet need among this population?
2. What approach will you use in serving your students? Is your approach grounded in research, a particular academic theme, or an educational philosophy?
3. What are the defining characteristics and values that make your school distinctive and/or innovative?
4. How will your school effectively meet the needs of your community? What results will you deliver that will make your school a good choice for parents?

Your Mission Statement

The mission statement is possibly the most important part of your charter school plan. In one or two sentences, the mission statement must characterize your school's purpose, beliefs and goals. A clear mission statement will help you focus your efforts and build support for your school.

There are many resources on the Web for help in writing effective mission statements. Also take some time to review the mission statements of successful charter schools, posted on their websites.

ASSEMBLE YOUR TEAM

At the start, your charter school may be nurtured by a small group of neighbors, teachers or community members. You may want to include community leaders who can generate revenue and support. However, developing a successful charter school is a complex process which will demand the efforts of

a number of experts. Your founding group may need to work with specialists with expertise in a number of areas including, but not limited to:

- Education law, including federal, state and local laws and policies
- Curriculum & instruction
- Assessment of student achievement
- Special education
- Systems technology
- Educational leadership
- Human resources
- Public school finance
- Accounting
- Management
- Governance
- Grant writing
- Real estate
- Civil engineering/architecture
- Community organizer
- Public relations/marketing/fundraising

WILL A MANAGEMENT COMPANY BE PART OF YOUR TEAM?

Think about whether your school will contract with an education management organization (EMO) or education service provider (ESP). These organizations work under a performance-based contract with the governing board to provide management services to charter schools. There are many such companies to choose from, and they vary widely in their arrangements with the charter school. Some provide only back-office administrative support, while others take a more active role in the operations of the school.

Founding groups should comparison shop. Look at the costs involved, contractual obligations and contingencies, and the nature of the proposed working structure. Also, check the references and history of the organization, especially the past performance of other schools in their portfolio. Consult with your school district about the models you are considering.

EVALUATE FEASIBILITY

Your founding group has developed a vision for your school, and you have identified a strong team to work with you. Now is the time to determine whether you have the expertise, community support, funding and team commitment to be successful. If you have not already done so:

1. Meet with your school district charter school specialists. Discuss your ideas and find out about district expectations and what resources they can provide.
2. Share your vision with community groups; determine community need and level of support.
3. Identify potential funding sources for support during startup and beyond.

If your preliminary research supports moving forward, and your group is committed, it's time to roll up your sleeves and get to work!

PHASE 2: DEVELOPING A PLAN

GET ORGANIZED

The founding group should create a business plan and set up committees to work on each of the areas addressed in the business plan. A detailed business plan will serve several functions. The plan will:

1. provide your founding group with the framework you need to effectively develop your school.
2. provide potential supporters with a clear idea of what you intend to do and how you will accomplish it.
3. pull together the results of your research and design efforts to support the application you will later submit to your sponsor.

CREATE A BUSINESS PLAN

Developing your detailed plan will take extensive work. Consult closely with your team of experts. Get to know the people on your school district's charter school staff. Your business plan should include the following key components:

- **Executive Summary** – A synopsis highlighting the key elements of the business plan, no more than two pages.
- **Mission Statement** – One or two sentences that characterize the school's purpose, beliefs and goals.
- **School Design** – Describe the school, including plans in the following areas:
 - **Instructional focus** – Describe your curriculum and approach, and the ideas upon which they are based. Consider that:
 - Charter schools must participate in the state accountability system including FCAT, so curriculum must align with the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards.
 - Reading must be a primary focus, and the reading program must be based on researched-based methods.
 - **Goals and how they will be achieved.**
 - Consider the K-12 assessment requirements for Florida public schools.
 - What are your school's performance objectives for raising student achievement, and how will progress be measured?
 - What other goals are key to your school's mission?
 - **Governance** – Describe how the school will be overseen.
 - What is the planned composition of the governing board?
 - What other advisory groups will be involved?
 - How will decisions be made?
 - Be aware of [Conflict-of-Interest rules](#) related to charter school governance.

- **Market Analysis** – Will require demographic research. Your plan should:
 - Describe your target students.
 - Provide data on numbers of target students in your area.
 - Analyze your competition, considering the strengths and weakness of the other schools in your target area.
 - Summarize marketing methods, which may include community meetings, door-to-door contact, brochures and posters, TV/radio/print ads, mailings and news coverage.
 - Provide survey results and other evidence of community interest such as letters of intent from parents, or applications.
 - **Management Plan** – Describe how the school will be managed. Include:
 - Organizational chart showing lines of authority for the staff and board
 - Job responsibilities and qualifications for each position. Remember that all teachers must be certified.
 - Positions and resumes of those already on board
 - Roles and qualifications of any subcontractors
 - Role and responsibilities of an educational management organization if selected
 - Fiscal policies and procedures to safeguard funds and discourage fraud
 - Staff recruitment plan
 - Staff training and evaluation policies
 - Parent involvement policies
 - **Operations Plan**
 - Logistics – consider the daily schedule, the annual calendar, student transportation, meals, hall traffic between classes, rest rooms, gym, library and playground usage, before- and after-school activities, and so on.
 - Administration – How will clerical and reporting responsibilities be handled?
 - Physical Plant – How will the facility be managed and maintained?
 - Security – Describe your plans for the safety and security of students, staff and facility.
 - Technology – Describe your plans for the installation, maintenance and management of computers, internet, phones and other electronics.
 - **Facility Plan** – Describe the site and physical plant you are seeking or have selected. Include gross square footage, number and placement of bathrooms, size and accessibility of classrooms, non-academic space, playground, parking, and bus and parent drop-off areas.
 - Needs assessment – Your needs assessment should include a list of the features you seek in your start-up site, considering your school’s design, student ages and numbers, enrollment projections, your resources and your target geographical area.
 - Include a budget describing the costs involved in acquisition, renovation, and operation.
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- Keep in mind that you may open in a less-than-ideal facility, and move on to the state-of-the-art school of your dreams at a later time. In this case, you should create a short-term facility plan for start-up, and a long-term facility plan for when you are ready to move.

For detailed guidance on facility selection, preparation and financing, download [Charter School Facilities: A Resource Guide on Development and Financing](#), published by USCharterSchools.org.

Charter schools are exempt from compliance with the State Requirements for Educational Facilities (SREF), but are required to comply with the [Florida Building Code](#), the fire prevention code, and any local health and safety requirements.

- **Financial Plan** – This should be prepared with your business manager or accountant. You will also want to utilize the [Charter School Revenue Estimate Worksheet](#) which can be found on the Department website. Your local school district finance officer may be able to help with revenue and expense projections.

Your financial plan should describe the financial condition and projections of your organization for the planning period, first year, and long-range through the term of the charter (usually five years). Include:

- Operating budget
- Balance sheet
- Capital budget
- Cash flow spreadsheet
- Identification of funding sources, including per-pupil funds, private individuals, local businesses and organizations, national foundations and federal grants

Review the TAP, [Guidance for Developing and Monitoring Charter School Financial Practices](#), on the School Choice website. See also, [Funding and Financial Management of Florida’s Public Charter Schools](#) for a detailed description of Florida’s public school funding model and an explanation of how state funding is calculated for charters.

- **Supporting Documents** – Include documents referenced in your business plan, such as:
 - Articles of Incorporation
 - Non-profit status
 - By-laws
 - Evidence of insurance
 - Resumes
 - Curriculum summary
 - Founding group list, including background and role of each member

FACILITY OPTIONS

While the dream of many charter school developers may be to build a new, state-of-the-art school facility, the reality is that most schools starting up need to direct their available funds to the more pressing needs of development and operations, with the option of a new school facility as a longer term goal. Some possibilities are:

- Build new, possibly as part of a new residential development
- Modular classrooms
- Surplus district building
- Church building with classrooms (understanding that as a public school, religions symbols and messages may not be displayed during school hours)
- Offices
- Strip mall, former big-box store or other store space

Work with a real estate agent, an architect and your district facilities specialist to get educated about the market, health, safety and other requirements and the costs involved as you evaluate sites.

While your founding group is developing your business plan, you will also be continuing your efforts to grow your community support and identify and recruit the individuals who will eventually serve on your governing board.

PHASE 3: APPLICATION AND APPROVAL PROCESS

PLAN TO START EARLY

It is advisable to start the process of preparing your application early in the year so you have time to present your best possible effort.

Some districts request that the charter planners submit a letter of intent to apply several months prior to the application deadline. It is critical for the applicant to consult with the school district to ensure that all policies and procedures are followed and for support in preparing the application.

Charter applicants are required by law to participate in New Applicant Training provided by the Florida Department of Education, or by a school district offering a Department-approved New Applicant Training Program. These trainings are generally held each summer prior to the annual application deadline. Contact your sponsor or the Department for dates and locations.

Charter school applications are due by close of business on August 1 of the year prior to planned opening, although upon approval, the school may delay opening until the following school year. By law, a school board receives and reviews all charter school applications and, within 60 days, must approve or deny the application, unless a delay is agreed to by both parties. **Appendix B** provides a flow chart of the application and approval process.

STEPS TO APPLICATION AND APPROVAL

Activities for this phase may happen in roughly the following order:

1. Review the [Model Charter School Application](#) and [Evaluation Instrument](#), which are available on the School Choice website. Determine who will be responsible for each section. Consider a professional grant writer to assist in preparing the application.
 2. Notify your sponsor of intent to apply, and ascertain submission requirements.
 3. Access sponsor support. While not required by statute, many sponsors offer:
 - Charter orientation workshops
 - Technical support through one-on-one meetings with district specialists or by phone
 - To review an early draft of the application and provide constructive feedback.
 4. Prepare your application, seek feedback, and make final revisions.
 - Ensure that each section completely, accurately and clearly addresses the question. It is possible that additional information submitted post-deadline will not be accepted.
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- Build in time for a revision stage. Circulate your draft application to specialists and others in the community and carefully consider their feedback in your revisions.
 - Ensure that the format and all submission requirements are followed.
5. Submit the application by August 1, close of business.
 6. Sponsor Review – The sponsor has 60 days to review the application. The review process may include an interview component in order for the committee to request clarification on aspects of the application.
 7. The sponsor’s review committee makes a recommendation to the district school board, which then votes to approve or deny the application. The school board meeting is public, and attendance by applicants is recommended.

Upon approval, you will move on to **Phase 4: Preparing to Open**, described in the next section.

DENIAL

If the school board denies your application, it will provide specific written reasons within 10 calendar days. Upon denial, your group has three choices:

1. You may [appeal](#) if you believe the sponsor did not have good cause to deny the application. You have 30 calendar days to appeal after denial. The appeal is to the State Board of Education and the State Board’s decision is a final action subject to judicial review.
2. You may reapply the following year, using the feedback from the review process to improve your application.
3. You may determine that opening a charter school is not practical for you at this time.

PHASE 4: PREPARING TO OPEN

With your application approved, you and your team will have approximately ten months to prepare to welcome students. During this time, you should continue building strong working relationships with your partners, community, and new personnel, along with district staff who can offer valuable assistance in the successful opening and operation of your charter school.

FORMALIZE YOUR PLANS

- **Form your governing board.** The governing board may include some or all of the founding team members, or its makeup may be entirely different. The function of the governing board is ongoing oversight and policy-making. It is advisable to seek governing board members who have expertise in accounting, management, and education, as well as community and parent members. Best practices suggest a minimum of 5-9 members.
 - **Attend the required Post-Application Training provided by the Department.** Check the website for the training schedule.
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- **Arrange for the required Governing Board Training.** Visit the School Choice website to view [Training Plans Approved by the Florida Department of Education](#).
- **Establish a charter contract.** Upon approval the sponsor and charter school have a total of 135 days to negotiate a contract or charter, which is the legal agreement between the school's governing board and the sponsor. The [Florida Model Contract Format](#), required for use as a template, is available on the School Choice website. You may wish to involve your attorney in negotiating the charter.
- **Establish a formal organization.** You will need to file for many or all of the following: articles of incorporation, [non-profit or 501\(c\)3 status](#), Florida sales tax exemption, fictitious name, federal employer identification number, and the school's MSID number. In addition, the governing board will need to finalize the by-laws and policies and formalize the administrative structure.
- **Develop formal operating agreements** with service providers in areas such as food service, transportation, legal, and so on. Remember that meals for students receiving free or reduced-price breakfast or lunch must meet federal guidelines.
- **Secure startup and ongoing funding.** Apply for the [Florida Public Charter Schools Grant Program Planning and Implementation Grant](#). Locate other sources of state, federal and private funding including donations, loans and grants. Review the [Grant Seeking Resources](#) available from the Office of Grants Management and sign up for their grant opportunity e-mails.
- **Finalize facility plans.** Secure your facility and develop a work schedule to cover renovations, new construction, permits, required inspections, certificate of occupancy, insurance, technology installation and furniture delivery.

THE GOVERNING BOARD

The charter school governing board is the entity legally responsible for the operation and continuing oversight of the school. The governing board authorizes payments, hires, enters into contracts with the district and other entities, applies for grants and other funding, and is held responsible for compliance with charter school laws and requirements.

Board members should possess the skills, knowledge, integrity and commitment to carry out their roles and responsibilities honestly and effectively. Members are typically unpaid, and must undergo a background screening and adhere to Conflict of Interest restrictions.

Every board member must undergo the required governance training within 90 days of appointment, and take a refresher course every three years.

APPLY FOR THE FLORIDA PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS GRANT

The Florida Public Charter Schools Grant Program (CSP) is a competitive grant funded through the US Department of Education. It is a three-year flow-through grant awarded by states to new charter schools for planning, program design, and initial implementation of the charter school.

The Florida Department of Education administers the CSP Planning and Implementation grant through a request for proposals (RFP) process. This competitive process is typically initiated in the fall when the Department releases the RFP. Eligible applicants will have 30-90 days to complete and submit the application.

In order to be eligible, the school must have an approved application and must meet the federal definition of a charter school found in section 5210 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). To learn more, please review the [Florida Public Charter Schools Grant Program](#) on the School Choice website.

PREPARE FOR OPENING DAY

Develop an action plan and timeline for all that must take place prior to the first day of school, to include, but not limited to:

- Develop a plan to recruit, hire and retain quality administrators, faculty and staff.
- Plan orientation and professional development.
- Develop the school calendar – academic and administrative.
- Create systems for accounting, staff benefits, payroll, banking, purchasing, transportation, food services, legal services, health services, technology, student records management, security and emergency management.
- Establish enrollment and lottery procedures.
- Conduct recruitment activities designed to reach your target students.
- Write employee handbook and student code of conduct.
- Purchase supplies, equipment and instructional materials.
- Prepare the offices, classrooms and other areas.
- Finalize curriculum and scheduling.

PHASE 5: GOING FORWARD

Once your new school has opened its doors, and your first students have settled in, a round of congratulations is certainly in order. However, as exciting, complicated and challenging as the journey has been, the work is far from over. In fact, now the real work of operating and growing a successful charter school is just beginning.

Charter schools are accountable to their students and their community to provide a high quality education in the manner described in their application and their charter. It is the responsibility of the sponsor to monitor the charter school and to verify that the academic and fiscal practices of the charter school are appropriate and in compliance with the law and with their charter.

WORK TOWARDS RENEWAL FROM DAY ONE

Study your charter. What goals, actions and processes have you agreed to? Develop and follow a plan to ensure timely and appropriate performance in each area. The [Building Charter School Quality Project](#) has developed performance management resources available online.

Form an Accountability Committee, making sure the members represent the entire school community. The Principal, a teacher, a board member, a parent, and a student will all contribute greatly to the committee, guiding the use of policy and data in decisions.

Work with your sponsor to understand district processes and policies as they apply to charter school monitoring. Consult regularly with your sponsor for assistance, be responsive to sponsor requests, keep the lines of communication open, and resolve issues promptly.

Academic Accountability

- Academic accountability must be demonstrated through annual state assessments. Charter schools are evaluated and assigned a school grade using the same standards and criteria as other public schools, and must comply with Differentiated Accountability (DA) requirements.
- Charter schools that fail to meet the requirements for student performance stated in the charter may be subject to district intervention, termination or non-renewal.

Financial Accountability

Charter schools must:

- Annually submit the [Charter School Accountability Report](#)
- Retain the services of an independent auditor to annually conduct an audit (See the TAP, [Auditor Selection Process](#))
- Submit [monthly financial statements](#) to the sponsor
- Require all members of the governing board to undergo [Governance Training](#) every three years

Charter schools are required to develop a corrective action plan if the sponsor identifies a deteriorating financial condition.

Charter schools that violate law, fail to meet academic or financial standards, or fail to adhere to the terms of their charter face possible termination or non-renewal. A charter school may be immediately terminated if the sponsor believes health, safety or welfare of the students is in jeopardy or determines other good cause.

Accreditation

Accreditation from the [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools](#) (SACS CASI) is recommended. Accreditation will help to establish the quality of your school and may expedite eligibility for capital outlay funding.

CAPITAL OUTLAY

Capital outlay funds are available to assist Florida public schools, including charter schools, with facilities costs. For a charter school to be eligible to receive capital outlay, the school must have been in operation for at least three years, or be part of an extended feeder pattern for a school currently receiving capital outlay, or be accredited by the Commission on Schools of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI).

In addition, the school must demonstrate financial stability and satisfactory student achievement, and operate in a facility not provided by the sponsor.

For information on how capital outlay funds may be applied, review the TAP, [Uses of Capital Outlay Funds for Charter Schools](#), found on the School Choice website.

CHARTER SCHOOL LINKS AND RESOURCES

Links may be viewed by accessing this document online from the Charter Schools page of the School Choice website: WWW.FLORIDASCHOOLCHOICE.ORG.

CHARTER SCHOOL STATUTES

[Section 1002.33](#) - establishes charter schools. Under this law, private entities may enter into charters with school boards to provide educational services to district students. State universities may grant charters to lab schools created under [s.1002.32](#). This law provides information on the application process and review, charter school requirements, charter funding, exemptions from statute, etc.

[Section 1002.345](#) - establishes criteria and requirements for charter schools experiencing a deteriorating financial condition or a state of financial emergency.

[Section 1013.62](#) - establishes charter school eligibility requirements, procedures, and uses for capital outlay funding.

CHARTER SCHOOL STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION RULES

[Appeals Rule, SBE 6A-6.0781](#) - establishes procedures for appealing a district school board decision to deny an application for a charter school.

[Applicant Training Standards Rule, SBE 6A-6.0785](#) - establishes a procedure by which sponsors may require charter applicants to attend training provided by the sponsor in lieu of the training provided by the Department.

[Capital Outlay Rule, SBE 6A-2.0020](#) - clarifies eligibility requirements for capital outlay funding by defining expanded feeder chain and the method for determining satisfactory student achievement.

[Conversion Charter Ballot Process SBE 6A-6.0787](#) - establishes a procedure by which parents and teachers of public school may vote to submit an application for conversion to charter status.

[Governance Training Rule, SBE 6A-6.0784](#) - establishes procedures for the approval of charter school governance training submitted to the Florida Department of Education by potential training providers. Participation in approved governance training is a statutory requirement for the governing bodies of all charter schools in Florida.

[Model Forms Rule, SBE 6A-6.0786](#) - provides the required model application format for potential charter school developers, an evaluation instrument for sponsors, and a model charter contract format.

[Monthly Financial Statement and Financial Condition Rule, SBE 6A-1.0081](#) - establishes requirements related to the monthly financial statement that a charter school must complete and submit to its sponsor and establishes procedures for developing financial recovery and corrective action plans and determining a deteriorating financial condition.

[Notice Requirements for Performance Data, SBE 6A-6.0788](#) - outlines the manner in which charter schools will provide student performance data to required recipients.

CHARTER SCHOOL RULES IN DEVELOPMENT

The Department has developed new rules and amended existing rules related to charter schools. The draft text for each rule is available below:

[6A-6.0781: Procedures for Appealing a District School Board Decision Denying Application for Charter School](#)

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PAPERS & GUIDANCE

Charter School Program Grant

[Administrative Fees](#)

[Pre-K Grant Awards](#)

[Subgrantee Conflict of Interest Technical Assistance Paper](#)

Financial/Funding

[Financial Condition Rule Training \(Webex\)](#)

[Guidance for Developing & Monitoring Financial Practices](#)

[Corrective Action/Financial Recovery Plan Worksheet](#)

[Charter School Financial Recovery Plan Guidelines](#)

[Funding and Financial Management Manual for Florida's Charter Schools](#)

[Uses of Capital Outlay Funds for Charter Schools](#)

[Auditor Selection Process](#)

State and Federal Requirements

[Homeless Student Transportation](#)

[Title 1 Handbook](#)

[Asbestos Regulations & Charter Schools](#)
[Charter School Improvement Plans](#)
[Charter School Statute - HB 7103](#)
[DOE Staff Information Data Base Reporting Requirements 2006-07](#)
[National School Lunch and Breakfast Program](#)
[Florida Next Generation Sunshine State Standards](#)
[Florida Sunshine Law](#)
[Ethics in Education Act](#)

Response to Intervention (RtI)

[Florida Response to Intervention Homepage](#) Includes links to Florida's RtI Implementation Plan and Introductory Online Training Course.
[Problem Solving and Response to Intervention Project](#)
[Response to Intervention Teaching Learning Connections Project](#)
[Florida's Positive Behavior Support Project](#)

Merit Award Program

The Merit Award Program was developed by the 2007 Florida Legislature by revising the guidelines for teacher performance pay in Florida. Relevant links related to the program are included below. For more information, visit [Just for Teachers](#).

[Section 1012.225, F.S. Merit Award Program for Instructional Personnel and School-Based Administrators](#)
[Section 1012.2251, F.S., End-of-course examinations for Merit Award Program](#)
[Rule 6A-7.0100 F.A.C., Merit Award Program for Instructional Personnel and School-Based Administrators](#)
[Rule 6A-5.065 F.A.C., Florida Educator Accomplished Practices](#)
[Florida Performance Pay Guidance 2007/2008 and Beyond](#)
[MAP Compliance Template](#)
[MAP Compliance Checklist](#)

Transportation

Charter Schools Transportation Resource Guide

[Memo](#)
[Attachment 1](#)
[Attachment 2](#)

2008 Inspection Manual/Study Guides
[TAN T-09-06 - 2008 Inspection Manual](#)
[T-05-05 - 2003 Re-certification Study Guide](#)

[2008 Re-certification Study Guide](#)
[2008 Table of Changes](#)
[2008 Florida Bus Safety Inspection Manual](#)

ADDITIONAL FLDOE RESOURCES

[FCAT](#)
[School Grades](#)
[Differentiated Accountability](#)
[Just Read, Florida!](#)
[School Improvement](#)
[Charter School Facilities](#)
[Facilities—Capital Outlay](#)
[Educator Certification](#)
[Sunshine Connections](#)
[Financial and Program Cost Accounting and Reporting for Florida Schools \(Redbook\)](#)
[Charter School Revenue Estimate Worksheet and Instructions](#)

FLDOE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CONTACTS

Office Name	website	Phone
Assessment and School Performance	http://www.fldoe.org/asp/	(850) 245-0513
Differentiated Accountability	http://www.flbsi.org/DA/index.htm	(850) 245-0509
Educational Facilities/Capital Outlay	http://www.fldoe.org/edfacil/	(850) 245-0494
Educator Certification	http://www.fldoe.org/edcert/	(800) 445-6739
Exceptional Student Education	http://www.fldoe.org/ese/	(850) 245-0475
Educator Recruitment, Development & Retention	http://www.fldoe.org/profdev/	(850) 245-0435
Family & Community Outreach	http://www.fldoe.org/family/	(850) 245-0847
Food & Nutrition	http://www.freshfromflorida.com/divisions/fnw/	(850) 245-9963
Funding and Financial Reporting	http://www.fldoe.org/fefp/	(850) 245-0405
Instructional Materials and Library Media	http://www.fldoe.org/bii/instruct_mat/	(850) 245-0425
Just Read Florida!	http://www.justreadflorida.com/	(850) 245-0503
Safe Schools	http://www.fldoe.org/safeschools/	(850) 245-0416
Professional Practices Services	http://www.fldoe.org/edstandards/	(850) 245-0438
School Improvement	http://www.flbsi.org/	(850) 245-0426
Title 1	http://www.fldoe.org/bsa/title1/	(850) 245-9939
Transportation Management	http://www.fldoe.org/transportation/	(850) 245-9795

CHARTER SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONS AND RESOURCES

Organizations

[National Alliance for Public Charter Schools](#)
[National Charter Schools Resource Center](#)
[Florida Consortium of Public Charter Schools](#)
[Florida Charter School Alliance](#)
[National Resource Center on Charter School Finance and Governance](#)
[Building Charter School Quality Project](#)
[CREDO National Charter School Study](#)
[National Charter Schools Institute](#)
[National Association of Charter School Authorizers \(NACSA\)](#)
[The Walton Family Foundation](#)

Publications

[Innovations in Education: Successful Charter Schools](#), published by the US Department of Education
[Primer on Implementing Special Education in Charter Schools](#), published by the Special Education Technical Assistance for Charter Schools Project
[The Colorado Charter School Handbook](#)
[Paving a New Path: A Guidebook for Illinois Charter Public School Development](#)

Charter School Board University: An Introduction to Effective Charter School Governance, Brian L. Carpenter, Ph.D., 2007

Charter Schools: Creating Hope and Opportunity for American Education, Joe Nathan, The Jossey-Bass Education Series, 1998 (Paperback)

Developing a Private or Charter School: The A to Z planning of a successful school (CD-ROM) by David W. Champagne, Breut Goldman, Richard Goldman, Phyllis M. Olmstead

Free to Learn Lessons from Model Charter Schools, Lance T. Izumi, Pacific Research Institute, 2005 (Paperback)

How to Create Alternative, Magnet, & Charter Schools That Work, by Robert D. Barr and William Parrett, National Educational Service, 1997 (Paperback)

On the Journey to Open a New School: One Step at a Time, Brenda J. Travis, 2005 (Paperback)

Timetable for Charter School Start-up

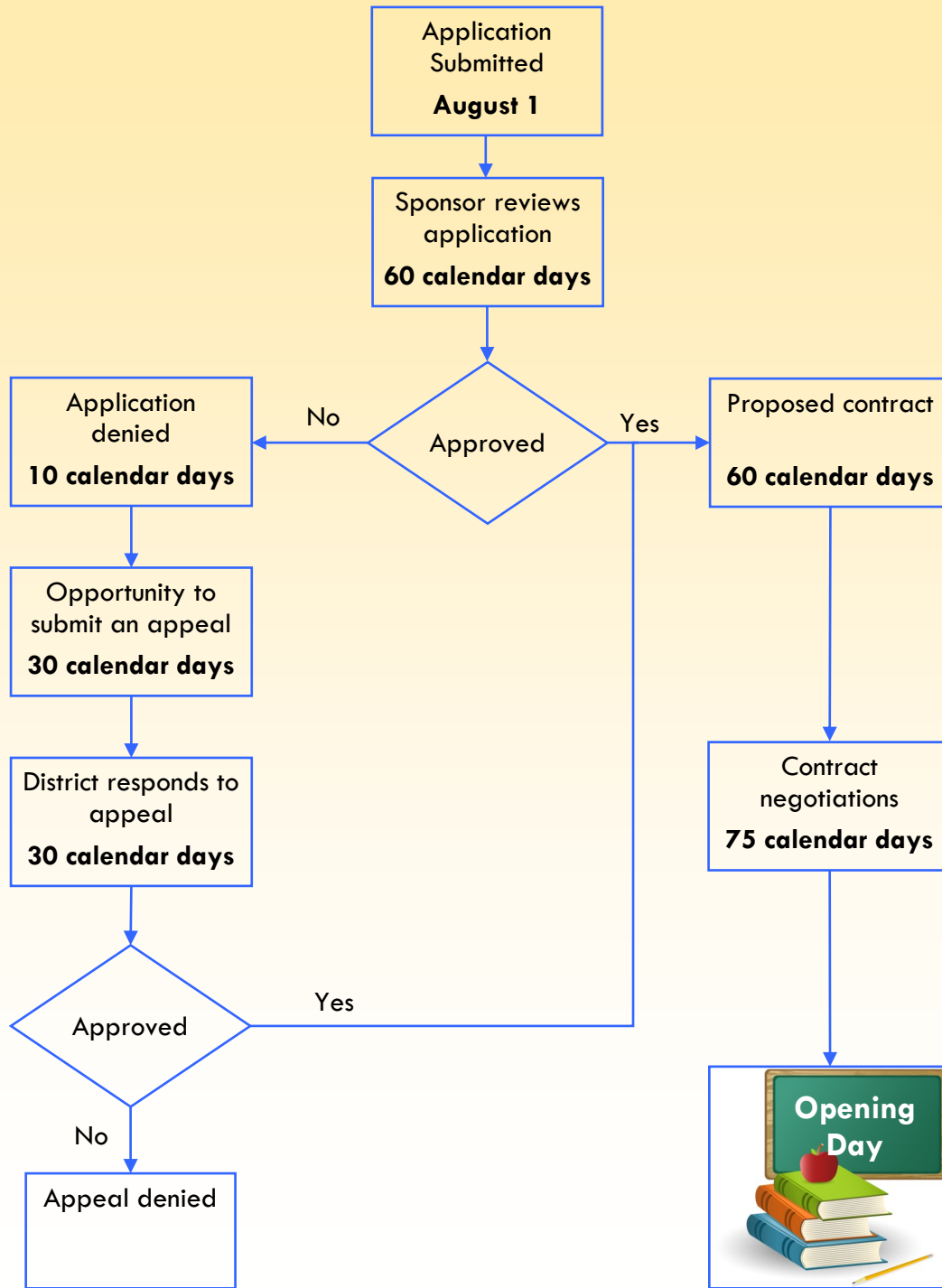
Two year Process Overview

Appendix A

	Vision/Team Building 4 months August-November	Development 5 months December-April	Application and Approval 6 months May-October	Preparing to Open 11 months November-August	Moving Forward Ongoing August – Renewal
Who	<input type="checkbox"/> Founder and allies	<input type="checkbox"/> Founding Board <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor	<input type="checkbox"/> Founding Board <input type="checkbox"/> EMO/ESP if applicable <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor <input type="checkbox"/> DOE Charter Schools Office	<input type="checkbox"/> Governing Board <input type="checkbox"/> EMO/ESP if applicable <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor <input type="checkbox"/> DOE Charter Schools Office	<input type="checkbox"/> Governing Board <input type="checkbox"/> EMO/ESP if applicable <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor <input type="checkbox"/> DOE Charter Schools Office
What	<input type="checkbox"/> Research statutes, rules and policies at the federal, state and local level <input type="checkbox"/> Visit your local public schools and successful charter schools <input type="checkbox"/> Consult with district charter specialists <input type="checkbox"/> Survey the community to determine need and level of support <input type="checkbox"/> Define mission and vision <input type="checkbox"/> Assemble Founding Board to assist in design and planning <input type="checkbox"/> Identify funding sources <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate feasibility	<input type="checkbox"/> Create a detailed action plan <input type="checkbox"/> Identify possible facilities & costs <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct a market analysis <input type="checkbox"/> Estimate enrollment and staffing levels <input type="checkbox"/> Develop financial plan and budget <input type="checkbox"/> Develop school design, curriculum and instruction plan <input type="checkbox"/> Gather community support <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to consult district charter specialists <input type="checkbox"/> Research and decide on interest in EMO/ESP.	<input type="checkbox"/> Attend district trainings <input type="checkbox"/> Draft application <input type="checkbox"/> If permitted, submit draft application to Sponsor for feedback <input type="checkbox"/> Make final revisions <input type="checkbox"/> Submit application by deadline and participate in requested interviews or requests for clarification <input type="checkbox"/> Apply for nonprofit status <input type="checkbox"/> Recruit Governing Board members	<input type="checkbox"/> Upon Sponsor approval: <input type="checkbox"/> Work with Sponsor to develop a contract <input type="checkbox"/> Formalize organization <input type="checkbox"/> Apply for CSP Startup Grant and other funding <input type="checkbox"/> Attend Post-Application Training <input type="checkbox"/> Board Governance Training <input type="checkbox"/> Review and finalize bylaws & policies <input type="checkbox"/> Market the school <input type="checkbox"/> As opening approaches: <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare facility <input type="checkbox"/> Recruit, hire & train administration, faculty and staff <input type="checkbox"/> Create systems for administrative functions <input type="checkbox"/> Acquire equipment, supplies, instructional materials <input type="checkbox"/> Develop academic calendar, class schedules	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing responsibilities: <input type="checkbox"/> Academic accountability <input type="checkbox"/> Financial accountability <input type="checkbox"/> Professional development <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising/marketing <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain strong relationships among community, Governing Board members, EMO/ESP, Sponsor staff, school staff, parents & students
Requirements Deadlines Events	<input type="checkbox"/> * Florida Charter School Conference - November		<input type="checkbox"/> August 1 application deadline <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor has 60 days to review	<input type="checkbox"/> Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Post-Application Training <input type="checkbox"/> Governance Training <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor requirements <input type="checkbox"/> * Florida Charter School Conference - November	<input type="checkbox"/> Monthly financial reports <input type="checkbox"/> Annual Independent Audit <input type="checkbox"/> Annual Report and Survey <input type="checkbox"/> State Assessments <input type="checkbox"/> Governance Training <input type="checkbox"/> Florida Charter School Conference - November
* Optional					

Appendix B

Charter Approval Flowchart





FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



*Improving K-12 Educational
Choice Options*

OFFICE OF INDEPENDENT EDUCATION AND PARENTAL CHOICE

325 West Gaines Street, Suite 1044
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400

Toll-free: 800-447-1636

Phone: 850-245-0502

Fax: 850-2450875

E-mail: Charterschools@fldoe.org

WWW.FLORIDASCHOOLCHOICE.ORG

**Revised 2012 by the Florida Department of Education,
Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice**