

Charter School Application

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Pennsylvania
Department of Education

**COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

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Charter School Requirements and Application

Introduction

This application format serves as a tool for charter applicants and school boards. Charter School applications are due to the district school board on November 15 of the year preceding the anticipated opening. A review of charter school research and literature and the practices of the states that have charter schools, reveals that planning for charter schools should have the following components:

- I. School Design**
- II. Needs Assessment**
- III. Description of Founding/Management Team**
- IV. Finance and Facility**
- V. Implementation and Administration**
- VI. Charter Template**

Your response to the six components may serve as the charter school's plan as you develop your model. [Section 1719-A of Charter School Law](#) outlines the following 17 specific points that the charter application must address. To fulfill all requirements, please complete all items in each section. Keep these points in mind as you address the six broad components of the charter school plan.

Application Requirements

1. The identification of the charter applicant.
2. The name of the proposed charter school.
3. The grade or age levels served by the school.
4. The proposed governance structure of the charter school, including a description and method for the appointment or election of the Board of Trustees.
5. The mission and measurable education goals of the charter school, the curriculum to be offered, and the methods of assessing whether students are meeting educational goals. Charter school students shall be required to meet the same testing and academic performance standards established by law and regulations applicable to public school students. ([22 Pa. Code Chapter 4, Academic Standards and Assessment](#))
6. The admission policy and criteria for evaluating student admission, which shall comply with the requirements of the Charter School Law.
7. The procedures that will be used regarding the suspension or expulsion of pupils. Said procedures shall comply with [Section 1318 of the Public School Code](#).
8. The information on the manner in which community groups will be involved in the charter school planning process.

9. The financial plan for the charter school and the provisions that will be made for auditing the school under provisions of [Section 437 of the Public School Code](#).
10. The procedures that shall be established to review complaints of parents regarding the operation of the charter school.
11. A description and an address for the physical facility in which the charter school will be located and the ownership thereof and any lease arrangements.
12. The proposed school calendar for the charter school, including the length of the school day and school year consistent with the provisions of [Section 1502 of the Public School Code](#).
13. The proposed faculty and a professional development plan for the faculty of a charter school.
14. Whether any agreements have been entered into or plans developed with the local school district regarding participation of the charter school students in extracurricular activities within the school district. No school district of residence shall prohibit a student of a charter school from participating in any extracurricular activity of that school district of residence: provided that the student is able to fulfill all of the requirements of participation in such activity and the charter school does not provide the same extracurricular activity.
15. A report of criminal history record, pursuant to [Section 111 of the Public School Code](#), for all individuals who shall have direct contact with students.
16. An official clearance statement regarding child injury or abuse from the Department of Public Welfare as required by [Section 111 of Public School Code](#) (relating to background checks for employment in schools) for all individuals who shall have direct contact with students.
17. How the charter school will provide adequate liability and other appropriate insurance for the charter school, its employees and the board of trustees of the charter school.

Activity	Date	Description
Issuance of Charter Application Instructions	September 17th	<i>Application available on CSO website</i>
Informational Meetings	September – October	<i>Meetings held via webinar and/or prospective applicants</i>
Letters of Intent (LOIs) due	October 15th	<i>LOIs submitted to CSO</i>
Application submission deadline	November 15th by 5pm EST	<i>Completed applications submitted to CSO</i>
Public Hearings		<i>Hearings are scheduled in accordance with the Charter School Law</i>
Decisions on Applications	No earlier than 45 days and no later than 75 days after the first hearing is held, unless otherwise agreed to be the parties.	<i>The Board of Education grants or denies new charter applications at a public meeting</i>

Charter School Application Fact Sheet

This application fact sheet is intended to be a “finger-tip” summary of your application. The information furnished below must be an accurate representation of the application and must correspond to the information provided in the body of the application.

Proposed Charter School Name (Must Include “Charter School” in the Title):

Proposed Charter School Location

Address:

City/Town:

Zip Code:

County:

Intermediate Unit:

Federal Employer Identification Number:

Primary Contact Person

First:

Middle:

Last:

Organization:

City:

State:

Zip Code:

Telephone:

Fax Number:

Email:

Proposed initial charter term:

Proposed School Schedule:

Projected school opening date (MM/DD/YYYY):

Length of school day: AM to PM Length of school year: days

Attach copy of school calendar and identify hours of the school operation, as per [Section 1715-A\(9\)](#).

Indicate Number of Representatives per Group

Founding Coalition

Group	Number of Representatives
Parents	
Teachers	
Business Partners	
Community Based Organizations	
Museums	
Higher Education	
Other Group - Identify:	

Grade and Age Ranges

Group	Grade/Age Range
Elementary	
Secondary	
Age of Kindergarten	
Age of Beginners	

Grades Educated

K 1 2 3 4 5
6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Projected Student Enrollment Year 1-5

Year	Enrollment
1st Year	
2nd Year	
3rd Year	
4th Year	
5th Year	
Total Number of Teachers	

Does the charter applicant have an existing retirement system?

Yes No

If, yes, what retirement system?

Does the applicant group presently have access to a facility suitable for the charter school?

Yes No

Signature of Primary Contact

Date

I. School Mission and Vision

1. Mission and Vision

- A. Briefly describe the core philosophy or underlying purpose of the proposed school.
- B. What is your overarching vision of the school?
- C. What is the academic focus of the proposed charter school?

Explanation: Define a concise plan for an innovative public school that will lead to improved educational performance and consistency between mission and the educational programs. The plan should be articulated to achieve improved performance.

2. Academic Programs

- A. Describe the proposed educational program of the school, providing an overview of the areas academic program.

3. Measurable Goals and Objectives

- A. What are the school's measurable academic goals and objectives to promote student learning?
- B. What are the school's measurable non-academic goals and objectives to promote student performance?

*Explanation: Develop clear, **measurable** goals with objectives for building the educational program that reflects a commitment to academic excellence for all students.*

4. Educational Programs

- A. Describe the curriculum and content in all subject areas.
- B. What teaching methods will be used? How will this pedagogy enhance student learning?
- C. How your school will meet the educational needs of diverse learners.
Describe effective teaching methods, curriculum, and a specific plan to meet the needs of the following groups of students that are consistent with the mission of your school.
 - i. Special Education- List any support staff and related service providers that might be **employed directly by the charter school or provided under contract**, who will provide required support for students with disabilities receiving special education.
 - ii. English Language
 - iii. Gifted

5. Student Evaluation and Accountability

- A. Describe plans to evaluate student academic and non-academic performance.
- B. How will student growth and development toward the school's overall learning goals and objectives be measured?
- C. Describe how student assessments will be used to improve student achievement and attain the stated learning objectives.

Explanation: Describe your commitment to high academic standards for all students; well- developed evaluation program for either school-developed or standardized testing; use of the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), Pennsylvania Alternate School Assessment (PASA), and/or Keystone Exams; and compliance with applicable auditing requirements

6. School Accountability

- A. What methods of self-assessment or evaluation will be used to ensure that the school is meeting its stated mission, goals and objectives?
- B. How do you plan to hold your school accountable to parents of the children attending your school?
- C. Describe procedures established to review complaints of parents regarding operation of the charter school
- D. Discuss your plan for regular review of school budgets and financial records.
- E. Describe your system for maintaining school records and disseminating information as required under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- F. Describe your system for maintaining accurate student enrollment information as required under Section [Charter School Law](#), Enrollment and Notification.

7. Leadership / Teacher Accountability

- A. **School Leader/Principal:** Identify key qualifications, certifications, and responsibilities for this role and explain how the school leader role will be evaluated and held accountable for school performance.
- B. **Leadership Team:** Identify and describe the responsibilities and qualifications of the school's leadership/management team beyond the school leader/principal.
- C. **Recruitment of Teaching Staff:** Outline the proposed charter school's procedures for identifying, recruiting, hiring, and dismissing qualified and appropriately certified school personnel, including conducting all federal and state required criminal and child abuse background checks. Response must address:
 - i. Any strategic partnerships the proposed charter school will establish to aid in talent identification, recruitment, and/or hiring.

- ii. How all instructional and support positions will be staffed (via direct employment, shared services, contractual services, volunteer or student employment, etc).
- iii. How the proposed charter school will maintain a certified teaching staff level of 75% or above and which, if any, positions are expected to be staffed by uncertified personnel, if known, and how.

D. Leadership/Staff Development: Describe the applicant's plan for training, supervising, supporting, and developing staff. Response must also address:

- i. How the proposed charter school will build human capital within its staff, the types of professional learning opportunities to be provided for educators and leaders, how teachers will be supervised and supported, and opportunities provided for participation in peer observation, collaboration, and/or professional learning communities.
- ii. How professional development will align with the school's mission as well as with the proposed curriculum and how, if at all, professional development will be tailored to specific individuals/roles or subject/grade levels.
- iii. The goals of the professional development program for teachers and how the success of this program be measured.
- iv. Describe the process for improvement and intervention for teachers and leaders who need additional supports.

E. Leadership/Staff Evaluation: Explain how the proposed charter school will evaluate the performance of the school leader and the faculty. Response must address:

- i. The schedule of instructional staff observations, frequency and nature of feedback and coaching, and the method for evaluation. Include information about any guiding frameworks and how data will be used in the teacher evaluation process.
- ii. How the school would handle unsatisfactory instructional or operational staff performance.
- iii. How the school will plan for leadership and teacher changes and turnover.

8. School Community

- A. **Targeted Community Needs:** Identify the targeted community of the proposed charter school and identify any enrollment preference for students residing in a specific catchment area/zip code/neighborhood or matriculating from a particular feeder school. Describe the nature and extent of parent involvement in the school's mission.
- B. **Local Resident and Stakeholders Needs & Priorities:** Identify the steps taken to identify and assess the educational needs and priorities of residents and stakeholders from the neighborhood where the proposed charter school will be located. Response should address the feedback received from community and civic leaders, local school leaders, local business operators, and other stakeholders.
- C. **Community Partnerships:** Describe the capacity in which community agencies or other entities will work with the proposed charter school. Identify community organizations and/or community leaders that have committed to providing programming or services to students at the school.
- D. **Community Support:** Describe the extent to which community members and residents support the proposed charter school.
- E. **Demand from Parents/Guardians/Families:** Describe the extent to which parents/guardians/families are demanding the proposed charter school.

Explanation: Describe expectations of family members (or guardians) to be active participants in their children's education and the integration plan of the school to collaborate with other community organizations.

9. Extra-curricular activities (athletics, publications and organizations)

- A. Describe the program of extracurricular activities planned for the charter school.

Note: Charter schools shall be permitted, if otherwise qualified, to be members of the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association.

- B. Describe whether any agreements have been entered into or plans developed with the local school district regarding participation of the charter school students in extracurricular activities within the school district.

Explanation: Identify organized program of activities that complements the mission of the charter school and the similar programs in the school district of students' residence.

II. Need Assessment

1. Statement of Need

- A. Why is there a need for this type of school?
- B. Explain why the charter school model is an appropriate vehicle to address this need.

Explanation: Provide recognition of potential opportunities to improve service and expand choices for students and parents.

2. School Demographics

- A. What are the school's enrollment projections for the first five years? What is the school's ultimate enrollment goal? What grades will be served? What is the age of kindergarten and age of beginner students? How many students are expected to be in each grade or grouping?
- B. Describe the community or region where the school will be located.
- C. Why was this location selected? Are there other locations suitable to the needs and focus of the school?
- D. Describe any unique demographic characteristics of the student population to be served, including primary languages spoken.

Explanation: Provide a description of the students to be served and the community in which the school will be located.

3. District Relations/Evidence of Support

- A. What efforts have you made to notify the district(s) from which your charter school would draw students?
- B. What efforts will be implemented to maintain a collaborative relationship with school districts?

Note: Letters of intent must be sent to all school districts from which the charter school could reasonably expect to draw students.

- C. Convey the scope of community backing for the proposed charter school and its founding coalition. Document community support among teachers, parents, students, community members, institutional leaders and others through the use of letters of support, surveys, or other tangible means.

Explanation: Document efforts to foster open communications with local school districts; evidence that the founders inspire the confidence of their targeted community; evidence that the program provides an attractive educational alternative to students and parents, and evidence that the breadth of community support extends beyond the core group of founders.

III. Description of Founding /Management Team

1. Profile of Founding Coalition

- A. Describe the makeup of the group or partnership that is working together to apply for a charter, including the names of the founders, their background and experiences, and references for each.
- B. Discuss how the group came together, as well as any partnership arrangements with existing schools, educational programs, businesses, non-profits, or any other entities or groups.
- C. Include any plans for further recruitment of founders or organizers of the school.
- D. Provide information on the manner in which community groups are involved in the charter school planning process.

Explanation: Describe a group that is composed of people with a range of professional skills capable of the organizational, financial, pedagogical, legal and other skills required to operate a functioning public school.

2. Governance

- A. Describe the proposed management organization of the school, including the following requirement:
 - i. An affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the Board of Trustees of the charter school, duly recorded, showing how each member voted, shall be used in order to take action on the following subjects:
 - a. School calendar (must include 990 hours or 180 days of instruction for secondary students [grades 7-12] and 900 hours or 180 days for elementary students [grades 1-6].
 - b. School cannot be kept on any Saturday for the purpose of ordinary instruction, except when Monday is fixed by the board of school directors as the weekly holiday, or on Sunday, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Christmas, Thanksgiving, the First of January and up to five additional days designated as local holidays in the adopted school calendar by the board of school directors as official local school district holidays, nor shall any school be kept open in any district during the time of holding the teachers' institute for such district.
 - c. Adopting textbooks
 - d. Appointing or dismissing charter school administrators
 - e. Adopting the annual budget
 - f. Purchasing or selling of land

- g. Locating new buildings or changing the locations of old ones
- h. Creating or increasing any indebtedness
- i. Adopting courses of study
- j. Designating depositories for school funds
- k. Entering into contracts of any kind where the amount involved exceeds \$200
- l. Fixing salaries or compensation of administrators, teachers, or other employees of the charter school.
- m. Entering into contracts with and making appropriations to an intermediate unit, school district or Area Vocational/Technical School for the charter's proportionate share of the cost of services provided or to be provided by the foregoing entities.
 - i. How will the Board of Trustees be selected?
 - ii. What steps will be taken to maintain continuity between the founding coalition's vision and the Board of Trustees?
 - iii. Describe the roles and responsibilities of the Board.
 - iv. What steps will be taken to facilitate a productive relationship between administrators and teachers?
 - v. Discuss the nature of parental and student involvement in decision- making matters where appropriate.
 - vi. Submit copies of the school's by-laws, contracts and other documents required by pending charter school legislation or applicable law. The requirements for the bylaws follow:
- n. The bylaws must contain a provision for "failure to organize or neglect of duty". Specifically, the bylaws must outline a removal procedure for the failure of a board member to perform his or her duties as outlined in the Charter School Law.
- o. No board member shall as a private citizen, engage in any business transaction with the charter school of which he or she is a trustee, be employed in any capacity by the charter school of which he or she is a trustee, or receive from such charter school any pay for services rendered to the charter school.
- p. A charter school Board of Trustees shall have a designated treasurer who shall receive all funds, including local, state and federal funds, and privately donated funds. The treasurer shall also make payments out of the same on proper orders approved by the Board of Trustees,

signed by the president or vice president of the Board. The treasurer may pay out such funds on orders that have been properly signed without the approval of the Board first having been secured for the payment of amounts owing under any contracts, which shall previously have been approved by the Board, and by which prompt payment, the charter will receive a discount or other advantage.

- q. Procedures for dismissal of an employee must be contained in the bylaws.
 - i. Submit board members' names, addresses, phone numbers and resumes.

Explanation: Describe the effective governance model; consistency with the mission; clearly defined roles of the Board of Trustees; teacher, student and parent input in school decision- making; and the well-developed, viable management structure.

IV. Finance and Facility

1. Financing

- A. Develop a preliminary startup and operating budget. Applicants are to use the guidance provided in the [Manual of Accounting and Financial Reporting for Pennsylvania LEAs](#) to create those budgets. Develop a purchasing procedure that addresses a competitive way to purchase goods and services.

Note: For additional financing procedures see [Section 1725-A of Charter School Law](#).

- i. What fund raising efforts have occurred and/or are planned to generate capital or to supplement the per pupil allocations?
- ii. Describe the implementation of the following required financial procedures: The treasurer of the charter shall deposit the funds belonging to the charter school in a depository approved by the board and shall, at the end of each month, make a report to the charter board of the amount of funds received and disbursed by him or her during the month. All deposits of charter school funds by the charter treasurer shall be made in the name of the charter school. The Board of Trustees of a charter school shall invest charter school funds consistent with sound business practice. Authorized types of investments for charter schools shall be:
 - a. United States Treasury bills

- b. Short-term obligations of the United States Government or its agencies or instrumentalities
- c. Deposits in savings accounts, time deposits or share account of institutions insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation or the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation or the National Credit Union Share Insurance Fund to the extent that such accounts are so insured, and for any amounts above the insured maximum, provided that approved collateral as provided by law therefore shall be pledged by the depository.
- d. Obligations of the United States of America or any of its agencies or instrumentalities backed by the full faith and credit of the United States of America, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania or any of its agencies or instrumentalities backed by the full faith of the Commonwealth, or of any political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania of any of its agencies or instrumentalities backed by the full faith and credit of the political subdivision.
- e. Shares of an investment company registered under the Investment Company of America Act of 1940 (54 Stat.789, 15 U.S.C. * 80a-1 et seq.) as defined in PA 24 PS 4-440.1 of the Pennsylvania School Code.

Note: All Investments shall be subject to the standards set forth in PA 24 PS 4-440.1 of the Pennsylvania School Code.

The school treasurer shall settle his accounts annually with the Board of School Directors for each school year. An annual school audit shall be conducted according to the requirements of Article 24 of the School Code of 1949. Charter School Boards of Trustees shall follow requirement set forth for school boards in this section.

2. Facility

- A. Provide descriptions of and addresses for the physical facilities under consideration and the ownership thereof and any lease arrangements.
- B. Explain how this site(s) would be a suitable facility for the proposed school. Consider the necessity of renovation to the facility and compliance with applicable building codes and accessibility for individuals with disabilities. Describe the services of the facility including heating, ventilating, lighting, sanitary conditions and water supply.
- C. Discuss the plan for maintaining the facility on a daily basis (custodial) and extended basis (facility maintenance).
- D. Discuss any progress, partnership developments or other future steps toward acquisition of a facility/land.

- E. Describe facility financing plans.

Explanation: Describe progress toward identifying and acquiring a school facility, with a back- up plan considering alternative facilities.

3. Liability and Insurance

- A. Describe your school's insurance coverage plans, including health, general liability (including school operation, extracurricular activities and parent volunteer activities), property, and director and officer's liability coverage (see [Section 1727-A of Charter School Law](#)).

Explanation: Provide evidence of insurability in all areas identified above.

4. Child Accounting

- A. Describe your school enrollment and attendance procedures.

Note: State child accounting procedures must be followed. ([24 PS 13-1332](#))

Explanation: Charter school funding is based on enrollment; therefore, a totally accurate child count is necessary to meet audit standard.

V. Implementation and Administration

1. Recruiting and Marketing Plan

- A. Demonstrate how you will publicize the school to attract a sufficient pool of eligible applicants.
- B. What type of outreach will be made to potential students and their families?

Explanation: Develop a solid plan to attract sufficient students to operate a school; publicize the school; and ensure a match between the school program and applicants' educational and personal needs.

2. Enrollment Policy

- A. Describe the enrollment methods and eligibility criteria you will use to select students. Explain administrative procedures to ensure compliance with laws pertaining to Special Education.
- B. Describe the timetable to be used for admitting students, including a plan for the admission lottery for students from both within and outside the district.
- C. Explain how these policies further the mission of the school in a non-discriminatory fashion.

Explanation: Establish consistency with the mission of the school and the

non-discriminatory policies for timely and realistic procedures for admitting students in accordance with charter school law ([Section 1723-A of Charter School Law](#)).

3. Human Resource Information

- A. Describe the standards to be used in the hiring process of teachers, administrators and other school staff.
- B. What is the targeted staff size and teacher/student ratio?
- C. What professional development opportunities will be available to teachers and other staff?
- D. Describe your human resource policies governing salaries, contracts, hiring and dismissal, **sick and other leave**, and benefits.
- E. Identify the proposed faculty.
- F. Attach a report of criminal history record, pursuant to [Section 111 of the Public School Code](#) for all individuals who shall have direct contact with students.
- G. Attach an official clearance statement regarding child injury or abuse from the Department of Human Services as required by [Section 111 of Public School Code](#) (relating to background checks for employment in schools) for all individuals who shall have direct contact with students.

Explanation: Establish high professional standards for teachers and other staff; commitment to professional development of staff; and working conditions and compensation packages that will attract and retain quality staff as per compliance with labor laws.

4. Code of Conduct

- A. Discuss any rules or guidelines governing student behavior.
- B. Describe your school's policies regarding student expulsion and suspension, including students with disabilities.
- C. Describe your school's mandatory student attendance plan and it's fit with the code of conduct.

Explanation: Provide evidence that the founders inspire the confidence of their targeted community; program provides an attractive educational alternative to students and parents; and community support extends beyond the core group of founders. Expectation for student behavior is clear and specific processes for disciplinary actions are established.

5. Transportation

- A. Describe your transportation program, including transportation for Special Education students and suggestions for improvement.

- B. What arrangements will be made to transport students and if you plan to implement an extended-day or extended-year program that requires transportation beyond that which the district provides?
- C. What plans are being made for the coordination of transportation of students who live outside the local district to be transported to the school? The school district of student residence must provide transportation to a charter school up to ten miles from its border.

Explanation: Establish workable arrangements for safely transporting students to and from school.

6. Food Service

- A. Describe the food service plan of the school.
- B. What are the plans for free or reduced lunch or breakfast? State regulations for student participation in such a program must be followed ([24 PS 13-1337](#)).

Explanation: Develop plans for the provision or accommodations of a mid-day meal.

7. Timetable

- A. Provide a detailed timetable of projected steps and dates leading to the opening of a charter school.

Explanation: Establish a well-developed, realistic plan of action for opening a charter school.

8. Safety

- A. Submit written documentation of intent to comply with all applicable safety requirements including the following to demonstrate the safety and structural soundness of the school:
 - i. Inspection by a local building inspector.
 - ii. Inspection by a local fire department.
 - iii. Approval from the municipal licensing authority for use of any explosives and flammable compounds or liquids in connection with courses taught at the school.
 - iv. Compliance with all other federal, state, and local health and safety laws and regulations.
 - v. Application for certificates, licenses, etc. are part of the planning process

Note: All necessary certificates and occupancy permits must be issued and in effect prior to the opening of the charter school.

Preliminary clearances on all these requirements should be obtained prior to a lease being executed.

9. School Health Services

- A. Describe your plan for providing school health services as required under [Article XIV of the Public School Code](#).
- B. Describe how school nursing services, including administration of medication will be delivered.