



Start·a·School

AN EDUCATION FREEDOM FOUNDATION INITIATIVE

District of Columbia

Charter Schools

Steps to Start a Charter School

[The School Reform Act](#) (SRA) requires applicants seeking to establish a new public charter school in DC to file a petition with DC PCSB, as the sole authorizer in DC. The [2024 Charter Application Guidelines](#) explains the process by which applicants submit their petitions and DC PCSB evaluates them.

For questions about charter applications, please contact applications@dcpcsb.org.

The [DC Public Charter School Board](#) (DC PCSB) is the sole authorizer of public charter schools in Washington, DC. In school year (SY) 2023 – 24, DC PCSB will provide oversight to 69 local education agencies (LEAs) operating 134 campuses. Public charter schools serve more than 45,000, or nearly half, of DC's public school students, who come from every ward in our city.

Components of the Application Review Process

Based on the following four components and the Standard for Approval, the DC PCSB Board will vote at a public meeting for one of three possible outcomes for each applicant group: approval with standard conditions, approval with standard and school-specific conditions, and denial. More information on the Standard for Approval and applicant decisions can be found in the guidelines.

Written applications should be submitted according to the 2024 Charter Application Guidelines. Each written application, with redactions, is made available on DC PCSB's website for public access.

Site visits to the operator's existing school(s) will be scheduled for all eligible existing operator [EO] or school management organizations [SMO].

Capacity interviews allow DC PCSB staff and Board members to ask founding group members a series of questions. Topics include the founding group's ability to execute the plan as written; support for students with disabilities (SWD), emerging multilingual learners (EML), and at-risk

students; teacher recruitment and retention; demand for the proposed school; and weak or confusing areas of the application. Transcripts of the capacity interviews will be made public.

Public hearings are opportunities for the Board and the public to hear from the founding group. The applicant may provide prepared comments no longer than five minutes, then the Board will question the applicant group about its application, planning process, or any other relevant topic. The public will also have the opportunity to give testimony about the application.

Sample Timeline

The following timeline represents the external-facing events comprising the 2024 Charter Application Review Cycle. Dates are subject to change based on scheduling needs. DC PCSB staff will notify prospective applicants if there are changes and dates will be updated here. All times are provided in Eastern Time (ET). Please review the state’s [website](#) for the latest timeline.

Event	Date
Release 2024 charter application guidelines	September 28, 2023
Letters of intent due (encouraged but not required)	January 22, 2024, at 5 p.m.
Release updated Sector Planning Supplement	February 22, 2024
Applicants submit all application materials.	March 8, 2024, at 9 a.m.
DC PCSB informs applicants if their applications are complete	March 8, 2024, at 5 p.m.
[EO]/[SMO] site visits, if applicable	March 13 – April 14, 2024
Capacity interviews	March 26 – 27, 2024
Public hearing on new school applications	April 22, 2024, at 6 p.m.
Vote on new school applications	May 20, 2024, at 6 p.m.
Release decision letters	May 30, 2024

2024 Charter Application Guidelines

Download and read the requirements to submit an application and how DC PCSB reviews and evaluates them using this link: [2024 CHARTER APPLICATION GUIDELINES](#)

Sector Planning Supplement

New school and expansion request applications must respond to the relevant data identified in the Sector Planning Supplement to inform their case for demand. New school applicants must meet at least the Standard “Demonstrated Need for the School” to receive approval. Download and read this supplement at this link: [2024 SECTOR PLANNING SUPPLEMENT](#)

Charter Application Archive

You can view previously approved and denied charter school Applications from 2011 through 2023 at this link: [CHARTER APPLICATION ARCHIVE](#)

Charter Schools Program Grant

Learn more about the Title IV, Part C Charter Schools Program (CSP) grant for eligible conditionally approved charter applicants, as administered by the Office of State Superintendent for Education (OSSE) by reading the information at this [link](#).

Charter School Support Unit

You can also review the resources found on the [Charter Support Unit \(CSU\)](#) website. This resource contains helpful information on the following:

1. Planning and Launching
2. Boards and Governance
3. School Operations
4. Professional Development
5. One-on-one Consultations
6. Facilities Planning
7. Board Governance Program

Statutes and Rules

- [DC School Reform Act \(SRA\)](#)
 - [§ 38–1800.01. Short title.](#)
 - [§ 38–1800.02. Definitions.](#)
 - [§ 38–1800.03. General effective date.](#)
 - [§§ 38-1801.01 – 38-1801.03. Subchapter I. District of Columbia Reform Plan.](#)
 - [§§ 38-1802.01 – 38-1802.15: Subchapter II. Public Charter Schools.](#)
 - [§§ 38-1803.11 – 38-1803.21: Subchapter III. World Class School Task Force, Core Curriculum, Content Standards, Assessments, and Promotion Gates.](#)
 - [§§ 38-1804.01 – 38-1804.03 Subchapter IV. Per Capita District of Columbia Public School and Public Charter School Funding.](#)
 - [§§ 38-1805.50 – 38-1805.71: Subchapter V. School Facilities Repair and Improvement.](#)
 - [§§ 38-1806.01 – 38-1806.09: Subchapter VI. Partnerships with Business.](#)
 - [§§ 38-1807.51 – 38-1807.57: Subchapter VII. Management and Fiscal Accountability; Preservation of School-Based Resources.](#)

- [§§ 38-1808.51 – 38-1808.58: Subchapter VIII. Establishment and Organization of the Commission on Consensus Reform in the District of Columbia Public Schools.](#)
- [§§ 38-1809.01 – 38-1809.01: Subchapter IX. Parent Attendance at Parent-Teacher Conferences.](#)

- [Public Charter School Fiscal Transparency Amendment Act of 2016](#)
- [Student Fair Access to School Amendment Act of 2018](#)

Resources

- [2025 Charter Application Guidelines.](#)