



# Start·a·School

AN EDUCATION FREEDOM FOUNDATION INITIATIVE

## Minnesota

### Charter Schools

The first charter schools in the nation opened in Minnesota in 1992. In Minnesota, charter schools are tuition-free and are governed by Minnesota Statutes 2023, Chapter 124E. Charter schools offer unique educational programs for students and families seeking an alternative to traditional district public schools. They must welcome and be open to all students. Charter schools are operated and governed by licensed teachers, parents, and community members. Currently, there are 180 charter schools in operation in Minnesota, serving approximately 70,000 prekindergarten through grade 12 students. There are also 60 charter schools with officially recognized early learning programs.

### Steps to Start a Charter School

Before a Minnesota charter school may be formed, a charter school developer must identify a state-approved authorizer whose mission aligns with the proposed school's mission. There are currently 12 approved authorizers in Minnesota. Authorizers can be school boards or intermediate school district school boards, other education districts, charitable organizations, institutions of higher education, nonprofit corporations subject to [Chapter 317A](#), or single-purpose authorizers.

Three critical aspects of an authorizer's oversight work are:

- Establishing the initial performance contract with a charter school;
- Determining if a charter school is ready to open; and,
- Deciding whether or not to renew a charter school contract.

The charter contract is the cornerstone of the charter school model. The contract articulates and safeguards the rights and responsibilities of the authorizer and the charter school, and outlines the academic, operational and financial performance outcomes the school must meet for contract renewal. A renewed contract between a charter school and authorizer can be up to five operational years. In addition to the performance outcomes of the charter contract with the authorizer, charter schools are required to administer state assessments to assure academic accountability.

## Virtual Charters

Virtual Charters are authorized.

Citations: [Minn. Stat. Ann. § 124D.094 ONLINE INSTRUCTION ACT.](#)

## General Charter Info

Learn more about Minnesota charter schools at the [MN Association of Charter Schools](#).  
[Guidance on Forming a Charter School in Minnesota.](#)

The first step in creating a Charter school is to register as a corporation. This is usually a non-profit LLC. Register with your state's Division of Corporations.

If you are planning to operate as a non-profit, you will need to obtain your IRS Non-Profit status by submitting [IRS Form 1023](#).

The second step is to register for a [Charter School Boot Camp](#).

## Apply to an Authorizer

Before forming a charter school, the school developers must apply to be chartered by a state-approved authorizer. The charter school developer(s) should seek an authorizer whose mission aligns with the proposed school's mission. A list of state-approved authorizers may be found on [Minnesota Department of Education's \(MDE\) Organization Reference Glossary webpage](#).

Every five years, MDE administers the Minnesota Authorizer Performance Evaluation System (MAPES) to evaluate authorizer performance. MAPES reports, as well as other authorizer reports, can be found on [MDE's website](#) by selecting the authorizer's name on the left side of the page. Charter school developers can review these reports to learn more about different authorizers.

Once charter school developers have located a potential authorizer, the next step is to contact the authorizer to learn more about their organization and alignment of the proposed school's mission to the authorizer's mission. Developers will need to complete the proposed authorizer's new charter school application and process, being cognizant of authorizer and statutory timelines. Each authorizer has its own set of timelines and expectations for submission of new charter school applications.

## Statutes and Rules

- [§ 124D.094 ONLINE INSTRUCTION ACT.](#)

## General

- [124E.01 PURPOSE AND APPLICABILITY.](#)
- [124E.02 DEFINITIONS.](#)
- [124E.03 APPLICABLE LAW.](#)

## Administration

- [124E.05 AUTHORIZERS.](#)
- [124E.06 FORMING A SCHOOL.](#)
- [124E.07 BOARD OF DIRECTORS.](#)
- [124E.08 CHARTER SCHOOL AND SCHOOL DISTRICT COLLABORATION.](#)
- [124E.09 EXTENT OF SPECIFIC LEGAL AUTHORITY.](#)

## Policies and Procedures

- [124E.10 CHARTER CONTRACT.](#)
- [124E.11 ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND ENROLLMENT.](#)
- [124E.12 EMPLOYMENT.](#)
- [124E.13 FACILITIES.](#)
- [124E.14 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST.](#)
- [124E.15 TRANSPORTATION.](#)
- [124E.16 REPORTS.](#)
- [124E.17 DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION.](#)

## Finance

- [124E.20 GENERAL EDUCATION REVENUE.](#)
- [124E.21 SPECIAL EDUCATION AID.](#)
- [124E.22 BUILDING LEASE AID.](#)
- [124E.23 TRANSPORTATION REVENUE.](#)
- [124E.24 OTHER AID, GRANTS, AND REVENUE.](#)
- [124E.25 PAYMENT OF AIDS TO CHARTER SCHOOLS.](#)
- [124E.26 USE OF STATE MONEY.](#)

CHAPTER 317A. NONPROFIT CORPORATION

## Resources

- [Guide to Opening a New Charter School](#) - 5/8/24  
This resource provides important information for newly approved charter schools and has been updated for schools opening in the fall of 2024.
- [Special Education Primer for Authorizers and Charter Schools](#) - 4/25/24
- [FY 2025 Charter School Lease Aid Requirements](#) - 4/10/24
- [General Education Revenue for Charter Schools' Extended Time Instructions](#) - 3/13/24
- [Charter Schools' Extended-Time Revenue Program Request Form](#) - 3/13/24
- [Merger Guidance for Charter Schools and Authorizers](#) - 3/8/24  
This document provides guidance to charter schools who wish to merge and Authorizers who oversee the merging of charter schools.
- [Guidance on Conflict of Interest for Authorizers and Charter Schools](#) - 12/20/23
- [Guidance for Contracts with Management Organizations](#) - 12/8/23
- [Transportation of Charter School Students](#) - 10/10/23
- [Charter School Assurances Instructions](#) - 9/14/23  
This is the charter school assurances form instruction document.
- [2023-24 Charter School Assurances Form](#) - 9/11/23  
Charter schools must fill out the assurances form, sign it, return it to their authorizers and copy MDE (mde.charterschools@state.mn.us) by October 31, 2023.
- [Charter School Admissions and Enrollment Guidance](#) - 8/29/23  
This document includes updates related to the 2023 legislative session.
- [FY 2024 Charter School Lease Aid Requirements](#) - 8/18/23
- [Frequently Used Abbreviations and Terms Glossary for Charter Schools](#) - 7/31/23
- [Charter School Website Compliance Checklist](#) - 7/25/23  
This document includes updates related to the 2023 legislative session.
- [Reporting Calendar for Charter Schools](#) - 6/28/23  
List of reporting and data entry periods of significant importance to charter schools, including a brief description of each. Note: this is not a complete list of all reporting requirements.