



Start a School

AN EDUCATION FREEDOM FOUNDATION INITIATIVE

Missouri

Charter Schools

Missouri is looking for new high-quality public schools to serve all children. The Missouri Charter Public School Commission (MCPSC) is interested in new schools to serve students who do not currently have access to a quality public school where they live and high-risk students or dropouts. The Commission is also seeking applicants with innovative models.

The [Missouri Charter Public School Association](#) has more information.

Steps to Start a Charter School

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](#).

Sponsors

There are three types of sponsors.

1. [Kansas City Public Schools \(KCPS\)](#) has worked and collaborated with charter schools since the late 1990s. Since 2015, the Kansas City Public Schools has sponsored charter schools. For more information, contact Charnissa Holliday-Scott, chollidayscott@kcpublicschools.org. The application submission process is outlined [here](#).
2. [The Missouri Charter Public School Commission](#) was established in 2012 (RSMo 160.425). Lawmakers, charter school advocates, and education reformers wanted an independent sponsoring entity with the authority to sponsor high-quality charter schools throughout Missouri. Sponsors enter into a contract with a Missouri non-profit organization that demonstrates the ability and capacity to operate a quality independent public school. Sponsors hold these schools accountable for the performance of the school and to the conditions of the contract. Performing schools can have their contract renewed. Poor-quality charter schools can be closed. The application submission process is outlined [here](#).
3. Colleges

- a. [Southeast Missouri State University](#): The application submission process is outlined [here](#).
- b. [Saint Louis University](#): The application submission process is outlined [here](#).
- c. [University of Missouri - St. Louis](#): The application submission process is outlined [here](#).
- d. [Washington University](#): The application submission process is outlined [here](#).

To apply for a charter school, the board will need to select the sponsor to use for the application. Once selected, the board will need to follow their application process. The State Board holds one meeting between November and December each year. As the charter must be approved by January 30th it is best to consider the November/December meeting as the target meeting allowing the January State Board Meeting as a final option if needed.

[How To Become a KCPS Charter School](#)

KCPS will consider sponsoring charter schools whose mission, vision, and core values are aligned with KCPS. Consideration is based on the charter school's ability to:

1. Build a viable business plan and application.
2. Demonstrate early on that the school will have high expectations for school staff, students, and families that will result in a high-performing, high-achieving school.
3. Extend opportunities to students who are not well served in a traditional setting.
4. Fill educational gaps in the community.
5. Utilize technology to deliver education.
6. Develop an innovative and relevant curriculum that maximizes personal potential and engages students in reading, math, and science.
7. Hold their organization accountable to high academic standards.
8. Hire an exceptional school leader and qualified teaching staff, and support continuing professional development.
9. Demonstrate strong leadership in governance and community engagement.
10. KCPS does not plan to accept charter schools contracting with a third-party management provider.

Applicants interested in KCPS becoming their sponsor will be encouraged to submit a letter of interest and any supporting documentation to the KCPS Charter Sponsor Liaison (CSL) no less than one year prior to submitting an application. Missouri law requires that charter school applications have to be approved by the State Board of Education by January 31st for opening the following fall. For an application to be reviewed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and approved by the State Board of Education, the application must be submitted before November 10th. The CSL will provide technical assistance throughout the process and ensure expectations on both sides are met. Applicants will also be encouraged to seek assistance from the Missouri Charter Public School Association.

All applications will be vetted by the KCPS Charter Sponsor Advisory Committee. The Committee is comprised of internal and external individuals with experience in public

education, board governance, accounting and finance, data management, marketing, and charter school operations. A scoring guide, developed by KCPS and based on DESE's application and guide for new charter applications, is posted on this website.

KCPS Charter Pre-Application Rubric

Timeline

A suggested timeline for consideration is below:

- Letter of interest—may be submitted at any time during the year.
- Initial review by KCPS—will take place 14 days from date of receipt of the letter of interest and any supporting documentation.
- Initial meeting to develop an application for consideration by KCPS—will begin one year prior to KCPS deadline for approving a charter application.
- Final acceptance by KCPS—will be communicated within 30 days of receipt of the final charter school application.
- DESE submission and approval—will be completed by October for opening the following fall to ensure compliance with the law.

Charter School Application Review Process

KCPS will use a detailed process for vetting charter school applications, with applicants advancing to the next step based on points awarded. The process includes:

1. The KCPS Charter School Liaison will facilitate meetings with potential applicants and provide technical assistance during the writing of the charter application several months prior to submission.
2. Internal and external individuals are chosen to participate in the KCPS Charter School Advisory Committee to review and score applications.
3. Initial review of applications, with points awarded for: student achievement plan; organizational and governance structure/expertise; financial plan including start-up dollars/budget; unique characteristics/need for type of school; community involvement; and quality of application.
4. In-person interviews with major stakeholders (school director/administrator and board), with points awarded for: capacity of running the school; depth of investment in the school; demonstrated understanding of state/federal requirements; and response to interview questions.
5. Final in-depth review of application, with suggested revisions prior to submission to DESE.
6. The Office of Education Collaboration will issue a written letter of acceptance or denial within 30 days from receipt of the final application. If the office chooses not to sponsor an applicant, the letter of denial will provide reasons for denial with a copy sent to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

How to Become a Missouri Charter Public School Commission Charter School

Application Deadlines

Missouri Charter Public School Commission accepts applications on an ongoing basis.

- Applications must be approved by the State Board of Education by January 31 in order to open the following school year.
- Schools planning to open the next school year must have a final application to the Commission by August 1.
- Applications received after August 1 will be reviewed for opening in the year following the next school year.

LEA Status

Schools wishing to amend their charter to become a local education agency (LEA) must amend their performance contracts pursuant to Policy 3.03, by March 1.

- LEA status shall become effective July 1 of the same year.
- DESE will then provide the school with a list of all regulations applicable to LEAs within 30 days. See [RSMo 160.405.6](#).

Who Can Apply for a Charter School

An inquiry for a new charter school may be made by parents, community leaders, social entrepreneurs, businesses, teachers, school districts, and municipalities.

- Interested parties must submit a charter school Letter of Intent (LOI) and Prospectus.
- Existing design applicants must show that their proposed school is similar to an existing model and may choose to become their own Local Education Agency (LEA).

Application Review

- Applications are reviewed by staff and subject experts based on various criteria.
- A public hearing is held to allow for presentation and comments.
- The approval process ensures compliance with Missouri statutes and regulations.
- The State Board of Education has the final say on approving or denying an application.

Boone County Exemption

Due to SB 727, 2024, charters can now operate in counties "between 150,000 and 200,000 inhabitants" (a bracket only Boone County fits at this time) without local school board sponsorship or approval.

See [160.400.2\(5\)](#).

“(5) In a school district located within a county with more than one hundred fifty thousand but fewer than two hundred thousand inhabitants, provided that the provisions of subsections 15 to 18 of section [160.415](#) shall not apply to any charter school operated in such county.”

Statutes and Rules

- [160.400-Charter schools, defined, St. Louis City and Kansas City school districts — sponsors — use of public school buildings — organization of charter schools — affiliations with college or university — criminal background check required.](#)
- [160.403.-Sponsoring a charter school, annual application and approval, contents of application, approval requirements.](#)
- [160.405.-Proposed charter, how submitted, requirements, submission to state board, powers and duties — approval, revocation, termination — definitions — lease of public school facilities, when — unlawful reprisal, defined, prohibited — performance report.](#)
- [160.408.-High-quality school, defined, replication in unaccredited districts.](#)
- [160.410.-Admission, preferences for admission permitted, when — information to be made publicly available — move out of school district, effect of.](#)
- [160.415.-Distribution of state school aid for charter schools — powers and duties of governing body of charter schools — performance report.](#)
- [160.417.-Financial stress, review of report information by charter school sponsor, when — criteria for financial stress.](#)
- [160.420.-Employment provisions — school district personnel may accept charter school position and remain district employees, effect — noncertificated instructional personnel, employment, supervision.](#)
- [160.425.-Missouri charter public school commission created, members, duties — funding — revolving fund created.](#)

Resources

Kansas City Public Schools (KCPS)

- [Charter School Sponsorship Manual](#)

Missouri Charter Public School Commission

- [Submission of LOL and Prospectus](#)
- [Invitation to Apply](#)
- [Application Review](#)
- [The Public Hearing](#)
- [Commission Interviews Board](#)
- [Commission Sponsorship](#)
- [State Board of Education Authorization](#)