



CHARTER SCHOOLS

BACKGROUND

Initiative 1240, approved by the voters at the November 2012 general election, allows the authorization of a limited number of charter schools within the state’s public school system. The initiative, codified as chapter 28A.710 RCW, limits the number of charter schools to 40 over a five year period, with no more than eight charter schools established per year.

WHAT IS A PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL?

A “charter school” or “public charter school” is a public school governed by a charter school board and operated according to the terms of a charter school contract. Charter schools may be a conversion charter school, in which an existing non-charter public school is converted to a charter school, or a new charter school. A charter school may not be religious or sectarian, and may not charge tuition for enrollment.

WHAT IS A CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZER?

An authorizer is an entity with the powers and duties to review, approve or reject charter school applications; enter into, renew or revoke charter contracts with nonprofit corporations seeking to operate charter schools; and oversee the charter schools the entity has authorized. Eligible authorizers are:

- School district boards of directors that have been approved as authorizers by the SBE, for charter schools located within the school district’s own boundaries;
- The Washington Charter School Commission, for charter schools located anywhere in the state.

WHAT IS SBE’S ROLE IN CHARTER SCHOOLS?

The SBE has responsibilities for implementation and oversight of the charter school law, including:

- Review and approval or denial of applications from local school boards to be authorizers of charter schools.
- Overseeing the performance of school districts it has approved to be authorizers, with the power to revoke chartering authority if the district fails to remedy identified problems in the operation of the schools it has authorized.
- Setting an annual timeline for submission of charter applications to all authorizers and approval or denial by the authorizers.
- Establishing an authorizer oversight fee, deducted from the state allocation to the charter school and transmitted to the authorizer for the costs of carrying out its duties.

- Ensuring compliance with the limits on the number of charter schools that may be established.
- Issuing an annual report, in collaboration with the Washington Charter School Commission, on the state’s charter schools for the preceding school year.
- Recommending, after five years, whether the Legislature should authorize the establishment of additional charter schools.

HOW ARE THE ROLES OF SBE & THE CHARTER COMMISSION DIFFERENT?

The Washington Charter School Commission is an authorizer of charter schools; the SBE is not. The SBE approves local school boards to be authorizers, but does not authorize charter schools itself. Its principal role, beyond setting in place procedures and timelines for implementation of the law, is one of oversight and reporting.

HOW MANY CHARTER SCHOOLS MAY BE ESTABLISHED?

A maximum of 40 charter schools may be established over a five-year period. No more than eight may be established in any year within the five-year period. If fewer than eight are established in any year, then additional schools equal to the difference between the number established in that year and eight may be established in the following year. The five-year period begins with the first year in which there have been charter schools operating for a full school year.

WHO CAN APPLY TO ESTABLISH & OPERATE A CHARTER SCHOOL?

A charter school applicant must be a non-profit corporation that has applied for tax-exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the federal tax code. It may not be a religious or sectarian organization, and must meet all of the requirements for a public benefit non-profit corporation before it may receive any state funding as a public charter school.

CHARTER TIMELINES

<u>Charter Authorizer Applications</u>	<u>2013 only</u>	<u>2014 forward</u>
District notice of intent to submit authorizer application	April 1, 2013	Oct. 1
SBE posts district authorizer application	April 1, 2013	Oct. 1
Closing date for authorizer applications to SBE	July 1, 2013	Dec. 31
Closing date for SBE decisions on authorizer applications	Sept. 12, 2013	April 1
<u>Charter School Applications</u>	<u>2013 only</u>	<u>2014 forward</u>
Last date for all authorizers to issue RFPs	Sept. 22, 2013	April 15
Closing date for charter application submissions	Nov. 22, 2013	July 15
Closing date for authorizer approval or denial of applications	Feb. 24, 2014	Oct. 15
Last date for authorizers to submit report of action	March 6, 2014	Oct. 25

RESOURCES

Information about decisions, milestones, progress, and handouts on implementation of the charter school law can be found at: www.sbe.wa.gov/charters.php. More information about the State Board of Education and its work can be found at www.sbe.wa.gov or by calling 360.725.6025.