



New Mexico Public Education Commission

2021 New Charter School Application Kit

Part A.

Introduction and Instructions



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Introduction

The Charter Schools Act

The *New Mexico Charter School Application Kit* was developed to provide guidance in the writing and review of new charter school submissions. The target audience for this document is both the founding group (the applicants), as they develop a charter school application, and the potential Authorizer—the Public Education Commission (PEC), Authorizer’s designee(s), or Authorizer’s legal counsel (collectively referred to as “Authorizer”), as they review and evaluate the quality and completeness of the application.

The New Mexico Charter Schools Act provides the following policy statement:

The Charter Schools Act ... is enacted to enable individual schools to structure their educational curriculum to encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods that are based on reliable research and effective practices or have been replicated successfully in schools with diverse characteristics; to allow the development of different and innovative forms of measuring student learning and achievement; to address the needs of all students, including those determined to be at risk; to create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site; to improve student achievement; to provide parents and students with an educational alternative to create new, innovative and more flexible ways of educating children within the public school system; to encourage parental and community involvement in the public school system; to develop and use site-based budgeting; and to hold charter schools accountable for meeting the department's educational standards and fiscal requirements. (22-8B-3 NMSA 1978 *et seq.*)

Starting a new charter school in New Mexico requires proposals from committed individuals who have the capacity to achieve strong, educational outcomes. Through charter schools, the PEC, as Authorizer, and the Charter Schools Division (CSD) in the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) seek to provide families with effective, quality educational options. The PEC makes the final determination regarding the application after reading the application, hearing from the applicants and the local community, and considering the information provided by the peer review team and the CSD.

The CSD Vision is as follows:

Driving student success in New Mexico by supporting excellent authorizing practices and charter schools that provide quality, innovative education

An Overview of the Review Process

Each year, the PEC approves and makes available—in writing at its office and online at its web site—an application for a new charter for a specified fiscal year. The PEC-approved application for a new charter for the current application cycle includes templates and attachments designated by the PEC. Templates and attachments must not be altered.

Technical Review—CSD staff will confirm whether the applicant team has met all requirements and whether the application package contains all components required by statute, rule, and application instructions. An application package will pass the technical review if:

1. the applicant team timely submitted a Notice of Intent to the PEC and the district;
2. the application package contains complete information for each application component, including:
 - a. Executive Summary (Information must be consistent with the contents of the application package),
 - b. School Size (Information must be consistent with the contents of the application package),
 - c. All narrative sections, required exhibits, and attachments;
3. the application package contains all required appendices; and
4. the application package contains all required documents submitted on the application attachment and/or templates approved for the current application cycle, including the 910B5 SEG Worksheet and a five-year Budget Plan.

Failure to meet the criteria above will result in the application package being deemed Incomplete. The application will be evaluated based on the information that is included in the application package when it is submitted.

Templates and attachments must not be altered from the approved content, format, and sequence. An application package submitted for a new charter will be deemed incomplete if it contains modifications to the content, format, or sequence of the application, templates or attachments or if it contains templates or attachments that were approved for use in a prior fiscal year.

Applicants will receive written notification of the deficiencies not more than 10 business days after the submission of the application package. If the application is deemed incomplete, the Applicant's file will be closed. The applicants may, within five business days of receiving the notice of an incomplete application, request a review by the PEC at its next regularly scheduled meeting. No new information and no additional submissions will be accepted or reviewed by the PEC or CSD. If such a request is received and the PEC finds that the application was complete, the application processing timelines will be adjusted.

Scoring—Applications will be evaluated and rated using the Evaluation Rubric, which is embedded in the application. The review team for your application consists of outside experts who are overseen by the CSD. Each team member will review your application independently and thoroughly. Once

complete, the team will come together to discuss your application and provide a consensus score and analysis. This preliminary analysis will be provided to the applicant team and the PEC.

The PEC and the CSD have determined that answers that score in the “Meets the Criteria” category are satisfactory and those that fall into the “Approaches the Criteria” and “Falls Far Below the Criteria” are unsatisfactory. The CSD has the ability to review scores for uniformity between applications assessed at the same time and review teams reviewing applications at the same time.

Capacity Interview— The review team will interview the applicant team. The interview questions are designed to determine the applicant team’s capacity to implement the charter school proposed in the application package and provide an opportunity for the applicant team to provide clarifying information regarding weaknesses identified in the preliminary review. The responses are scored and analyzed and may inform the analysis of the written application. The Application score and analysis, along with a score and analysis of the Capacity Interview, will form the basis for the CSD’s analysis to the PEC. (See Part D below.)

Community Input Hearing— The PEC holds a public hearing at which the applicant team has an opportunity to answer the PEC’s questions. During the hearing, the PEC also has a chance to hear from the community and to learn about the positives and negatives for potentially opening a school like the one proposed.

Please note that the PEC will ask the applicants to respond to questions on the application during the Community Input Hearing. The applicants may have the personnel with the technical expertise with them at the table (and *should* have these people with them, if these people were primarily responsible for drafting a section). However, the applicants themselves should demonstrate knowledge and understanding in all areas of the application.

CSD Analysis—The CSD utilizes information from the external peer review team consensus score preliminary analysis, and capacity interview, along with analysis of the community input hearing to prepare materials for the PEC. The analysis is presented to the applicants and PEC at least two weeks prior to the PEC meeting.

PEC Consideration—The **PEC will make the final decision** to deny, approve, or approve with conditions charter school applications. The PEC reads and evaluates all applications. The PEC makes its decision based on, but not limited to

- 1) the application;
- 2) the review team preliminary scoring rubric and analysis;
- 3) the community input hearing;
- 4) the capacity interview;
- 5) the review team final scoring rubric and analysis;
- 6) the CSD's analysis;
- 7) all clarifying information and statements provided by announced deadlines; and
- 6) the applicants’ statements at the PEC meeting.

If you have further questions regarding this process, please do not hesitate to call the Charter Schools Division at charter.schools@state.nm.us or (505) 827-6909.

The New Charter School Application Kit contains four main parts, plus appendices:

1. Part A—Introduction and Instructions
2. Part B—Executive Summary
3. Part C—Application and Rubric
4. Part D—Capacity Interview Questions and Rubric

The kit is intended to guide you through the steps of developing a charter school proposal. While the kit comes in four parts, you will only be submitting **Part B, Executive Summary** and **Part C, Application and Rubric**. All parts of the kit comply with the amended Charter School Act, which requires charter schools' performance to be measured according to a framework of specific criteria. The application itself is organized by frameworks.

The **Part A, Introduction and Instructions** provides you with information regarding expectations, application timelines, contact information, an application glossary of terms, and logistical information. Although the application is not scored based on this section, the overall ability to create a clear, cohesive, comprehensive, reasonable, and innovative charter school application depends in large part on following the instructions in this guide.

The **Part B, Executive Summary** requires you to provide a summary or overview of the proposed school. This offers the reviewers a general understanding of what will be explained and described in detail within the application itself. In addition, this summary will be posted on the CSD website so that the public knows who is applying for a state-funded public charter school. This section is not evaluated for points. However, your summary should adequately reflect what is found in the rest of the application. For instance, if your school has a STEM focus, then this should be mentioned in the Executive Summary. **This section should be submitted to the CSD along with the Part C, Application between May 1st and June 1st of the current year (5:00 PM MST).**

The **Part C, Application and Rubric** consists of a series of requests for information that should be responded to as completely as you deem appropriate. Please use the rubrics to guide your responses. In addition, it is important not to compartmentalize your responses but rather to use the prompts to assist you in presenting a clear, comprehensive, cohesive, reasonable, and innovative educational, organizational, and financial framework for a public charter school. The evaluators will be looking for a consistent narrative that presents evidence of a thorough and thoughtful plan, formulated by a capable team, deserving of being entrusted with millions of dollars of public funds, which will offer a vibrant and innovative educational option for New Mexican children and their families. Your mission should be reflected throughout the Application in all proposed programs, budgets, and resource allocations. **Note: Simply following the prompts does not guarantee approval by your selected Authorizer.**

The **Part D, Capacity Interview Questions and Rubric** does not require any written information from you. Instead, you are strongly encouraged to use the questions in Part D to better assess your own capacity to implement the framework for the charter school that you have outlined in your application and to prepare answers in advance to the interview questions. All applicants receive the same set of fifteen (15) standard questions plus individualized questions, which are created by your application reviewers in response to their review of your written application.

Summary

Experience has shown that successful charter schools tend to have a number of common characteristics such as:

- A clear, focused, results-oriented mission statement that aligns to all parts of the proposal
- Demonstrated understanding of the charter school's projected students, based on the local community or the school district in whose geographic boundaries the charter school applies to operate
- An educational program that is likely to be effective for the school's projected students, based on the local community or the school district in whose geographic boundaries the charter school applies to operate
- Strong goals to assist the school in meeting its mission and educational programming
- Strong, experienced, and diverse leadership and governance that aligns the mission of the school with results-oriented practice
- A Governing Body that provides strong, professional functions in financial oversight, Board functions, and supporting the leadership of the school
- Strong financial planning and management
- A school that demonstrates support and ownership of the school by the local community, not just the applicant team

Authorizers want thoughtful, well-developed applications from capable school developers who are committed to enhancing education in New Mexico. Please note that all successful applicants shall enter into a planning/implementation year, complete a planning/implementation year checklist, and negotiate a contract with their Authorizer prior to receiving approval from the Authorizer to commence operations. The templates used in the negotiations are available on PED's website.

Instructions and Timeframe

(The following dates are for applicants who intend to submit an application to the PEC. All applications must be submitted between May 1 and June 1.)

NOI	The Notice of Intent (NOI) must be submitted no later than the second Tuesday in January, on the form provided, to both the Public Education Commission and the local district where the proposed charter school is to be located.
Form and Point of Contact	All submissions should be prepared utilizing the <i>current year's New Charter School Application Kit</i> . The Executive Summary, the Application, and all appendices must be complete when submitted. Any questions regarding the Application and the review process must be directed to charter.schools@state.nm.us
Notice	Be sure that the CSD has the most current e-mail address and phone number for you <i>at all times</i> . Due to the limited number of CSD staff and heavy workload, the CSD will NOT send any notices or other information by hard copy unless required to do so by law.
Deadline: Charter Application	Charter Applications may be submitted between May 1 st and June 1 st . However, the deadline for submission of all materials to the PED's CSD is June 1st, by no later than the end of the day (5:00p.m. Mountain Time) .
Deadline: Public School Facilities Authority (PSFA) Master Facilities Plan/ Ed. Spec. Checklist	Charter applications must include evidence that the founders have completed and submitted a Facilities Master Plan/Ed. Spec. Checklist. The completed form must be submitted to the PSFA in April. The exact date will be provided in the training sessions. Find the Facilities Master Plan/Ed. Spec. Checklist form on the PSFA website. Please contact PSFA for more information.
Manner of Submission of the completed Charter Application	Only electronic copies will be accepted. All applicants <u>must submit an electronic version</u> of their new application. Submission accounts will be created and training will be provided during the new application training. If you have questions about submission, contact charter.schools@state.nm.us .
Technical Assistance Workshops	At least five Technical Assistance Workshops will be provided by the CSD, generally once per month, January – May. Applicant teams that submit a timely NOI will be notified of the details, dates, times, and locations for all trainings via email. Please be diligent about checking your emails and the CSD website for information regarding the Technical Assistance Workshops. (https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/options-parents-families/charter-schools/trainings-offered/). To RSVP, please send participant's name, school affiliation, position, and email address to charter.schools@state.nm.us .
Applications Provided to the PED	Copies of all received applications will be transmitted to the PEC on or before June 8.
Substantive Review Period (June 2 - 23)	A review team of outside charter school experts will read and analyze the applications. Each team is overseen by CSD staff.

Written Application Preliminary Analysis (June 28–June 30)	The review team’s preliminary analysis of the written application is provided to the applicant and the PEC <u>no fewer than four days</u> prior to the applicant team’s scheduled Capacity Interview date.
Capacity Interviews (July 5-9)	The Capacity Interview will be held in Albuquerque. The Capacity Interview is a critical component of the review process, and the founders’ key spokesperson must be available. In addition, if a particular person drafted a section in its entirety, that person should also be available to answer questions. This interview will be designed to demonstrate the founding group’s capacity to implement the school as planned in the Application.
Capacity Interview Preliminary Analysis (July 12-16)	The review team’s preliminary analysis of the capacity interview is provided to the applicant and the PEC <u>no fewer than seven days</u> prior to the applicant team’s scheduled Community Input Hearing date.
Public Hearing to Obtain Community Input (July 19-23)**	As provided by the New Mexico Charter Schools Act, the PEC will hold Community Input Hearings to allow the local community, including the local school district, the opportunity to provide comments on the application. In addition, the PEC will use this opportunity to obtain information from the applicants that may inform the commissioners, prior to taking an actual vote. Please note, the PEC expects that founders have a knowledge and understanding of all parts of their submitted application, including budget.
CSD Analysis (August 6)**	The CSD will send its analysis to the PEC and the applicant no later than two weeks prior to the PEC meeting. The analysis will be sent via email.
PEC Decision-Making Meeting (3 rd week of August)**	The PEC will hold a public decision-making meeting to: a) approve, b) approve with conditions, or c) deny the Application. At this meeting, the applicants will have an additional opportunity, prior to the decision, to address the PEC and to answer questions from the PEC members.

**These dates are subject to change based on conflicts beyond the control of the CSD and the PEC. The number of charter applications submitted to the PEC for consideration may influence these dates as well.

Glossary of Terms Relevant to the Application

Alignment of Curriculum: The curriculum of all public schools must be aligned with the New Mexico Common Core State Standards, Content Standards, Benchmarks, and Performance Standards. An alignment document—by subject and grade level—lists each of the performance standards, cross-referenced with the instructional materials, and a timeline for when they are addressed.

Assessment: A valid and reliable method(s), tool(s) or system(s) to evaluate and demonstrate progress toward—or mastery of—the academic and non-academic performance goals stated in the application.

Charter School Act: The Charter Schools Act, 22-8B-1 et. seq. NMSA 1978, allows the authorization of charter schools that are independent public schools. Charter Schools operate under charters granted for up to five years by the Public Education Commission (PEC) or local school districts, known as Authorizers. Once an Authorizer has awarded a charter, the new charter school organizes around the core mission, curriculum, theme, and/or teaching method described in its application. Charter schools are allowed autonomy, including control of their own budget, hiring their own employees, and other functions that the charter school is required to perform in order to carry out the educational program described in its charter. A charter school, on an annual basis, must demonstrate academic improvement, fiscal responsibility, and sound organizational operations that comply with the law.

In 2011, the Legislature amended sections of the Charter School Act to add and modify accountability requirements for charter schools and Authorizers. By using a Performance Contract and accompanying Performance Framework, charter schools have specific material terms they must meet. In addition, they are assessed by the indicators contained in the Performance Frameworks. The categories evaluated in the Performance Framework are Academic, Financial, and Organizational indicators. If the school is approved, the Authorizer negotiates terms of the Performance Contract, including mission-specific goals, with the charter school prior to the time that the school commences operations.

Instructional Hours: Hours in which regular students are in school-directed instructional programs, exclusive of lunch and breaks

Mission: The mission of the school is a concise statement that describes the purpose of the school and how the school will achieve it. The mission should answer questions, such as: 1) what outcomes for students does your school seek to accomplish; 2) how will it accomplish that; and 3) what is unique about your school? The best mission statements are clear, focused, compelling, and have a focus on outputs rather than inputs. The statement should be the driving force and rationale behind all the other components of the application.

Mission-Specific Goals: The Amended Charter School Act **requires schools to identify at least two mission-specific goals in the application** that set targets for the implementation of the school mission. Mission-specific goals **MUST BE** provided within the application. For the purposes of this application, the goals will show the capacity of the applicant to identify appropriate goals aligned with the mission of the proposed school.

MISSION-SPECIFIC GOAL SAMPLES: *The following are samples of strong mission-specific goals intended to demonstrate what complete SMART, mission-specific goals look like. In some cases, the school will need to provide a rubric or other supporting documentation.*

MISSION SPECIFIC GOAL	HOW IT WILL BE MEASURED	NOTES
Each year, at least 80% of Example Charter School's students, enrolled on the 40th and 120th day, will complete two STEAM credits with a C or better and will demonstrate proficiency on the associated EOC exam.	The school would need to provide rosters for all enrolled students and their course enrollment and final grades in STEAM courses, including EOC exams.	This goal demonstrates how a school with a specific mission can utilize state-normed assessments to measure their success.
Each year at least 85% of Example Charter School's students, enrolled on the 40th and 120th day, will complete a course of study in a specific art discipline with an average of C or better and will demonstrate proficiency in core technical skills through portfolios and performances evaluated by distinguished artists.	The school would need to provide rosters for all enrolled students and their course enrollment and final grades in arts courses. The school would need to develop rubrics for each arts course to evaluate the core skills in the discipline and identify distinguished artists in each discipline who will evaluate portfolios and performance.	Though this goal is school site developed (not normed) and a reliable baseline would not be available, it is strongly connected to a specific mission.
Each year, at least 80% of Example Charter School's students, enrolled on the 40th and 120th day, will complete a 20-hour community service project and will demonstrate increased civic responsibility.	The school must provide an appropriate pre-post survey with questions designed to gauge a person's commitment to community engagement or civic service. The school would be expected to identify specific questions or to use the survey to create an index score for each student. Pre and post surveys would be analyzed and students' change in attitudes would be analyzed to see if they are statistically significant. The school would also provide a verified list of all students enrolled, along with completed projects and hour logs.	This goal demonstrates a method schools could use to include qualitative goals. It is specific and, with an appropriate measurement tool in place, could provide unique information about the school. It should be noted that the research design requires a pre-post survey and significant data tracking and analysis, and some schools may not have the necessary resources.

Additional examples:

- 80 to 85% of students, enrolled on the 40th and 120th day, will score 91 or higher on the end of year Qualities for Success (Q for S) Assessment OR they will increase their beginning of year Q for S score by at least 10 points by the end of the year score on the Qualities for Success Report Card.
- 70 to 79% of students in each grade level, enrolled at both the 40th and 120th day, will have earned the following number of college credits: Grade 9 – 3 college credits; Grade 10 – 6 college credits; Grade 11 – 12 college credits; and Grade 12 – 24 college credits
- 80 to 89% of students, enrolled on the 40th and 120th day, will earn a score of 10 out of 12 possible points (83%), using the school-provided rubric, on the oral presentation of their electronic portfolio regarding an art medium and its relationship to the arts-integrated curriculum.
- Goal 1: 75 - 90% of students, enrolled on the 40th and 120th, day will score at or above the expectation for their grade level on the school's rubric for Ownership and Collaboration in experiential learning.
Goal 2: 70 - 80% of students, enrolled on the 40th and 120th day, will score at or above the expectation for their grade level identified in the school's rubric for Response Skills in Experiential Learning.

New Mexico Common Core State Standards, Content Standards, Benchmarks, and Performance

Standards: The State of New Mexico has established the Content Standards with Benchmarks and Performance Standards to be used by all public schools, including charter schools, and state-supported educational institutions to develop, deliver, and assess curriculum. New Mexico has adopted the Common Core State Standards. The NM Standards may be accessed at

<https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/instructional-materials/new-mexico-content-standards/>

NM Standards: Refers to New Mexico Content Standards, Benchmarks, and Performance Standards

Partnership: A partner organization is essential to the existence of the charter school and, without which, the school's mission cannot be accomplished. A "partnership" contemplates a formal relationship, rather than an informal or tangential agreement to provide ancillary support to particular school programs. A partner organization will be an entity that is committing funds or other resources to support the school's operation and long term existence. If the school's plan contemplates reliance on a partner, the applicant should provide evidence (draft contract, memorandum of understanding, or other document that evidences the commitment) that the proposed partner is willing to commit to that relationship on the condition the charter school is approved. A partner is **not** a major curriculum provider or other vendor who may be key but replaceable through a substitute entity.

Plagiarism: The practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own will not be tolerated. Be sure to credit authors and cite sources for any references in the application.

Plan: A plan, for purposes of this application, is a detailed statement of how an outcome will be achieved. A plan must include clear expectations, criteria, actions steps, timelines, benchmarks, and responsible parties.

Policy: A policy, for purposes of this application, is a guiding statement that reflects the principles, rules, or guidelines to be adopted by the school's governing body once the charter contract is formally executed. Policy statements contain clear expectations, criteria, timelines, and responsible parties to be implemented on behalf of the governing body.

Procedure: A procedure, for purposes of this application, is a statement of the specific methods to be used or course of action that will be taken to implement a policy in the day-to-day operation of the school. A procedure identifies actions steps, timelines, benchmarks, and responsible parties.

Remediation for students not achieving standards: Remediation, for purposes of this application, refers to a process, procedure, plan, or a variety of instructional support opportunities to assist individual students who are not achieving proficiency in the NM standards or other student performance expectations.

Scope and Sequence: A scope and sequence should include the following components:

- Grade levels, grade spans, age spans, or other sequence
- The knowledge, content standards/areas or organizing themes within the grades levels, grade spans, age spans, or other sequence.
- The time/number of lessons/etc. spent to address specific knowledge, content standards/areas or organizing themes.
- Sufficient coverage of all grade level content standards/areas required by the state.

SMART Format: Goals must be guided by the SMART format according to the format set forth in Mission-Specific Goals description above. The criteria for SMART format is as follows:

- **Specific.** A well-defined goal must be specific, clearly and concisely stated, and easily understood. Educational goals should be tied to learning standards that specify what students should know and be able to do for each subject or content area and for each grade, age, or other grouping level.
- **Measurable.** A goal should be tied to measurable results to be achieved. Measurement is then simply an assessment of success or failure in achieving the goal.
- **Attainable.** A goal should be attainable and realistic.
- **Rigorous.** A goal should be challenging, based on current or expected performance.
- **Time-Specific with Target Dates.** A well-conceived goal should specify a timeframe or target date for achievement.

Special Populations: Special populations may include students who have been identified with special needs that require an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), a Section 504 Accommodations plan, English language learner (ELL) instruction, or those who require access to ancillary services including, but not limited to, health, speech/language services, social work services, physical therapy, occupational therapy, etc.

State and Federal Accountability System Academic Performance Indicator: The School Grading Accountability System is the first part of the academic framework that is used to evaluate all public schools, including charter schools, in the state of New Mexico. The NM System of School Support and Accountability Report includes criteria components such as Math and Reading Proficiency, Student Growth, English Learner Process, Science Proficiency, Chronic Absenteeism, Educational Climate, Graduation Rates, and College and Career Readiness (the latter two being appropriate for high school only). Understanding the State Accountability System is critical in the development of your school, as it is a major component of your school's annual evaluation.

Unique: Unique, for the purposes of this application, describes specific methods that are different and innovative, based on reliable research, effective practices, or demonstrably successfully in schools with diverse characteristics, not currently available to students in the proposed geographic area. Compare and contrast with educational programs of other public schools that serve the same grade levels in that area.