

<b>Missouri Charter Public School Commission</b>	
<b>Approval of New Charter Schools</b>	<b>2.02</b>

**Policy**

The Commission decides whether to approve, deny, renew or close charter public schools are made based on recommendations provided by staff after the approved review process has been completed. This policy governs the approval of applications for new charter schools.

**Application Process**

Applicants must apply to the Commission for sponsorship using the Commission’s current Model Application or one approved specifically by the Commission. The Commission’s current Model Application and instructions will be posted to the Commission’s website.

The Commission is committed to conducting a rigorous evaluation of all charter school applications received consistent with national authorizing standards.

Applicants should not contact individual commissioners regarding their applications until after the application process is complete. In addition to the recommendations of review team members and staff, commissioners consider input from the community. So, applicants are encouraged to demonstrate community support for their proposal by including recommendations in their application.

The Commission will review applications within 90 days.

**Letters of intent and invitations to apply**

Interested applicants should submit a Letter of Intent and Prospectus. The Commission reviews the Letter of Intent and Prospectus and decides whether to invite the applicant to make a full application. Such applications are completed online. The Commission will only accept applications by invitation and through the online process.

**Review**

To review each application, the Commission assembles teams of internal evaluators and may engage external evaluators with relevant and diverse educational, organizational (governance and management), financial and legal expertise, as well as an understanding of the principles of accountability and autonomy. The Commission trains reviewers to ensure consistent standards and fair treatment of all applications. To ensure decision-making processes are free of conflicts of interest, review assignments are made only after a full disclosure of any potential or perceived conflicts of interest between reviewers and applicants.

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Reviews are based on applicable Missouri State Statute, Code of State Regulations, Principles and Standards, and the evaluation expectations outlined for each section. This includes the proposed charter school's mission, organizational design (with a focus on strong governance), academic program, and financial management.

The scoring criteria used for application review will be included with the application materials on the Commission's website. The application requirements will be modified for applicants seeking to replicate an existing school model. And, for all applicants that already operate a charter school in Missouri or other states, specific attention will be paid to past and current performance in each area.

**Public hearing and interview**

Based on the recommendation of staff and prior to a formal vote to approve sponsorship, the Commission will hold a public hearing on the proposed charter school. The public hearing will be held in the school district, and if possible, in the community or neighborhood the proposed charter school plans to locate. Applicants will have an opportunity to present their application to the public and Commission members. An open comment session is included for attendees to express support or opposition for the proposed school and to ask questions for the Commission to consider. If holding the hearing in public is not feasible, the Commission may hold the hearing virtually.

After the public hearing and prior to a formal vote to approve the charter school, the Commission will interview applicants and board members to assess their capacity to govern and operate a high-quality charter school in a fiscally responsible manner that advances the mission of the charter school. The Commission may also pursue questions based on the comments generated at the public hearing.

The public and media are invited to attend, but may not participate in the interview. The officers of the governing board and the school leader (if named) shall attend the interview. Up to eight (8) total representatives may attend the interview, including all members of the governing board, school leadership positions, and key personnel.

**Sponsored Schools**

If approved, Commission-sponsored schools will enter a performance contract for five (5) years. Renewals may be awarded for up to 10 years based on performance.

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Prior to opening, each new school is expected to fulfill all the requirements in the Commission’s Pre-opening Checklist. If certain foundational items or a significant number of other items are not completed by the deadlines set by the Commission, the school’s opening may be delayed. If the opening is delayed, the Commission may require the school to satisfy additional reporting requirements to ensure the school opens ready for students, families, and staff.

Once approved and operating, Commission-sponsored schools must meet specific requirements for oversight, such as using the Commission’s document reporting platform and setting aside funds in case of closure. These requirements are included in other Commission policies and may be referenced in the performance agreement.

**Definitions**

High-risk student: Pursuant to RSMo 160.405, at least one-third of schools sponsored by the Commission “shall be to schools that actively recruit dropouts or high-risk students as their student body and address the needs of dropouts or high-risk students through their proposed mission, curriculum, teaching methods, and services.”

New school application: An application to the Commission for sponsorship of a new charter public school.

New sponsor application: An application for Commission sponsorship of an existing charter public school at the end of its performance contract with another Missouri sponsor.

Performance contract: The “charter” is established through a performance contract executed by the Commission and the governing body of the approved school. It includes the original charter application.

Renewal application: An application to renew the current performance contract between the Commission and a charter public school.

Transfer charter: An existing charter public school applying to transfer sponsorship to the Commission from another Missouri sponsor, prior to the expiration of the school’s current performance contract with the other Missouri sponsor.