

WASHINGTON STATE CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION

# STRATEGIC PLAN

2025 - 2028



WASHINGTON STATE  
*Charter School Commission*

STUDENTS • INNOVATION • TRANSPARENCY

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Introduction ..... 3
  - About..... 3
  - Role..... 4
  - Value Proposition ..... 4
- Message From the Commissioners ..... 5
- Internal Factors ..... 6
  - Capacity Building & Sustainability ..... 6
  - Leadership Transition & Succession Planning..... 7
  - Organizational Growth & Maturity ..... 7
- External Factors ..... 8
  - Legislative Landscape..... 8
  - School Leadership & Support ..... 9
  - Key Insights ..... 10
- Vision, Mission, Core Values ..... 11
- Equity Statement ..... 12
  - Commitment..... 12
  - Actions..... 13
- Goals ..... 14
- Strategies ..... 15
  - Goal 1 ..... 15
  - Goal 2 ..... 16
  - Goal 3 ..... 17
- Measuring Success..... 18
- Acknowledgements ..... 19

# INTRODUCTION

## ABOUT THE COMMISSION

The Washington State Charter School Commission (Commission) is the main authorizer of charter public schools in Washington and is an independent state agency. It was formed with the mission of creating a rigorous and comprehensive proposal process for qualified non-profits wishing to open charter public schools. Additionally, the Commission monitors and provides oversight to ensure that schools and boards maintain high standards of quality. The Commission was formed following the passage of Initiative 1240 by state voters in 2012, which created the charter public school system in our state.

Charter public schools are established through a rigorous application process, reviewed by an 11-member Commission that sets clear criteria for prospective charter public school operators. The Charter School Act outlines the powers and parameters of charter public schools in Washington and grants authority to authorized districts and the state authorizer (the Commission) to oversee and facilitate the development of these schools. ([source](#))

[Commissioners](#) serve up to two, four-year terms and are appointed by the Governor, and legislators from the majority and minority in the State Senate and State House. Additionally, the State Board of Education and Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction each appoint a designee to serve on the Commission. The Commission has five standing committees: Executive, Authorization, Performance, Legislative and Finance. ([source](#))



## THE COMMISSION'S ROLE IN WASHINGTON'S PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

As the main authorizer of charter public schools, the Commission ensures that schools are complying with the charter contract and applicable rules and laws. The Commission evaluates and reports on the performance of each charter public school, conducts regular in-person visits, observes school board meetings, and performs quality school reviews. Additional duties include evaluation of performance frameworks, establishment of pre-opening conditions and oversight of an annual compliance calendar. ([source](#))

In addition to its oversight and regulatory role, the Commission can be responsive to the evolving needs of its partners and schools. The Commission may take on the role of a leader, driving initiatives and setting strategic priorities to advance educational excellence. At other times, the Commission acts as a collaborative partner, working alongside schools and other organizations to co-develop solutions and share resources. Additionally, the Commission provides support by offering guidance, training, and resources tailored to the needs of its partners. As the lead authorizer, the Commissioners provide rigorous oversight of charter public schools in a multi-pronged ecosystem that includes other public state agencies such as the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Auditor's Office. If a school is found to be out of compliance with its contract and/or the law, and efforts are not successful to resolve non-compliance, the Commission may revoke a school's contract.

While state regulations are concrete, the Commission continuously iterates its sector support initiatives based on feedback and emerging trends. This involves assessing effectiveness, gathering insights from partners and national experts, and adapting its methods to better align with the sector's needs. By embracing a cycle of evaluation and adaptation, the Commission remains agile and effective, fostering strong and productive relationships while addressing the dynamic challenges and opportunities within the sector.

## THE COMMISSION'S UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION

The Commission holds an unwavering commitment to cultivating a healthy and vibrant educational sector while ensuring equitable access to quality education. As a key agency in the charter public school landscape, the Commission provides leadership, partnership, and support tailored to the diverse needs of our schools. By setting the state's standards of quality for charter public schools, and fostering an environment of continuous improvement and innovation, the Commission drives sector-wide advancements and supports schools in delivering exceptional educational experiences.



# MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONERS

Dear Parents,

2024 marks a decade anniversary for the charter public school sector in Washington State. Charter public schools are tuition-free, open to all, non-sectarian public schools. Charter public schools are located across the state and 15 of the 17 total are authorized by the Commission. As of June 2024, charter public schools were serving nearly 4,700 students.

The Washington State Charter School Commission (Commission) is committed to deliberate listening, introspection, and evaluation to strengthen the work of the agency and delivery of its mission. This Strategic Plan is directly informed by the insights and expectations of those who we serve — families of charter public school students, the professional educators and administrators who operate charter public schools, and advocates of equitable education for all public school students. Formed to oversee qualified non-profits who wish to open a charter public school, the Commission also upholds its part of a rigorous system of accountability that ensures charter public schools meet the requirements of their charters, Washington state law, and the expectations of taxpayers and charter public school families.

This Strategic Plan sets the Commission’s vision and values, which are grounded in our [Educational Equity Policy](#). The Strategic Plan specifies the goals and strategies that will chart the course of the Commission’s work over the next three years. To develop the strategic direction and the work plan for Commission staff that comprise the heart of this plan, the Commission appointed a Strategic Planning Advisory Committee composed of four Commissioners to guide the work. The Advisory Committee worked with an organizational development consultant to conduct engagement through focus groups, interviews, and surveys of people involved in charter public schools in Washington, including school leaders, board members, families, students, partner organizations, and Commissioners and Commission staff. Together, we analyzed the findings, identified challenges, opportunities, and developed the goals and strategies for this plan.

In the weeks and months ahead, the Commission will implement the recommendations and associated actions from the plan and following the stress test of daily operations, will address any area of focus that needs to be adjusted to serve its purpose and the sector. At the heart of this work is an unwavering commitment to a diversity of Washington State students who deserve educational equity from which they and all communities will benefit.

The Commission is confident that ongoing student success will be a reminder that charter public schools are a public school option that is invaluable for many and will seek ways in which this regulatory agency can do its part in empowering charter public schools where students thrive.

We are grateful for the time and effort of community members that participated in the development of this Strategic Plan and are optimistic about and committed to the promise of our state’s charter public school students.

Sincerely,

*2024 Washington Charter School Commission*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 

# INTERNAL FACTORS IMPACTING OUR WORK

When developing this Strategic Plan, the Commission took stock of both internal and external factors that impact our work. By recognizing these factors, we can be aware of strengths and opportunities as we implement this Strategic Plan.

## CAPACITY BUILDING & SUSTAINABILITY

To foster a robust and sustainable organization, the Commission prioritizes capacity building as a foundational pillar. By investing in the professional development of our staff, we aim to enhance our ability to meet the evolving needs of our partners. Through continuous learning and skill enhancement, our team will be better equipped to deliver high-quality education services and innovate in response to emerging trends and challenges.



### Staffing

The Commission recognizes the critical role of each staff position in achieving our organizational objectives. The Commission is committed to creating and maintaining a dynamic and responsive staffing structure that reflects our strategic priorities. This involves regular assessments of current staff positions, identifying gaps, using equitable hiring practices, and evolving roles as necessary to address emerging needs.



### Skill Building

The Commission places a strong emphasis on skill building and has established a comprehensive professional development program to support the unique needs of staff. This program includes coaching opportunities, peer learning groups, and access to professional development on national best practices of charter authorization. By fostering a culture of continuous improvement, the Commission empowers team members to expand their expertise, adapt to new challenges, and contribute more effectively to the mission of the organization.



### Tool Development

To support staff in their roles, the Commission is dedicated to developing and implementing innovative tools and technologies. This includes the creation of user-friendly digital platforms, data management systems, and collaborative tools that streamline operations and enhance efficiency. By equipping the team with the best tools available, the Commission will improve its service delivery, cultivate greater collaboration, and drive organizational excellence.



### Building Systems That Live Beyond People

Sustainable success requires systems that endure beyond individual contributions. The Commission will focus on developing and institutionalizing processes, policies, and systems that ensure continuity and consistency. This involves documenting best practices, creating comprehensive procedures, and leveraging technology to automate routine tasks. By building resilient systems, the Commission will safeguard against disruptions and ensure long-term organizational effectiveness.

## **LEADERSHIP TRANSITION & SUCCESSION PLANNING**

Effective leadership is essential for the long-term success of the Commission. As part of our strategic plan, we will implement a robust leadership transition and succession planning process. This includes identifying and nurturing potential leaders within our organization and providing them with the necessary training and experiences to prepare for future leadership roles. By ensuring a smooth and seamless transition of leadership, the Commission will proactively support organizational stability and regulatory oversight of charter public schools.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH & MATURITY**

As the Commission continues to grow and mature, it will take a strategic approach to managing change. This includes regularly evaluating the organizational structure, governance models, and operational practices, to ensure they are aligned with the organization's growth trajectory. The Commission will also seek opportunities for strategic partnerships and collaborations that can enhance capacity and impact. By embracing a mindset of continuous improvement and adaptability, the Commission will thrive and achieve its mission of steady and consistent regulatory oversight and adaptable supports for charter public schools and those they serve.



# EXTERNAL FACTORS IMPACTING OUR WORK

## LEGISLATIVE LANDSCAPE



### Authorization

Growth constraints within the education sector, particularly due to the inability to authorize new charter public schools due to state law, present a significant challenge for the Commission. To overcome these barriers, the Commission will adopt a strategic approach focused on innovation and expansion within existing school communities. This includes forming strategic partnerships and optimizing current resources to serve more students. The Commission aims to foster sustainable expansions of current schools and increased impact within the constraints of the existing authorization landscape. Additionally, the Commission will advocate for policy changes that support sector growth, including the ability to authorize more schools, to create a more conducive environment for educational innovation and expansion.



### State Policies

State policies have a significant impact on the Commission's operations and strategic direction. To effectively navigate this landscape, the Commission will actively engage with policymakers, participate in advocacy efforts, and contribute to policy discussions. By maintaining a strong presence in policy forums and collaborating with other education organizations, the Commission will work to influence policies that promote equitable access to quality public education. Additionally, the Commission will ensure compliance with all relevant regulations and adapt strategies to align with policy changes.



### Funding

Securing adequate and sustainable public funding is a significant challenge for the charter public school sector. While the Commission is not responsible for directly funding charter public schools in the state, it recognizes the important need for charter public schools to have access to equitable, reliable and adequate funding in order to serve their communities. To address this broader issue in public policy, the Commission will evaluate funding proposals that could impact charter public schools and participate in the legislative process, as appropriate, as one of the primary agencies with oversight responsibilities and which has unique insights about the sector and charter public schools to help inform decision-makers.



## SCHOOL LEADERSHIP & SUPPORT



### Board & School Leadership

Effective school leadership is vital for the success of the charter public school sector. The Commission will work closely with school boards, administrators, staff, and volunteers to ensure they are equipped with the tools and resources necessary to achieve success. The Commission is committed to addressing the specific issues faced by schools, including the need for effective oversight and support. The Commission will work closely with schools to identify challenges and provide feedback in support of their academic, financial, and organizational performance. This includes offering technical assistance, connecting schools to resources, and compliance monitoring and intervention to address areas such as academic performance, financial sustainability, and governance. By providing comprehensive oversight and support, the Commission aims to create a robust and effective oversight system.



### Sector Supports

The education sector, particularly the charter public school ecosystem, is constantly evolving, presenting both challenges and opportunities for the Commission. To effectively navigate these transitions, we must remain agile and adaptive. This involves staying ahead of trends in authorization, school leadership, pedagogy, governance, school finance, and policy changes. The Commission will continue to monitor sector developments, identify opportunities for innovation, and implement improvements. Recognizing the intricate ecosystem that supports charter public schools, the Commission will collaborate with organizations that provide various facets of school support, including professional development, governance training, and operational assistance. By remaining flexible and forward-thinking, the Commission can smoothly navigate sector transitions and continue to deliver high-quality education services that meet the needs of our partners.



### Role Clarity

A significant challenge faced by the Commission is the lack of awareness and confusion regarding the roles and responsibilities within the charter public school sector. This ambiguity can hinder the Commission's ability to effectively position itself and build strong relationships with key partners, including school leaders, policymakers, and the community. Misunderstandings about the Commission's role in oversight, support, and advocacy can lead to mistrust and reluctance to collaborate. To address this, the Commission must engage in clear and consistent communication, clarifying its mission and the distinct functions it performs. By fostering a better understanding of its role, the Commission can strengthen relationships, enhance cooperation, and work more effectively towards improving educational outcomes in the charter public school sector.



# KEY INSIGHTS



## Community Engagement and Partnerships

The Commission recognizes the importance of strong community engagement and strategic partnerships in achieving our mission. The Commission is committed to building and maintaining meaningful relationships with local communities, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and other partners. Collaborative initiatives, joint projects, and active participation in community events will help foster a sense of shared responsibility and collective action.

In an ever-changing educational environment, the Commission must remain at the forefront of innovation. The Commission will actively seek opportunities to collaborate with other organizations, researchers, and thought leaders to develop and implement innovative educational solutions. This includes participating in pilot projects, sharing best practices, and co-creating new programs that address emerging challenges and opportunities.



## Role Clarity and Building Awareness

Raising public awareness about the importance of charter public schools and the role of the Commission is crucial for garnering support and building a positive reputation. The Commission will implement comprehensive outreach campaigns that utilize various media channels, including its website, newsletters, Commission meetings, and community events. By sharing success stories, highlighting impacts, and engaging with the public, the Commission will aim to increase its visibility and attract broader support for its initiatives.



## Balancing Accountability and Problem-Solving

The Commission plays a crucial role in ensuring oversight and accountability within the charter public school sector. This responsibility is fundamental to maintaining high standards and fostering trust among partners. However, the Commission also recognizes the importance of collaboration and support in driving the long-term success of schools. By pursuing its oversight duties with a commitment to problem-solving and innovation, the Commission aims to create a supportive environment where schools can thrive. This involves working closely with school leaders to identify challenges, share best practices, and co-create solutions that enhance educational outcomes. Through this dual approach, the Commission not only upholds rigorous accountability standards but also empowers schools to achieve sustainable growth and continuous improvement.

# VISION, MISSION, CORE VALUES



## VISION

Students across Washington state have equitable access to innovative learning opportunities that lead to educational success in the charter public school ecosystem.

## MISSION

The Washington State Charter School Commission is established as an independent state agency whose mission is to:

- (a) Authorize high quality charter public schools throughout the state, especially schools that are designed to expand opportunities for at-risk students;
- (b) Ensure the highest standards of accountability and oversight for these schools; and
- (c) Hold charter public school boards accountable for: Ensuring that students of charter public schools have opportunities for academic success; and exercising effective educational, operational, and financial oversight of charter public schools.



## CORE VALUES

**Equity:** *The structural, cultural, and relational barriers embedded in the public education system must be recognized and dismantled.*

**Innovation:** *Inspire new and emerging educational practices, perspectives, and experiences that create compelling opportunities for student success.*

**Accountability:** *Intentional, responsible stewardship of resources and services that create and sustain a healthy, connected charter public school sector for all students.*

# EQUITY STATEMENT

The Commission is committed to closing opportunity gaps between the state’s most and least privileged groups of students within the educational system. We have a moral and legal obligation to cultivate charter public schools where socio-economic status and protected groups status such as race, gender, language, sexual orientation, national origin, and disability cease to be a predictor of academic and life outcomes. Educational equity benefits all students and our entire community. This language is from the [Commission’s adopted Equity Policy](#).

## COMMITMENT

With the implementation of this policy, the Commission will:

- Only approve charter public schools designed to mitigate systemic barriers to improve access to students while demonstrating a financial and organizational model that maintains the school’s financial viability and compliance with all legal requirements;
- Renew charter public schools whose outcomes demonstrate increased student academic outcomes for all students while reducing the academic opportunity gap while demonstrating financial viability and legal compliance;
- Raise the achievement of all students in charter public schools while eliminating the predictability of student academic outcomes based on identities such as race, gender, language, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, socio-economic status and other protected group status;
- Identify and eliminate systemic barriers to improve access for students;
- Use equity in all decision-making;
- Advocate for equitable funding for all charter public schools at the state and philanthropic levels; and
- Annually review and adopt its Educational Equity Policy.



## ACTIONS

The Commission will utilize equity in all decision-making to ensure its work and the schools it authorizes will accomplish the above goals by implementing the following strategies:

- **Recruit, hire, develop, and retain** racially and linguistically diverse, culturally responsive, high-quality personnel that over time will more accurately reflect the student population authorized charter public schools serve.
- **Train** its workforce to strengthen employees' knowledge and skills to use an equity analysis to support schools as each school strives to eliminate disparities in achievement, course and program placement, and discipline.
- **Hold** schools accountable for student learning using multiple, disaggregated measures of student progress.
- **Revise, refine and update** the annual New School Application and charter renewal processes to align to its Educational Equity Policy to reflect the Commission's goal for schools to raise the academic achievement of all students and eliminate opportunity gaps between all student groups.
- **Revise, refine and update** its Academic, Organizational and Financial Performance Frameworks to align to its Educational Equity Policy to establish clear expectations for all charter public schools and provide each school with an annual assessment of their progress towards meeting each expectation.
- **Incorporate** educational equity outcomes of accountability into the Executive Director's annual performance evaluation process.
- **Provide** support and resources in the form of training and materials to each charter public school board of directors to develop and deepen their equity analysis and understanding of and skills in addressing the persistent opportunity gap that exist between students.
- **Engage** regularly with community and school partners to receive input and feedback to ensure successful alignment of the authorization and oversight processes to the Educational Equity policy.
- **Advocate** for equitable public funding for all charter public schools, at the legislative and philanthropic level so that each school receives the resources necessary to attain and maintain adequate facilities, hire, train and retain a workforce that reflects the diversity of their student body as well as provide the best instruction and supports to all students, particularly for students that have and continue to be systemically marginalized. ([source](#))

# GOALS



1

Increase the visibility of the Commission's role in the charter public school system.



2

Position the agency as a statewide sector leader to strengthen, improve, and align systems that support equitable student education.



3

Sustain a healthy charter public school sector by leveraging the Commission's unique oversight position to identify and help address opportunities and vulnerabilities in school performance and resources.



## Increase the visibility of the Commission's role in the charter public school system.

### STRATEGY 1.1

Amplify the importance of the charter public school sector by sharing information about the Commission and the charter public school system.

### STRATEGY 1.2

Expand the agency's communications and engagement practices.

### STRATEGY 1.3

Share stories about student and school performance.



## 2

**Position the agency as a statewide sector leader to strengthen, improve, and align systems that support equitable student education.**

### **STRATEGY 2.1**

Identify opportunities to cultivate strategic partnerships with mission-aligned organizations, agencies, and individuals.

### **STRATEGY 2.2**

Strengthen relationships with policymakers, community leaders, families, and partners in order to stay connected with current community conditions.

### **STRATEGY 2.3**

Establish role clarity among partners within the ecosystem of charter public schools.





# 3

**Sustain a healthy charter public school sector by leveraging the Commission’s unique oversight position to identify and help address opportunities and vulnerabilities in school performance and resources.**

**STRATEGY 3.1**

Identify current and emerging opportunities to build supportive and mutually accountable partnerships with charter public school boards and school leaders.

**STRATEGY 3.2**

Maintain and uphold standards for high quality school performance in order to best meet the needs of the charter public school community.

**STRATEGY 3.3**

Develop a diverse and qualified board of Commissioners that serve as the agency’s ambassadors in charter public school communities.

# MEASURING SUCCESS

## COMMITMENT TO ACCOUNTABILITY

The Commission's commitment to accountability is demonstrated through its dedication to modeling the same high standards and practices within the organization that it expects from its charter public school partners. Central to this commitment is the cultivation of a strategic learning culture, where continuous improvement and adaptive strategies are core principles. The Commission utilizes a coordinated and aligned approach to monitoring and reporting their progress toward these goals and strategies. These processes include setting clear performance metrics, conducting regular assessments, and maintaining open communication channels with their sector partners. By embracing a strategic learning approach, the Commission remains agile and responsive, adapting to emerging opportunities and challenges. This approach not only builds trust and credibility with its partners, but also reinforces the Commission's role as a leader for excellence in the charter public school sector.

## DATA-DRIVEN PRACTICES

To operationalize the data and reporting process, the Commission will utilize its established frameworks, tools, and processes. The agency's robust data-driven approach includes the use of Academic, Financial, and Organizational Performance Frameworks, along with Quality School Reviews, monthly board meetings, and regular charter public school visits. These tools facilitate continuous feedback and monitoring, ensuring comprehensive evaluation and the timely communication of results.

Additionally, the Commission's complaint and compliment process provides valuable insights into partner experiences, needs, and aspirations. By integrating these practices, the Commission fosters a culture of transparency and adaptability, effectively tracking progress toward their long term goals. This systematic approach ensures that the Commission remains responsive to the evolving needs of the charter public school sector while maintaining high standards of oversight, operational excellence, and robust support.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who contributed to the development of this strategic plan.

To the students, parents, and school leaders: your voices, insights, and experiences have been invaluable in shaping our vision and direction. Your participation ensures that this plan reflects the real needs and aspirations of our school communities.

We are also immensely grateful to our funding partners, whose support and belief in our mission have made this process possible.

A special thanks to the appointed 2024 Commission for their time, dedication, and thoughtful contributions throughout the process. Your commitment to this work has been essential in steering us toward our shared goals.

Finally, we want to acknowledge the hard work and expertise of the Commission staff and our consultant team. Your efforts have been critical in organizing, guiding, and executing this strategic planning process. Your collaboration and professionalism are deeply appreciated.

Thank you all for your commitment to ensuring a brighter future for our schools and communities.

## **APPOINTED COMMISSION**

Governor - Carla Rogenmuser  
Governor - Kyle Burleigh  
House Minority - Vickey Melcher  
Senate Majority - Christine Varela  
Senate Minority - Steve Litzow  
House Majority - Donald Felder  
SBE - Harium Martin-Morris  
OSPI - Matt Shultz

## **STAFF**

Jessica Debarros  
Kara Lowe  
Jess Saven-Barton  
Italiana Hughes  
Halma Abubakar  
Charmaine McCladdie  
Marcus Harden  
Scott Canfield  
Jill Riemer

## **CONSULTING TEAM**

Periscope Theory, LLC

## **CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL NETWORK**

Catalyst Public Schools: Bremerton  
Impact Black River Elementary  
Impact Commencement Bay Elementary  
Impact Puget Sound Elementary  
Impact Salish Sea Elementary  
Pinnacles Prep  
Pullman Community Montessori  
Rainier Prep  
Rainier Valley Leadership Academy

Rooted School Vancouver  
Spokane International Academy  
Summit Atlas  
Summit Olympus  
Summit Sierra  
Whatcom Intergenerational High School  
Why Not You Academy