



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

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ABOUT THE WASHINGTON STATE CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION

Washington State’s Charter School Commission (the Commission) was formed with the mission of creating a rigorous and comprehensive proposal process and to hold charters accountable to high standards of quality. The Commission is an independent state agency that exists to authorize high quality public charter schools throughout Washington with an emphasis on schools designed to expand opportunities for at-risk students, providing leadership and oversight that is consistent with national principles and standards of charter school authorizers and the provisions of Washington’s charter school law

Mission:

To authorize high quality public charter schools and provide effective oversight and transparent accountability to improve educational outcomes for at-risk students

Vision:

Foster innovation and ensure excellence so that every student has access to and thrives in a high quality public school

Values:

- Student Centered
- Cultural and Community Responsiveness
- Excellence and Continuous Learning
- Accountability / Responsibility
- Transparency, and Innovation

WASHINGTON STATE CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION

STRATEGIC AUTHORIZING VISION

The Commission is committed to creating an equitable and rigorous proposal process. From this process, the Commission seeks to authorize high quality schools that will significantly improve student outcomes, particularly for at-risk students.

The Commission seeks to build a diverse portfolio of school delivery models that expand the authority of teachers and school leaders, as well as encourage and accelerate the identification and use of best practices in teaching and learning. It also seeks to develop, test, and document innovative new ideas that can be replicated in other Washington schools.

The Commission expects schools to have authentic and sustainable connections to the communities they serve. These connections are evidenced by strong commitments from community and business stakeholders, systems for ensuring cultural sensitivity and responsiveness to all students and their families, and effective and engaged governance boards.

Utilizing multiple measures of student achievement, the Commission will hold schools accountable for student academic performance.

SECTION A: DEFINITIONS

A1. What is a charter school in the State of Washington?

A charter school is a public school that is governed by a non-profit board of directors. Charter Schools operate independently of local districts, maintaining a five-year charter contract granted by the Washington State Charter School Commission or an approved school district authorizer. Charter schools have the flexibility to organize around a core mission, curriculum, theme, and/or teaching method, as well as flexibility to set their own budget and staffing. In return for this flexibility, a charter school must produce positive results following the same academic performance standards as any public school in Washington. Charter schools are also subject to requirements and performance measures as outlined in their charter contract. A charter school may be a “new charter school” or a “conversion charter school.”

A2. What is a conversion charter school?

A conversion charter school is “a charter school created by converting an existing noncharter public school in its entirety to a charter school.” ([RCW 28A.710.010\(8\)](#)) Conversion charter schools cannot displace students enrolled at the existing public school and must have the capacity to enroll all existing students who wish to remain at the school after conversion. Applicants to establish a conversion charter school must also demonstrate that the conversion is supported by either a majority of:

1. the teachers assigned to the school; or
2. the parents of students at the school.

A3. What is the purpose of establishing charter schools?

The Washington State Charter School Commission’s policies regarding the purpose of establishing charter schools are:

1. To stimulate the development of innovative programs within public education;
 2. To provide opportunities for innovative learning and assessments;
 3. To provide high quality school options for students and families that will significantly improve student outcomes, particularly for at-risk students;
 4. To provide parents and students with greater options in choosing schools within and outside their school districts;
 5. To provide teachers with a vehicle for establishing schools with alternative, innovative methods of educational instruction and school structure and management; and,
 6. To provide models for replication in other public schools.
-

A4. What is a charter contract?

A charter contract is “a contract between a charter school and an authorizer that outlines the roles, powers, responsibilities, and performance expectations” for the charter school and authorizer. A sample contract can be found at the following link: <http://charterschool.wa.gov/applying/application-materials/>

A charter contract is entered into if a charter school’s application is approved by an authorizer.

A5. What does the Commission mean by Cultural Competency?

The Commission strongly encourages applicants and approved charter schools to demonstrate how they will implement the following concepts throughout their proposal, as well as in their school processes:

Cultural Inclusion

Inclusion is widely thought of as a practice of ensuring that people in organizations feel they belong, are engaged and are connected through their work to the goals and objectives of the organization. Miller and Katz (2002) present a common definition: “Inclusion is a sense of belonging: feeling respected, valued for who you are; feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others so that you can do your best work.” iii Inclusion is a shift in organization culture. The process of inclusion engages each individual and makes each feel valued and essential to the success of the organization. Individuals function at full capacity, feel more valued and are included in the organization’s mission. This culture shift creates higher-performing organizations where motivation and morale soar.¹

Culturally Responsive Education Systems

Culturally responsive educational systems are grounded in the beliefs that all culturally and linguistically diverse students can excel in academic endeavors when their culture, language, heritage, and experiences are valued and used to facilitate their learning and development, and they are provided access to high quality teachers, programs, and resources.²

Cultural Competency

Cultural competence provides a set of skills that professionals need in order to improve practice to serve all students and communicate effectively with their families. These skills enable the educator to build on the cultural and language qualities that young people bring to the classroom rather than viewing those qualities as deficits.

Cultural competence allows educators to ask questions about their practice in order to successfully teach students who come from different cultural backgrounds.

¹ Puget Sound Educational Service District. (2014). Racial Equity Policy. (p. 7) Seattle, WA: Blanford, S.

² Leadscape, National Institute for Urban School Improvement. (2010) Culturally Responsive Coaching for Inclusive Schools. (p. 4) Tempe, AZ: Mulligan, E. M., Kozleski, E. M.

Developing skills in cultural competence is like learning a language, a sport or an instrument.

The learner must learn, relearn, continuously practice, and develop in an environment of constant change. Cultures and individuals are dynamic – they constantly adapt and evolve.

Cultural competence is:

- Knowing the community where the school is located
- Understanding all people have a unique world view
- Using curriculum and implementing an educational program that is respectful of and relevant to the cultures represented in its student body
- Being alert to the ways that culture affects who we are
- Places the focus of responsibility on the professional and the institution
- The examination of systems, structures, policies and practices for their impact on all students and families viewing those systems as deficits.³

³ Center for Improvement of Student Learning, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.
<http://www.k12.wa.us/CISL/EliminatingtheGaps/CulturalCompetence/default.aspx>

SECTION B: APPLICATION PROCESS

B1. Who may apply to operate a charter school?

A “charter school applicant” must be a nonprofit corporation that is either a public benefit nonprofit corporation as defined in [RCW 24.03.490](#), or a nonprofit corporation as defined in [RCW 24.03.005](#) that has applied for tax exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

B2. Are there any nonprofit corporations that are not eligible to operate a charter school?

Nonprofit corporations that are sectarian, religious, or do not meet the definition of a public benefit corporation are not eligible to operate a charter school

B3. What is the proposal review process?

The proposal review process consists of:

- An applicant’s submission of a narrative proposal to the Commission. The narrative proposal is a comprehensive description of the proposed school’s educational, organizational, and financial plans. The proposal is submitted both online and in hardcopy.
- A review of the application by a multi-member evaluation team.
- A capacity interview of the applicant conducted by the evaluation team. The capacity interview is intended to give applicants the opportunity to present their plan and demonstrate their capacity to open and maintain a high-quality charter school by answering specific questions about their proposal and engaging in a performance task.
- A public forum hosted by the Commission for the applicant. The purpose of the public forum is to provide, without limitation, an opportunity for parents, community members, local residents, and school district board members and staff, to learn about and provide input on each application.
- Commission Resolution Meeting. The Commission meets during a regularly scheduled public meeting and passes resolutions to deny or approve a charter school application. Applicants will be allowed to provide a short presentation regarding their proposal and then engage in a question and answer session with Commissioners.

All criteria will be subject to review for cultural responsiveness per [Chapter 108-20 WAC Application](#), the terms of the solicitation (request for proposals) and its associated rubric.

Specifically, the Commission strongly encourages applicants to demonstrate how they will implement

the following concepts throughout their proposal:

Cultural Inclusion

Inclusion is widely thought of as a practice of ensuring that people in organizations feel they belong, are engaged and are connected through their work to the goals and objectives of the organization. Miller and Katz (2002) present a common definition: “Inclusion is a sense of belonging: feeling respected, valued for who you are; feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others so that you can do your best work.” iii Inclusion is a shift in organization culture. The process of inclusion engages each individual and makes each feel valued and essential to the success of the organization. Individuals function at full capacity, feel more valued and are included in the organization’s mission. This culture shift creates higher-performing organizations where motivation and morale soar.⁴

Culturally Responsive Education Systems

Culturally responsive educational systems are grounded in the beliefs that all culturally and linguistically diverse students can excel in academic endeavors when their culture, language, heritage, and experiences are valued and used to facilitate their learning and development, and they are provided access to high quality teachers, programs, and resources.⁵

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Cultural competence provides a set of skills that professionals need in order to improve practice to serve all students and communicate effectively with their families. These skills enable the educator to build on the cultural and language qualities that young people bring to the classroom rather than viewing those qualities as deficits.

Cultural competence allows educators to ask questions about their practice in order to successfully teach students who come from different cultural backgrounds.

Developing skills in cultural competence is like learning a language, a sport or an instrument.

The learner must learn, relearn, continuously practice, and develop in an environment of constant change. Cultures and individuals are dynamic – they constantly adapt and evolve.

Cultural competence is:

- Knowing the community where the school is located
- Understanding all people have a unique world view

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⁵ Leadscape, National Institute for Urban School Improvement. (2010) Culturally Responsive Coaching for Inclusive Schools. (p. 4) Tempe, AZ: Mulligan, E. M., Kozleski, E. M.

- Using curriculum and implementing an educational program that is respectful of and relevant to the cultures represented in its student body
- Being alert to the ways that culture affects who we are
- Places the focus of responsibility on the professional and the institution
- The examination of systems, structures, policies and practices for their impact on all students and families viewing those systems as deficits.⁶

B4. To whom is the charter granted?

A charter is granted to the nonprofit applicant; the nonprofit's board of directors is responsible for ensuring that the nonprofit satisfies its obligations under the charter. The Commission or an approved authorizer and the board of directors of the approved charter school must execute a charter contract by which the nonprofit corporation agrees to operate a public charter school that provides educational services that meet basic education standards as well as any additional standards that are essential components of the education program described in the application. In return, the applicant receives allocations of public funds to be used for such purposes as set forth in applicable statutes and in the charter contract.

B5. How many charter schools may be established?

[RCW 28A.710.150](#) states that 40 charter schools may be established over five year period, and no more than eight schools may be established in a year. However, in years where the total number of charter schools established is less than eight, the remaining slots may be transferred to the following year. For example in the 2014-2015 school year one charter school was established, leaving seven slots added to the eight existing slots for the 2015-2016 school year.

B6. Who reviews and evaluates charter school applications and the capacity of an applicant?

The Commission's application review and evaluation process consists of several components that are explicitly stated in the governing solicitation (Request For Proposals). Review and evaluation may include:

1. Evaluation by a multi-member evaluation team who are qualified, impartial, and disclose any conflict(s) of interest before performing evaluations;
2. Due diligence research and review;
3. Review by Commission staff;
4. Public comment;
5. A public forum;

⁶ Center for Improvement of Student Learning, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

<http://www.k12.wa.us/CISL/EliminatingtheGaps/CulturalCompetence/default.aspx>

6. Capacity interviews and applicant engagement; and
7. Review by the Commissioners.

The application evaluators and Commission staff will recommend approval or denial to the Commission regarding the applications reviewed. The Commissioners consider the recommendations of the evaluators and other evidence collected through the application review process when deciding whether to approve or deny authorization.

B7. What is the capacity interview?

Applicants (all individuals that are listed as members of the applicant team) are required to participate in a capacity interview following the timely submission of a complete application. Applicants have the opportunity to present their plan and demonstrate the non-profit corporation's organizational, academic, and financial capacity to open and maintain a high-quality charter school. Additionally, the capacity interview serves as an opportunity for the evaluation team to ask questions, seek clarification, and gain additional information regarding the application. The interview responses are taken into consideration along with the application review scores, and are used to inform the final recommendations made by the independent evaluators.

B8. What role do the independent evaluators play in the application review process?

The role of the evaluation team in the application review process is solely advisory; the evaluation team's final recommendation is not binding, and the Commission holds the final authority to approve or deny an application.

B9. As an applicant, why must I participate in a public forum?

Public forums are a critical component of the application review process. The public forum provides an opportunity for the applicant to engage directly with up to four Commissioners, as well as for the community potentially affected by the applicant to learn more about and to provide input on each application. The public forum information supplements the team evaluation and may be used by the Commission to evaluate the applicant.

B10. When should an applicant secure a facility?

During the application process, applicant groups must provide a viable plan for identifying a potential facility for the proposed charter school. This requires a significant amount of diligence given the difficulties associated with identifying an affordable facility that meets all of the legal and zoning requirements for the operation of a school. However, applicants who enter into lease or purchase agreements before being authorized and receiving a charter contract, do so at their own risk; a secured facility does not guarantee approval of a charter school application or a charter school contract.

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B11. Are there any legal constraints regarding charter school facilities?

Charter school facilities must adhere to applicable local and state health and safety requirements, zoning and planning laws, and other occupancy requirements. Charter schools must also be nonsectarian in all aspects, including operations, which impacts charter schools' ability to lease or rent from a religious organization.

B12. What are the constraints associated with the lease or rental of a facility from a sectarian or religious organization?

The United States Constitution and the Washington State Constitution both place constraints on the interactions between public entities, such as charter schools, and religious or sectarian organizations. In the context of lease or rental of charter school facilities from a religious or sectarian organization, charter schools need to ensure that they avoid even an appearance that the school is affiliated with or influenced or controlled by a religious or sectarian organization. There are many factors that could lead to such an appearance, and it is impossible to anticipate and address all of those factors in a FAQ. However, there are a number of steps that a charter school can take in an effort to minimize the appearance of support, affiliation, or control:

- Any lease or rental agreement should be the result of an arm's length negotiation, with the amount paid under the agreement being as close to fair market value as possible. Payment significantly above or below fair market value it can create the appearance of support, affiliation, or control;
- The physical space being leased or rented by the school should be under the sole control of the charter school, for the school's exclusive use;
- There should be no religious symbols, pamphlets, icons, messages, books or other paraphernalia on display at the entrance to the charter school, in entries or hallways leading to the leased or rented space, or inside the leased or rented space itself;
- There should be complete separation between the charter school administration and the sectarian organization and contact between the two should be limited to interaction as a landlord tenant or, ideally, through a property management organization;
- The religious or sectarian organization should have no control over the charter school and its operations;
- Students should have no contact with representatives or members of the religious or sectarian organization, or religious or sectarian activities;
- The building should not have the external appearance of a religious or sectarian organization, it should not have signs or religious symbols on the outside of the building and, ideally, would not be on property that is adjacent to, or near, buildings that are occupied by the religious or sectarian organization;

- Extracurricular activities cannot involve religious affiliation or interaction with a religious or sectarian organization;
- The charter school board should not be affiliated with the religious or sectarian organization from whom they are leasing property and no church or sectarian leader should serve in any capacity with the charter school;
- The lease or rental agreement must be non-sectarian in all provisions and should avoid provisions that give even an appearance of religious or sectarian influence;
- The lease or rental agreement must clearly vest control and decisions relating to the charter school with charter school board;
- The charter school should develop policies that contain safeguards that ensure that each of these steps are adhered to and ensure that there is not an appearance of endorsement or support of the sectarian organization.

B13. What criteria/standards does the Commission use in determining whether to authorize a school (or approve an application)?

The application and all associated documents will be evaluated and scored in accordance with the criteria set out in the rubric:

1. Exceeds;
2. Meets;
3. Partially meets; or
4. Does not meet.

The application will also be evaluated to determine whether the school is designed to serve at-risk students, students from low-performing public schools, and whether each component aligns with the overall mission, budget, and goals stated in the application and supporting documents. After evaluation of the application and supporting documents, the capacity interview, and the receipt of other documented evidence throughout the application review process, including public input, the Commission will determine whether to approve, approve with conditions, or deny an application. Preference will be given to applications for charter schools designed to serve at-risk student populations or students from low-performing public schools.

B14. Is there a sample successful application available to serve as an example for applicants?

The Commission encourages applicants to review the application archive at <http://charterschool.wa.gov/applying/application-archive/>.

The Commission has authorized eight (8) schools:

Excel Public Charter School
Grades 6-12
Opening 2015 in Kent

Rainier Prep
Grades 5-8
Opening 2015 in Seattle

First Place Scholars
Grades K-5
Currently serving students in Seattle's Central District

SOAR Academy
Grades K-8
Opening 2015 in Tacoma

Green Dot Public Schools, Washington State: Charter
Middle School
Grades 6-8
Opening 2015 in Tacoma

Summit Public Schools: Olympus
Grades 9-12
Opening 2015 in Tacoma

Green Dot Public Schools, Washington State: Green Dot
Seattle
Grades 6-12
Opening 2016 in South Seattle

Summit Public Schools: Sierra
Grades 9-12
Opening 2015 in South Seattle

Applicants should be aware that the RFP and its Rubric have changed since the approval of the above list.

B15. How soon after a charter contract is granted can a school be opened?

Applicant groups may propose to open in the fall of the following year after application approval or delay their opening for up to one additional school year. For applicant groups wishing to delay their opening, they must provide a compelling reason for the delay. An initial charter contract must be granted for a term of five operating years. The contract term must commence on the charter school's first day of operation. An approved charter school may delay its opening for one school year in order to plan and prepare for the school's opening. If the school requires an opening delay of more than one school year, the school must request an extension from the Commission. The Commission may grant or deny the extension depending on the school's circumstances.



SECTION C: FUNDING

C1. How are charter schools funded?

Charter schools are funded using the same formulas that apply to other public schools. Charter schools must comply with applicable reporting requirements to receive state and federal funding allocated based on student characteristics. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) allocates funding for a charter school including general apportionment, special education, categorical, and other non-basic education moneys. Allocations are based on the statewide average staff mix ratio of all non-charter public schools from the prior school year, as well as the school's actual full-time equivalent enrollment. Categorical funding is allocated to a charter school based on the same funding criteria used for non-charter public schools and the funds must be expended as provided in the charter contract. A charter school is also eligible to apply for state grants on the same basis as a school district.

C2. Will charter recipients be given funding to assist them during the pre-opening stage?

Currently, Washington does not have the federal Charter Schools Program (CSP) grant funds available for charter schools to use during the pre-opening stage.

C3. To what extent are charter schools required to provide pupil transportation?

Charter schools are required to provide transportation to eligible students: students whose route stop is outside the school's walk area; and students who are disabled and either non-ambulatory or incapable of protecting their own welfare while traveling to or from the school, or other location where special education services are provided. Charter schools are also required to provide transportation to homeless students to the same degree as other public schools. Charter schools receive funding for pupil transportation using the same funding criteria that apply to other public schools.

C4. Are charter schools entitled to federal funds or grants?

Yes, charter schools are eligible for federal entitlement funds and grants. On October 8, 2014 the U.S. Department of Education announced 27 new grants totaling \$39.7 million under the Charter Schools Program (CSP) to expand high quality charter schools, and open new charter schools across the nation. These grants will support charter schools' efforts to increase high-need students' success. Eight (8) charter schools in Washington State applied and were awarded CSP grants in 2014. These grants are awarded by two CSP programs. One program is focused on helping high-performing charter management organizations open new charter schools. The other program supports new charter schools located in states that do not have a state-level CSP sub-grant program. For more information, please

visit: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/charter/index.html>.



SECTION D: LAWS AND REGULATIONS

D1. Are laws and regulations waived for charter schools?

Charter schools must follow the same state educational standards, administer the same state assessments, and abide by almost all of the same state and federal laws and regulations as other public schools in Washington. Charter schools however have autonomy and flexibility to innovate and make decisions about staffing, curriculum, budgets, and learning opportunities to improve student achievement and outcomes.

D2. To what extent can charter schools contract with other entities in order to satisfy the terms of the contract?

Charter schools can enter into contracts with any school district, educational service district, or other public or private entity for the provision of real property, equipment, goods, supplies, and services, including educational instructional services and including the management and operation of the charter school to the same extent as other noncharter public schools, as long as the charter school board maintains oversight authority over the charter school. Contracts for management operation of the charter school may only be with nonprofit organizations. The charter contract between the school and Commission contains requirements regarding certain specified contracts that a charter school may enter into.

D3. What do the performance frameworks and state assessments mean for charter schools?

In Washington the Academic Component of the Performance Framework is aligned to the State Board of Education's accountability system, the Achievement Index. All public schools, including charter schools, must administer and report outcomes of Washington state assessments. These assessments and results are captured in the Academic Component of the Performance Framework. The Performance Framework (Academic, Organizational, and Financial) sets forth the academic, operational, and financial performance indicators, measures, and metrics that will guide the Commission's evaluation of each charter school. The Performance Framework's and annual mission specific performance targets are set by each charter school in conjunction with the Commission and are designed to help the school meet applicable federal, state, and Commission expectations.

D4. Do charter schools serve students with special needs and students who are English language learners?

Yes. Charter schools are public schools and are free and open to all students and must meet the

educational needs of all students. There are specific legal requirements regarding the education services that must be provided to all students. There are also specific legal requirements governing the education services that must be provided to students who are eligible for special education services and students who are English language learners. Those legal requirements are discussed on the OSPI website:

- <http://www.k12.wa.us/MigrantBilingual/BilingualProgram.aspx>
- <http://www.k12.wa.us/MigrantBilingual/TBIP-Guidelines.aspx>
- <http://www.k12.wa.us/MigrantBilingual/BilingualProgram.aspx>
- <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/ellresources.html>
- <https://www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/LawsProcedures.aspx>
- <https://www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/ResourceLibrary/default.aspx>
- <http://idea.ed.gov/explore/home>

D5. May students who are interested in enrolling at a charter school be given an entrance exam?

No. Charter Schools may not limit admission on any basis other than age group, grade level, or physical capacity of the school and must enroll all students who apply as long as they fall within these parameters. A charter school is open to any student regardless of his or her location of residence.

D6. May students and their families be required to attend interviews or informational meetings as a condition of enrollment?

No. Charter schools cannot require potential students and their families to attend interviews or informational meetings as a condition of enrollment.

D7. How does the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act affect Washington charter schools?

Because Washington charter schools are public schools, the NCLB requirements are applicable to charter schools in the state, including the requirement that teachers are highly qualified. See the federal No Child Left Behind Act home page at <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml?src=pb>, and other Washington web resources on NCLB: <https://www.k12.wa.us/ESEA/NCLB.aspx>.

D8. What are the minimum licensure/training requirements for charter school instructional staff?

At a minimum, charter school instructional staff are subject to the same licensure and training requirements as other public school instructional staff. This requires educators to maintain active certification and satisfy the professional and ethical standards governing educator conduct. Charter

schools may also rely on “people of unusual competence” if all of the legal criteria are satisfied before doing so.

Charter school staff in other fields requiring specific licensure (e.g. school nurse) are also subject to the same licensure and training requirements as other professionals in their fields. Charter school staff and employees may also be subject to additional training requirements as specified in the charter school application and the charter contract.

D9. What are the minimum licensure/training requirements for teachers regarding English language learner education in charter schools?

Charter Contract section 8.6 states Charter Schools shall provide resources and support to English language learners to enable them to acquire sufficient English language proficiency to participate in the mainstream English language instructional program. The School shall employ and train teachers to provide appropriate services to English language learners. The School will work to assure compliance with any and all requirements of state and federal law regarding services to English language learners. Schools may also work with local ESD’s for assistance in providing services for ELL students. Please be aware that these are only the minimum licensure/training requirements, and charter schools may be subject to other federal, state, and local requirements as provided by law.

D10. What are the minimum licensure/training requirements for teachers regarding special education in Washington charter schools?

Charter Schools must comply with all state and federal requirements for special education teacher qualifications. This includes employment of an educator who possesses the appropriate endorsements and, as required, has the highly qualified designation.

D11. How does a charter school know about quarterly and annual reporting requirements?

The Commission uses the Performance Framework and charter contract to guide the reporting and accountability requirements of all charters including the pre-enrollment report, quarterly reports, annual reports, and annual audits. In addition, a detailed annual compliance calendar will be available to all charter schools as well as an online management system that will assist all schools in the Commission’s reporting expectations. Charter schools will also have reporting obligations that are linked to receipt of funding. Charter schools are required to satisfy those obligations in addition to the obligations required by the Commission.

D12. What is the process for Renewal of a Charter Contract?

Per [Chapter 108-40-070 WAC](#), No later than May 1st, one school year before the expiration of the charter

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school contract, the charter school must notify the Commission in writing of its decision to apply for renewal of its charter contract. Once notification is received, Schools must submit a renewal application before the final school year begins, no later than June 1st.

Once the application is received and reviewed, the Commission will issue a written report of the schools performance (performance report). The school may submit a response to the performance report that corrects or clarifies information contained in the report, justifying renewal in response ineligibility presumptions if applicable.

In conjunction with the performance report, the commission will issue renewal application guidance. The renewal application guidance will, at a minimum, provide the charter school with an opportunity to:

1. Present additional evidence, beyond the data contained in the performance report, supporting its case for charter contract renewal;
2. Describe improvements undertaken or planned for the school; and
3. Detail the school's plans for the next charter contract term. The renewal application guidance will also contain the criteria that will guide the commission's renewal decisions.

For those renewal applications deemed eligible for renewal consideration, individuals designated by the Commission may conduct a school site visit (renewal inspection) during the renewal applicant school's final school year under the existing contract. A renewal inspection report will be issued in response to this inspection.

Interested parties, including members of the public, may submit written comments to the Commission regarding the potential renewal of a school's charter contract.

For applications deemed eligible for renewal consideration, commission staff will review renewal applications, the renewal inspection report, and other relevant information, and make a recommendation, based on the renewal criteria, to approve, deny, or conditionally approve the renewal application.

Finally, The Commission will pass a resolution approving, denying, or conditionally approving the renewal application. Renewal may be for a term of up to five years. This term may be shorter depending on the school's performance, demonstrated capacities and particular circumstances. The school must then execute a new contract with the Commission.

D13. What is the process for Revocation, and Termination of a Charter Contract?

[Chapter 108-40-120 through 190 WAC](#) outline the roles and responsibilities of the charter school board

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and staff, as well as the Commission in the event of a Revocation or Termination of a charter contract. These parties will work together to create a transition team to wind-down the operations of the school, as well as to develop a plan for reassignment of students.

D14. What systems are in place to assist Charter Schools with reporting?

The Commission has worked with Washington-based Charter Tools to develop an online platform that streamlines its application, authorization, and oversight processes. Starting with the 2015 RFP, all new school applications will be submitted and evaluated through Charter Tools. Once approved, schools will begin reporting and obtaining compliance status updates through Charter Tools.

D15. Can individuals with close family relationships (brothers, sisters, parents, etc.) serve on the same charter school board?

Washington state law governing non-profit corporations does not prohibit or constrain who can serve on a non-profit board. Similarly, the Charter Schools Act does not constrain who can serve on a charter school board. While the Commission recognizes these laws, it discourages charter school boards from having individuals with close family relationships serve on the same charter school board and prohibits the practice in certain circumstances. Best practice in non-profit governance also discourages individuals with close family relationships from serving on the same board due to the potential conflicts that could arise. Applicants that apply to the Commission, should disclose in their board documents if such a relationship exists. The Commission will examine the applicant closely and may question the applicant during the resolution meeting in order to discern whether adequate safeguards are in place to ensure that such a relationship will not pose a risk to the financial or organizational health of the charter school. For existing charter schools, if their board composition changes and individuals with a close family relationship begin to serve on their charter school board, the relationship must be disclosed to the Commission by completing the board disclosure statements. The Commission does prohibit close relations from constituting the majority of a quorum on a charter school board or committee of the board due to the inherent conflict of interest and the implications regarding compliance with the open public meetings act.

