

## Washington State Charter School Commission

### Expansion and Replication Policy

The Washington State Charter School Commission (the “Commission”) is committed to advancing its statutory mission of authorizing high quality charter public schools throughout the state, especially schools that are designed to expand opportunities for at-risk students, and to ensure the highest standards of accountability and oversight for these schools. (RCW 28A.710.070(1)).

The Commission recognizes that a promising strategy for advancing this mission is to encourage the expansion or replication of charter schools that have both a proven track record of performance success and also the capacity for successful growth. Expansion is the addition of new grades and/or new grade levels, or an increase of enrollment to a level significantly above that envisioned at the time that a school’s original charter contract was approved. Replication is the creation of a new school based on an existing school or school model.

At the same time, the Commission acknowledges that expansion or replication attempted without the requisite preparation and support, can lead to less successful results in the expanded or new schools but can jeopardize the original schools’ initial successes. The operation of one or more existing charter schools is no guarantee that a school operator has the capacity to expand or replicate its existing schools successfully while maintaining its current successes. Success in one location or with certain grades does not assure success in another location or serving different grades.

Therefore, in order to pursue this strategy, the Commission shall implement the following measures:

- Consider proposals and in some cases, encourage proposals for replication or expansion from operators of one or more existing charter schools with strong records of high academic, financial, and organizational performance, based on multiple years of data using multiple measures and in absolute terms, not merely relative to the performance of other schools.
- Establish requirements and evaluation criteria for applications for proposed replication or expansion that are distinct from the requirements and evaluation criteria for an application for a new school.
- For an application from an operator of multiple schools, consider the performance record of all the schools in the school model for which replication is proposed.
- Carefully evaluate the applicant’s capacity and preparedness to implement successfully the proposed expansion or replication while maintaining the high performance of the applicant’s current school(s).
- For an applicant that holds one or more contracts from another authorizer, contact that authorizer about the performance of, and outlook for, the operator’s schools and the operator’s interactions with the authorizer.

- Require the applicant to identify the needs that its proposed expansion or replication will address, considering not only community interest but a market analysis made with reference to the existing schools, programs, and student enrollment data and projections in the area to be served.
- Identify, and attempt to reduce, barriers to replication and expansion by successful charter schools, including, if appropriate, an expedited application process for operators of schools currently authorized by the Commission.
- Evaluate differently a proposed expansion that actually is the proposed merger of two or more existing schools, considering carefully the separate performance records of the schools proposed to merge.

In addition, the Commission may implement the following measures:

- Approach schools that are currently authorized by the Commission, and that have strong performance records, about their potential interest in expansion or replication.
- Proactively identify unmet educational needs in the state, especially inadequate opportunities for at-risk students, and encourage proposals from highly successful charter operators specifically to address these identified needs.