



Roadmap for Charter School Development

(Adapted from US Charter School's "Steps to Starting a Charter School")

1. Exploration Process

Investigate Maryland State laws, policies and available funding
Review Maryland authorizing process
Visit charter schools
Conduct research on charter schools, school models and design, and related areas
Assess community and student needs
Research district context
Identify application due dates for the district
Schedule an appointment to review successful charter applications in the Baltimore City charter school office (Even if you are not applying in Baltimore). These are public documents.

2. Initial Design Process (3-6 months)

- Form a core design team
 - Assess skills, access experts
 - Ensure that design team is diverse in skills and experience
- Articulate initial vision for the charter school
- Investigate applying for nonprofit and tax-exempt status
- Engage with the community
 - Identify community members (including planning group members, community leaders, and parents/families) to engage
 - Hold community meetings
 - Share student needs assessment
 - Share vision for school or work with community members to collaboratively develop vision for school
 - Solicit input from community members
- Develop clear vision and mission statements
- Create a plan that maps out how the design team will prepare the major design areas below
- Conduct research and reach out to experts in each major school design area, as needed:
 - Educational program design
 - Governance
 - Budget/Finances
 - Facilities
 - Other

- Create a basic written description of your ideas for a new charter school, including major design areas
 - Share prospectus with community members, school board leaders, potential funders and others to engage them and solicit further input for your school design
- Develop a strategy for gaining district support
- Identify possible facilities for the school
- Identify dates to apply for national charter school start-up funding; begin to raise additional funds, if needed

3. Major Design Areas (6-12 months)

- Educational program
 - Define educational approach and goals
 - Consider whether you will contract with a nonprofit charter management organization (EMO or CMO)
 - Define school academic standards
 - Develop or select curriculum and instructional methods
 - Develop or identify assessment methods
 - Develop special education plan
 - Develop professional development plan
 - Develop instructional calendar and daily schedule
- School culture and climate
 - Articulate vision for school culture and climate, and a strategy for developing them for both students and teachers
- Parent and community engagement strategy
- School governance
 - Draft board bylaws and policies
 - Create an administrative structure
 - Identify school leaders and/or recruitment strategy
 - Identify board members and/or recruitment strategy
- School staffing
 - Identify staffing needs and develop recruitment plan
- Budget and finances
 - Develop school budget and financial plans
- Facilities and operations
 - Tentatively secure possible facilities for the school
 - Develop operations plans
- School accountability plan

- Write an accountability plan that incorporates accountability for academic achievement, sound fiscal management and governance
- Address other application requirements (including plan for liability and insurance coverage, transportation plan, and other areas)
- Continue building community and school board support for your charter school proposal

4. Applying for the Charter

- Draft the charter application
 - Incorporate all elements required by law
 - Address any application requirements of your district
 - Provide detailed information on each major design area for your school
- Review, review, review
- Ensure that charter school proposal is comprehensive, addresses all required areas, adequately addresses concerns identified by school board/authorizer, and provides a solid framework for a high-quality charter school
- Assess whether you have gained sufficient school board support
- Submit completed charter school proposal to local school board
- Apply for the MSDE CSP Grant- charter school planning and implementation funding

5. Pre-Operations/Incubation: Getting Ready to Open (8-12 months)

- Finalize formal operating agreements with the sponsor district staff that identify services they will provide and the terms under which they will provide them
- Recruit and hire staff
- Recruit any additional board members
- Recruit and admit students
- Orient staff and bring them into the planning process
- Formalize the instructional program
 - Refine detailed curriculum, instruction and assessment plans
 - Choose and purchase instructional materials

- Finalize detailed school calendar and daily schedule
 - Create exact professional development schedule based on overall plans
 - Prepare facility and support services
- Fiscal support (accounting, budget, payroll, banking, auditing, purchasing)
- Transportation
- Food service
- Insurance
- Staff benefits (non-profit)
- Telecommunications and technology
- Other
- Formalize relationships with community groups, supporters, the sponsor district, the media, MAPCS, and other partners

6. Operating: Opening the Doors

- Formally open the doors and celebrate the commencement of the school
- Transition school's governance structure from initial "start-up" stages to one of on going policy-making and oversight
- Deepen relationships with community groups, supporters, the sponsor district, the media, MAPCS, your legislators and other partners