



CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION EVALUATION RUBRIC  
2026

<b>School Name</b>
<b>Receipt Date</b>
<b>Hearing Review Date</b>

**After a charter application is deemed to be complete, the evaluation rubric provides the sponsor with a means of determining the quality of the application. The design criteria and several indicators of quality are provided for each application component.**

## Introduction and Guiding Information

The South Carolina Charter School Application Evaluation Rubric is intended to guide reviewers through an evaluation of the key components and criteria as outlined in the South Carolina Charter School Application Guidance.

When reviewing the applicant’s response to each section, reviewers should determine if the response for each section meets the standard, partially meets the standard, does not meet the standard, or falls far below the standard; each section of the rubric outlines key characteristics of a response that “Meets the Standard.” In the table below, each of the four ratings is defined:

Rating	Definition
Meets the Standard	<i>The response reflects a thorough understanding of key issues. It addresses the topic with specific and accurate information, presents a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate, and the applicant’s capacity to carry out the plan effectively.</i>
Partially Meets the Standard	<i>The response meets the criteria in many respects, but lacks detail and/or requires additional information in one or more areas.</i>
Does Not Meet the Standard	<i>The response meets the criteria in some respects but has substantial gaps in several areas.</i>
Falls Far Below the Standard	<i>The response is undeveloped, or significantly incomplete, or otherwise raises concerns about the sustainability of the plan or the applicant’s capacity to carry out the plan effectively.</i>

Using the provided standards and possible ratings, reviewers should score each section based on the evidence found in the application. Within each section, space is provided for reviewers to indicate areas of strength, areas of weakness, and evidence which may be used to support the assigned rating. Note that evidence should be as factual and objective as possible.



**Rating:**

## **2. Curriculum and Instructional Model**

**A response that “Meets the Standard” will include the following:**

### **2.a Instructional Model**

1. An introduction and summary of the educational program to include an overview of the curriculum and instructional design, the guiding educational philosophy, and how the educational program aligns to the mission of the school; included should also be an explanation of how the education program will improve student learning. The response addresses any non-negotiable elements of the school model, including any distinctive learning or teaching techniques to be used. A brief description of the evidence that promises success for this program with the anticipated student population is also included.
2. A description of how the educational program is research-based and data-driven including why the selected curriculum was chosen for the anticipated population of students.
3. An explanation of how the charter school will meet or exceed the academic performance standards and expectations, including how the school will ensure alignment with the academic standards adopted by the State Board of Education.
4. A description of the methods, systems, and development teachers will have available for adapting the curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of all students. The response also includes a description of the school’s Response to Intervention (RtI) plan and what specific social-emotional and academic supports teachers will use to support students, including students i) above or below grade level, ii) with disabilities, iii) identified as gifted and talented, and iv) requiring Multilingual Learners (MLs) services.
5. A discussion of the systems and structures the school will implement for students at risk of dropping out or not meeting grade level or graduation requirements.
6. For a charter school offering high school grades, if applicable: a description of how the school will meet the state’s graduation (exit) requirements to include an explanation of how students will earn credit hours, how grade-point averages will be calculated, what information will be on transcripts, and what elective courses will be offered. If graduation requirements will exceed state and district standards, an explanation of the additional requirements is included.
7. ***Additional Requirements for Replication Schools:***
  - a. Describe any changes in instructional methodology and strategies in your new school. Why are these changes being implemented? How will you know if they create the intended impacts and create rigorous instruction?
  - b. Explain the organization’s approach to replicating and implementing the curriculum and instructional design among multiple schools.
  - c. How will you ensure the fidelity and consistency of your instructional methodology and strategies across sites?

**Areas of Strength:**

**Areas of Weakness:**

**Evidence:**

**Rating:**

### **2.b Educational Structure**

8. A description of any unique features, such as a non-traditional school year, longer school day, key partner organizations, multiple campuses, school culture, etc.
9. Information regarding the proposed charter school's grade levels to be served, the grade levels upon opening, and the growth plan (if the school does not plan to initially open with all grade levels).
10. The size of the school at full capacity, including the number of classes per grade level and the number of students per class.
11. A description of the basic learning environment (e.g., classroom-based, independent study), including class size and structure.
12. A description of the structure of the school day and school week for each division. Included is the number of instructional hours/minutes in a day for core subjects such as language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. The response should include: the length of the school day, including start and dismissal times and the minimum number of hours/minutes per day and per week that the school will devote to academic instruction in each grade.
13. An explanation of how the instructional design, learning environment, class size and structure, curriculum, teaching methods, and schedule will be optimal for student learning and how it will support the mission of the school.

**Areas of Strength:**

**Areas of Weakness:**

**Evidence:**

**Rating:**

**2.c Professional Development**

14. Describe the components of the school's professional development plan for all staff (teachers, leaders, other staff) and how it will support effective implementation of the educational program. How does the plan align with the vision and core academic priorities of the school? How will the plan be evaluated?

**Areas of Strength:**

**Areas of Weakness:**

**Evidence:**

**Rating:**

**2.d Virtual Offerings, if applicable**

*If the proposed charter school plans to offer virtual courses, the response should include the following information:*

15. Lists the currently developed courses that are ready for curriculum alignment
16. Includes access to one course per level that can be previewed by the SCDE and sponsor to assess depth of work necessary for curriculum alignment
17. A concise description of how the proposed charter will comply with the 25 percent real time requirement
18. A clear timeline of how curriculum development will be completed and then approved by the SCDE
19. A description of how much teacher interaction students will receive within the online instruction
20. A description of the portal to be used and how it works
21. A description of how the applicant plans to comply with the teacher requirements in S.C. Code Ann. § 59-40-50.

**Areas of Strength:**

**Areas of Weakness:**

**Evidence:**

**Rating:**

### 3. Serving Students with Disabilities and Special Populations

**A response that “Meets the Standard” will include the following:**

1. Clear identification of the types and size of the various populations that the school expects to serve and the basis for these assumptions.
2. A detailed discussion of how the curriculum, daily schedule, staffing plans, and support strategies and resources of the proposed educational plan will meet diverse needs of any special populations or any modifications to the educational plan that will be made in order to do so;
3. A description of the school’s plan to provide a continuum of services in the least restrictive environment.
4. Outline which clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of the charter school and proposed sponsor, as well as an explanation of the partnership between the two (*to include an explanation of any contracted services between the proposed school and a local school district*).

**Areas of Strength:**

**Areas of Weakness:**

**Evidence:**

**Rating:**

#### 4. Goals, Objectives, and Assessment Plan

##### 4. A response that “Meets the Standard” will include the following:

1. Goals that are appropriate and manageable and will provide evidence that the school is advancing its mission and meeting the purpose of S.C. Code Ann. § 59-40-20 including closing achievement gaps, as applicable are clearly outlined. Goals should be “SMART” (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic of the school’s mission, and time-based).
2. A summary of test scores, attendance rates, or other data of the residential district which will be used as a baseline and how this data will be used to establish goals for the school.
3. Strategies to meet the goals and objectives that reference the educational program section.
4. A clear description of the diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments including state-mandated assessments with baseline data gathering and details on the types of assessments. The response includes a discussion of why the assessments were chosen, the plan to administer the selected assessments, and how the results will be used to inform instruction. The response should also address how the data will be used to measure and evaluate academic progress – of individual students, student cohorts, and the school as a whole – throughout the school year, at the end of each academic year, and for the term of the charter.
5. A detailed plan to monitor progress toward meeting the goals and objectives of the school and how the school will make modifications based on data, including revising and redirecting professional development and instruction is included in the response.
6. **The following requirements only apply to applicants proposing to replicate an existing charter school:**
  - a) A brief description of the academic performance of the school to be replicated is provided. The response should address if the goals that were set have been met. If not, the response should describe the corrective action plan used to address those goals which have not been met.
  - b) The response discusses any achievement gaps that were/are present at the school to be replicated and how they were/are being addressed.

**Areas of Strength:**

**Areas of Weakness:**

**Evidence:**

**Rating:**

## Section II: Organizational Plan and Capacity

Please review the characteristics of a response which Meets the Standard and indicate areas of strength, areas of weakness, and a rating using the definitions provided on page 2 of this document. Please also share evidence below to support your ratings.

### 1. Governing Board

#### A response that “Meets the Standard” will include the following:

1. Identification of the key members of the founding group/planning committee. *Key members are individuals who will play a substantial and ongoing role in the school’s development, governance and/or operation, and thus will share responsibility for the school’s outcomes.* The response provides a brief biography of each member, highlighting what experience they bring to the proposed school and any leadership experience and credentials.
2. A brief description of how and why the founding group/planning committee decided to form a school in South Carolina.
3. A discussion of the governance structure of the proposed school, including the primary roles, powers, and duties of the governing board and how it will interact with and evaluate the school leader. Included is the nature and extent of involvement by key stakeholder groups and an explanation of how the identified structure and composition will ensure that the school will be an educational and operational success and that there will be an active and effective representation of key stakeholders. The response also includes a description of the current and desired size and composition of the governing board. *The composition of the board must be aligned with the requirements stated in S.C. Code Ann. § 59-40-50 (B)(9).*
4. A description of how governance will transition from the charter committee to the governing board in the first year of operation.
5. The process to appoint or elect new members of the board, including when and in what manner elections will be held that ensure proper participation of parents and/or employees of the school in voting in a manner that is consistent with the school’s by-laws is clearly outlined. The response will include answers to the following questions: How will the board expand and develop over time? How and on what timeline will new members be recruited and added, and how will vacancies be filled? What are the priorities for the recruitment of additional board members?
6. Clearly outlined plans for building the capacity of the governing board and professional development plans to include what kinds of orientation or training the new board members will receive, and what kinds of ongoing development existing board members will receive. The plan for training and development should include a timetable, specific topics to be addressed, and any requirement to participate.
7. A description of the relationship of the governing board to the school’s administrators, staff, parents, and students.
8. The response clearly describes any advisory bodies or councils that are in place or will be formed, including the roles and duties of each. For each identified group, a description of the following is included:
  - a) Its current and/or planned composition and the strategy for achieving that composition; and
  - b) The role of parents, students, and teachers, as applicable, and community members.
9. **The following requirement only applies to applicants proposing to replicate an existing charter school:**
  - a) The response outlines how the governance structure of the new school will relate to the school which is being replicated.

**Areas of Strength:**

**Areas of Weakness:**

**Evidence:**

**Rating:**

**2. Educational/Charter Management (EMO/CMO)  
A response that “Meets the Standard” will include the following:**

1. A description as to how the partnership between the applicant board and EMO/CMO originated: was the applicant recruited by an EMO/CMO to form a board or did the board conduct a search for an EMO/CMO; what due diligence was conducted (were other management organizations considered and why was the decision made to partner with this particular organization)A description that conveys clear understanding of financial obligation to the EMO/CMO and whether it increases, decreases, or stays the same for the duration of the relationship, including building ownership if the developers are making payments to the EMO/CMO.
2. A detailed description of the oversight and evaluation methods that the school’s governing board will use to oversee the EMO/CMO; include the supervisory responsibilities of the EMO/CMO (if any), including which school employees the EMO/CMO will supervise, how the EMO/CMO will supervise these employees, and how the charter school board will oversee the EMO/CMO’s responsibilities.

3. Evidence is provided that the school's governing board is independent from the EMO/CMO and self-governing, including evidence of independent legal representation and arm's-length negotiating.
4. Clear description of any existing or potential conflicts of interest between the school's governing board, proposed school employees, proposed EMO/CMO, and any affiliated business entities.
5. Lists all subsidiaries or related entities that are affiliated or owned in whole or in part by the EMO/CMO, and identify the nature of those entities' business activities and explain whether the school has or will have any relationship with or receive any services from any of the entities listed in the previous question.
6. A clear description of, and applicable documentation of any loans, grants, or investments made between the EMO/CMO and the school, including an explanation of how any such loans, grants, or investments may be initiated, repaid, and refused by the school.
7. A detailed description of a plan for the operation of the school in the event of termination of the management agreement.
8. If the following are not included in the contract (*see appendix*), the response should address each one accordingly in the narrative:
  - a) "If the school's governing board intends to execute promissory notes or other negotiable instruments, or enter into a lease, lease-purchase agreement, or any other facility or financing relationships with the EMO/CMO, provide evidence that such agreements are separately documented and not part of or incorporated in the school management contract. Any facility or financing agreements must be consistent with the school governing board's authority and practical ability to terminate the management agreement and continue operation of the school. "
  - b) "Describe the respective financial responsibilities of the school's governing board and the EMO/CMO. Who will own property purchased with public funds? Which operating and capital expenditures will each party be responsible for? What types of spending decisions can the management organization make without obtaining board approval? What reports must the EMO/CMO submit to the board on financial performance, and on what schedule? How will the school governing board provide financial oversight?"
9. An explanation of the EMO/CMO's success in serving student populations similar to the target population of the school. As well as, a description of the organization's demonstrated academic track record as well as successful management of non-academic school functions (e.g., back-office services, school operations, extracurricular programs).
10. A listing of all schools currently or formerly operated by the EMO/CMO. Including, identifying those schools that serve the same grade levels and student populations demographically similar to the anticipated population of the proposed school. Include name, year opened, contact information, location, number of students, and contact information for the authorizer for each currently operating school.

11. An outline of state accountability data for the schools in comparable markets (if available) managed by the EMO/CMO for at least the last three years including performance data for all subgroups served by grade level; data demonstrating the schools' progress in closing within school and within comparable schools' achievement gaps; and any additional evidence that the existing design has been effective in raising student achievement.
12. A listing and description of any management contract terminations as well as any charter revocations, non-renewals, or withdrawals/non-openings that the proposed EMO/CMO has experienced in the past five (5) years.
13. A description of any current or past litigation that has involved the EMO/CMO or any school it operates.
14. **Additional requirements for replication applications:**
  - a) A description of any key educational features that will differ from the operator's or management provider's existing schools or schools proposed for replication, not previously mentioned above. The response includes an explanation of the rationale for the variation in approach and any new resources the variation would require.
  - b) A discussion of the results of past replication efforts and lessons learned – including particular challenges or troubles encountered; how they have been addressed; and how the applicant will avoid or minimize such challenges for the proposed school.

**Areas of Strength:**

**Areas of Weakness:**

**Evidence:**

**Rating:**

**3. Administrative Structure/Building-Level Leadership**  
**A response that “Meets the Standard” will include the following:**

1. A concise description of the administrative structure of the school.
2. A detailed description of the capacity and experience that will be sought for school leadership and management team members along with job descriptions of the administrative positions, including the school leader and any other administrative staff with a clear delineation of employee classification and who is responsible for employment decisions and oversight at each level. The response explains how the capacity of the school’s administrative team is tied to the mission, organizational sustainability, and student achievement.
3. A description of how a lead administrator will be hired and how the transition of leadership and charter committee responsibilities will happen.
4. A description of the nature and extent of parental, professional educator, and community involvement in the operation of the charter school.
5. A description of the process for evaluating the school leader and management company (if applicable).
6. **Additional Requirement for Replication Schools:**
  - a) A description of any involvement with the replication of existing successful public charter schools.

**Areas of Strength:**

**Areas of Weakness:**

**Evidence:**

**Rating:**

#### 4. Employees

**A response that “Meets the Standard” will include the following:**

1. A clear description of the criteria that will be used in hiring teachers, administrators, and other school staff.
2. A detailed description of the recruitment strategies that will be employed to achieve the desired quality of staff.
3. A discussion on how the school will ensure that at least one member of the administrative staff holds a current SC certification of administration or has at least one year of experience in the field of school-based administration.
4. A description of the proposed evaluation process for teachers. *Charter schools may use the ADEPT Evaluation System, SC TAP, or another evaluation system that has been approved by the Office of Teacher Evaluation.*
5. A brief description of the process the school will use to communicate its employment policies and any policy changes.
6. A detailed description of the grievance and termination procedures for the charter school’s employees.

**Areas of Strength:**

**Areas of Weakness:**

**Evidence:**

**Rating:**

## 5. Enrollment

**A response that “Meets the Standard” will include the following:**

1. A detailed description of the policies and procedures that will guide the enrollment and withdrawal of students, including the proposed timeline to reach a diverse student population, processing of applications, lottery process if needed, and the appeal process for a student who is denied admission for a reason other than the lottery;
2. A description of the recruitment strategies that will be utilized with a rationale provided for each one.
3. An explanation of how the community will receive information about the formation of a new charter school.
4. An explanation of the enrollment timeline to include notification process, deadlines, and parental acceptance/rejection process.
5. A brief description of any enrollment priorities that will be granted by the school consistent with state charter school law.
6. An explanation of how the school intends to enroll out-of-district students, including estimated percentage of enrollment, notification to sending district, and approval procedures for receiving and sending districts (not applicable if applying with the SCPCSD or an IHE as the intended sponsor); and
7. A concise description of how the proposed charter school intends to ensure that enrollment reflects that of the local school district in which the charter school is located or that of the targeted student population of the local school district that the charter school proposes to serve, to be defined for the purposes of this chapter as differing by no more than 20 percent from that population.

**Areas of Strength:**

**Areas of Weakness:**

**Evidence:**

**Rating:**

## 6. Student Conduct, Rights, and Responsibilities

A response that “Meets the Standard” will include the following:

1. A description of the process and timeline for developing a student handbook and related policies; *the discipline policy must comply with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (20 U.S.C. § 1232) (FERPA).*
2. A description of the student rights and responsibilities, including behavior and discipline standards and disciplinary actions to be taken by the administration for breaches of student conduct policy.
3. A reasonable appeal process for students recommended for expulsion that includes a right to appeal a decision to the charter school board, including notice and hearing procedures for the board of directors of the charter school is outlined in detail.
4. The process for addressing IDEA compliance regarding student discipline, suspension, and expulsion for students with IEPs and the continued provision of FAPE and a description of how the school will identify and address significant behavioral concerns, specifically as it relates to students with special needs is included in the response.
5. A discussion of how the proposed plan protects students’ rights including due process to include the following: how the school will ensure that the discipline policy does not disproportionately affect students with disabilities and the school’s plans for conducting discipline hearings.

**Areas of Strength:**

**Areas of Weakness:**

**Evidence:**

**Rating:**

### 7. Transportation

A response that “Meets the Standard” will include the following:

*The SC Charter School law does not require charter schools to provide transportation. The law does, however, require an applicant to describe how the charter school plans to meet the transportation needs of its students.*

1. A discussion of the plan which will be put in place if the school is planning to provide transportation by school bus (must comply with state regulations for driver and training and the state safety requirements for school buses).
2. A discussion of the proposed transportation service if the school intends to contract with the local school district or a third party.
3. Regardless of the applicant’s intention to contract with a third party for transportation services, a description of how the proposed charter school plans to address the transportation needs of its students and, in particular, if the lack of transportation is preventing a child from attending school.

**Areas of Strength:**

**Areas of Weakness:**

**Evidence:**

**Rating:**

## Section III: Business Plan

Please review the characteristics of a response which Meets the Standard and indicate areas of strength, areas of weakness, and a rating using the definitions provided on page 2 of this document. Please also share evidence below to support your ratings.

### 1. Budget and Finance

#### A response that “Meets the Standard” will include the following:

1. An in-depth discussion on how the proposed budget will support the mission, vision, and educational program of the school. The discussion will include how the proposed 5-year and 10-year budget support the successful implementation of the school’s educational program and increasing student achievement and will highlight any unique instructional strategies or curricular components and how they will be funded. In addition, the discussion will explain the school’s data-driven decision-making process in regards to resource allocations.
2. A detailed description of budget assumptions, calculations, and revenue estimates. The narrative should include, at minimum, the basis for revenue projections, staffing levels, and costs; the narrative should also provide specific evidence supporting assumptions and/or describe the source of estimated amounts wherever possible.
3. A clear description of any applicable state and federal money funding sources that clearly address the degree to which the school budget will rely on variable income (e.g., grants, donations, fundraising). The response will indicate the amount and sources of funds, property, or other resources expected to be available through banks, lending institutions, corporations, foundations, grants, etc. and will note which are secured and which are anticipated, and include evidence of commitment for any funds on which the school’s core operation depends.
4. A summary of any negotiated services to be provided by the proposed sponsor (local school district, the SCPCSD, or the institution of higher education/technical college), including but not limited to financial accounting, payroll services, food services, custodial services, maintenance, curriculum, library and media services, and warehousing.
5. An explanation of how the school will remain fiscally solvent, adhere to generally acceptable accounting practices, have no material breaches, address any financial concerns, and follow the South Carolina pupil accounting system, auditing, and reporting procedures.
6. A concise description of how the school will maintain its books and records according to generally accepted accounting principles and will create an appropriate system of internal control.
7. A discussion focusing on planned client subcontracts to outside providers (if applicable).
8. An outline of the process the school will follow to contract with a certified public accountant to conduct an annual, independent financial audit and to disseminate the results from the audit to the school district and required state agencies.
9. An indication if the school plans to offer South Carolina Retirement System benefits to its employees. If so, the response will describe the planning committee’s understanding of the costs and restrictions associated with such benefits and how the school’s budget will absorb applicable costs from year to year.
10. A thorough discussion of the school’s contingency plans for cash flow challenges, a budget shortfall, lower than expected student enrollment or other financial challenges in the early years of operation.

**Areas of Strength:**

**Areas of Weakness:**

**Evidence:**

**Rating:**

## **2. Facilities**

**A response that “Meets the Standard” will include the following:**

1. A description of the basic facilities requirements for accommodating the school plan, including number of classrooms, square footage per classroom, common areas, overall square footage, and amenities.
  - a) Identified are any other significant facilities needs not already specified, including: playground, large common space for assemblies and other large group meetings, athletic facilities, and other special considerations (identified and explained).
2. An explanation of how the facility will meet the needs of students and an assurance is provided that it will be accessible to students with physical disabilities.
3. If a facility has been identified, the address of the facility, a description of the facility, and the name and address of the owner of the facility is included.
4.
  - a) If entering into a lease agreement, a description of the material terms of the agreement to include what specific buildout is required and what the estimated costs are.
  - b) A description of the planning committee’s contingency plan should the lease or planned purchase fall through.If a facility has not been identified, specify plan for obtaining such a facility and include a description of the facility needs, a statement as to whether an existing facility will be remodeled or a new facility will be built, and a schedule for completing or obtaining a
5. suitable facility and, if applicable, a description of and timeline for any plan to raise funds for completing or obtaining the facility is included.
  - a) A discussion of the planning committee’s process for obtaining facilities.  
A description how the school’s facilities plan is aligned with the projected enrollment growth outlined in the charter application.

**Areas of Strength:**

**Areas of Weakness:**

**Evidence:**

**Rating:**

**3. Insurance Coverage:**

**A response that “Meets the Standard” will include the following:**

All of the following documentation should be included in Appendix Item FF:

1. A copy of workers’ compensation insurance and the amounts.
2. A copy of liability insurance and the amounts to be obtained by the charter school. The minimum policy must cover the limits of the South Carolina Tort Claims Act (S.C. Code Ann. § 15-78-120 (Supp. 2013)).
3. A copy of the insurance to cover loss to the school building and contents for fire and theft.
4. A copy of indemnity insurance against civil and criminal liability for the charter school to protect the sponsor, the members of the board of the sponsor, and the employees of a sponsor acting in their official capacity with respect to all activities related to the charter school.
5. A copy of automobile insurance and both property and liability insurance.
6. An indication whether the charter school will obtain any other type, or types, of insurance. For each type, include a description and estimated cost of coverage.
7. All Insurance Documents—for each type of insurance listed, a statement from a South Carolina–licensed insurance company or the state insurance reserve fund stating the charter school applicant’s ability to secure the insurance and an estimate of the cost of the insurance, if available.

**Areas of Strength:**

**Areas of Weakness:**

**Evidence:**

**Rating:**