



SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Charter School Application Process

Sample Timeline and Decision Pathway

Example Scenario: A charter school application is submitted on February 1, 2027, at 5:00 PM ET. If approved by the authorizer, the school would be in its planning phase during the 2027-2028 school year and would open during the 2028-2029 school year.

Application Requirements and Timeline

- Letter of Intent (LOI) must be submitted at least ninety (90) days before submission of the formal application.
 - The LOI is due no later than October 30, 2026 at 5 PM ET.
 - The LOI must be submitted to the proposed authorizer and copied to the South Carolina Department of Education.
- Applications are due February 1, 2027, at 5:00 PM ET.
- The application must be submitted to the proposed authorizer and a copy provided to the SCDE Charter Schools Office.
- The applicant shall notify the local legislative delegation of the county where the proposed charter school will be located and provide a copy of the application upon request

Authorizer Review Period (S.C. Code Ann. § 59-40-70)

- The authorizer has up to ninety (90) days after receipt of the application to make a formal decision.
- The authorizer may request clarifying information or additional documentation during the review process.
- The application must be considered in a public hearing upon reasonable public notice.
- The authorizer issues either an approval or denial decision.

Pathway if Approved	Pathway if Denied
• Application approved by the authorizer. • Planning Year: 2027-2028. • Governance, staffing, facilities, student recruitment, budgeting, policies, and operational systems are finalized. • Before opening, SCDE must verify the accuracy of the school financial data within forty-five (45) days after approval. • School opens during the 2028-2029 school year.	• Authorizer provides written explanation of denial within ten (10) days. • Applicant may appeal to the Administrative Law Court within forty-five (45) days. • Appeals proceed pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. §§ 1-23-380(B) and 1-23-600(D). • Administrative Law Court hears the appeal and issues a final written order. • ALC timelines vary based on court rules and caseload.

Final Outcomes

If the Administrative Law Court affirms the authorizer decision, the application is denied and the process ends.

If the Administrative Law Court reverses the authorizer decision, the application is approved, SCDE completes financial verification, and the school proceeds toward opening in 2028-2029.

Legal References

- S.C. Code Ann. § 59-40-70 (Authorizer review and decision timeline).
- S.C. Code Ann. §§ 1-23-380(B) and 1-23-600(D) (Administrative Law Court appeals).

At-a-Glance Process

LOI (90+ Days Prior) → Application Submission (February 1, 2027, 5:00 PM ET) → Authorizer Review (Up to 90 Days) → Decision Point → Approval Path (Planning Year 2027-2028 → Financial Verification within 45 Days → Opening 2028-2029) OR Denial & Appeal Path (Written Denial within 10 Days → Appeal within 45 Days → ALC Order → Final Outcome).