



# Charter System Application

DISTRICT NAME

DISTRICT ADDRESS

Dr. John D. Barge  
State School Superintendent  
JULY 2014



**Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent**  
*"Making Education Work for All Georgians"*

## Introduction

The Charter Schools Act of 1998 established a flexibility option for Georgia school districts that wish to become a Charter System. A Charter System is a local school district that operates under the terms of a charter contract between the State Board of Education and the local Board of Education. The system receives flexibility in the form of waivers of certain state laws, rules and guidelines in exchange for greater accountability for increased student performance and an emphasis on school-based leadership and decisionmaking.

Your Charter System Application is a petition to the Georgia State Board of Education asking it to create or renew your charter system. The evaluation of your Application will be led by the Charter Schools Division of the Georgia Department of Education, in partnership with others within the Department (including the Policy Division and the Accountability Division) and with the independent Charter Advisory Committee (CAC) that was also established by the Charter Schools Act.

The evaluation of your Application will focus on whether implementing the charter system proposed in your Application will lead to the improved academic performance you are promising in exchange for freedom from much of Georgia's education law, rules and guidelines. It will also determine whether the proposed charter system would comply with all applicable laws, rules, regulations, policies and procedures (including the Charter Schools Act of 1998, as amended [O.C.G.A. §§ 20-2-2060 through 20-2-2071], State Board of Education Rule 160-4-9-.04 et. seq., and Department of Education Guidelines accompanying the Charter School Rules); whether your proposed academic plans are viable; and whether the charter system is in the public interest.

Please note that submitting a Charter System Application does not guarantee that a charter will be granted. It does guarantee, however, that the Georgia Department of Education will work closely with you to improve your chances of State Board of Education approval of your charter system contract.

## DEADLINE AND SUBMISSION PROCEDURES

Your Charter System Application must be approved by your local Board of Education in accordance with the rules and regulations of your local board. After local submission, review and approval, charter system applications must be received at the address below by November 1 of the year prior to the start of the July-June fiscal year in which the charter system contract would go into effect. Early submissions are strongly encouraged.

Georgia Department of Education  
Charter Schools Division  
2053 Twin Towers East  
205 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive, SE  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

**Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent**  
**July 2014 • Page 1 of 11**



**Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent**  
*"Making Education Work for All Georgians"*

## APPLICATION PACKAGE CHECKLIST

Your Charter System Application Package must comply with the following submission procedures.

- An Application Package includes an original and two copies of the following items:
  - SYSTEM APPLICATION COVER SHEET** (Use the form on page 3; the form may not be altered in any way).
  - CHARTER SYSTEM APPLICATION** (Your answers to the questions posed on pages 4-7).
    - The Charter System Application is limited to 50 double-spaced pages using an 11-point Times New Roman font and one-inch margins with a header showing the school system's name and a footer showing consecutive page numbers. Please note the suggested page limits provided within each section.
    - The original must be signed in blue ink. Stamped signatures will not be accepted.
  - ASSURANCES FORM AND SIGNATURE SHEET** (Use the Assurances Form and Signature Sheet below on pages 8-10; the Form and the Sheet may not be altered in any way).
    - The original must be signed in blue ink; stamped signatures will not be accepted.
  - EXHIBITS** (See list of required Exhibits below on page 11).
    - Required Exhibits should be as limited in size as possible (no more than 5 pages per Exhibit). The only exceptions to this size limitation for Exhibits are your most recent annual audit, accreditation report, and strategic plan (to which you will provide online links).
    - All Exhibits must be tabbed.
- Your Application Package must be bound by a binder clip; do not enclose your Application Package in a notebook, binder, or folder.
- Your Application Package must also include a single CD or USB drive that includes a:
  - Microsoft Word version of your Charter System Application Cover Sheet
  - Microsoft Word version of your Charter System Application
  - PDF Version of your signed Assurances Form
  - Microsoft Word version of your Exhibits (except for your annual audit, accreditation report, and strategic plan)
  - PDF version of your most recent annual audit
  - PDF version of your most recent accreditation report
  - PDF version of your most recent strategic plan

Faxed or emailed copies will not be accepted. Only complete petitions that comply with these guidelines will be evaluated. Applications will not be returned; please keep a copy for your records.



**Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent**  
*"Making Education Work for All Georgians"*

## CHARTER SYSTEM APPLICATION COVER SHEET

Please enter the requested information in the gray boxes following each question. Thank you!

Proposed Charter System Information			
1. Full Name of Proposed Charter System			
2. Please indicate whether this is a:  New Petition          or a Renewal Petition	3. How many schools in total are you proposing to include in your charter system?		
4. How many of each of the following schools are you proposing to include in your charter system?  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <span>Primary School(s)</span> <span>Middle School(s)</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <span>Elementary School(s)</span> <span>High school(s)</span> </div>			
5. On July 1 of what year do you want your charter contract to be effective?			
6. How many years are you proposing for the term of your charter contract? (Note that an initial charter cannot exceed five years)			
7. Charter System Street Address	8. City	9. State	10. Zip
11. Contact Person		12. Title	
13. Contact Street Address	14. City	15. State	16. Zip
17. Contact's telephone number	18. Contact's fax number	19. Contact's E-mail Address	



**Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent**  
*"Making Education Work for All Georgians"*

## CHARTER SYSTEM APPLICATION

The Charter System Application includes 17 questions grouped into three sections. The first section is "The Case", where you present your school system's need for a charter. The second section focuses on your "Performance Expectations", and the third section focuses on your "Local School Governance" plan.

### THE CASE

Please fill out the Excel versions of the following chart found at <http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Charter-Schools/Pages/Charter-Petition-Application.aspx>

1. What challenges is your school district facing?
  - Provide a brief description of the specific issues that, if resolved, would allow you to consider your school district a complete success.
2. What is the rank order priority of these challenges (from most to least important)?
3. Which of these challenges will your school district be able to address by becoming a charter system?
4. What specific actions will your district take to address each of these challenges (listed in #3 above) during its five-year charter term?
5. Provide a clear explanation of how each of these specific actions (listed in #4 above) will lead to the specific challenge being addressed.
6. Although you will be granted a broad flexibility waiver if you are granted a charter, please list the specific Georgia law or State Board rule that must be waived to allow your district to implement each specific action (listed in #4 above).
  - Please also list the waivers you have used during the past five years (including those granted to the entire state, e.g. class size) and what goals they helped you accomplish during those five years?
7. Indicate the timeline for implementation of each specific action (listed in #4 above).
8. Indicate which of these specific actions (listed in #4 above) represents an innovation for your school district.

### PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

9. What are your school system's specific student performance expectations for your five-year charter term?
  - As background for your answer to this question, please see the CCRPI and Beating the Odds expectations listed below. These expectations will be included in your charter contract.



**Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent**  
*"Making Education Work for All Georgians"*

- In your answer to this question you will list the specific areas you will target to achieve your CCRPI and Beating the Odds expectations.
- For example, you may choose to target Math or ELA to raise your overall CCRPI score – because your current Math or ELA scores are dragging your CCRPI score down.
- As a way to be competitive on Beating the Odds, you may also choose to focus on closing the gap in your system between educationally advantaged and educationally disadvantaged students – or you may choose to ensure gifted students are well-served, since average-performing gifted students will lower your Beating the Odds ranking compared to schools and districts with high-performing gifted students.

Goal 1: During each year of its first five-year charter term, the Charter System shall “beat the odds” as determined by a formula measuring expected student growth.

A. The Beating the Odds analysis is a cross-sectional, fixed effects regression model that uses the following factors from the CCRPI school-level dataset, GaDOE student record file, and GaDOE CPI data.

a. Student-based Factors:

- % African American
- % Hispanic
- % White
- % Other
- % Free/Reduced Lunch
- % Students with Disabilities
- % English Learners
- % Gifted

b. School-based Factors:

- School Size (FTE)
- Student/Teacher Ratio
- School Configuration/CCRPI Score Type (i.e. Elementary, Middle, High)
- Locale Type (i.e. City, Town, Rural)
- District Performance (Fixed Effect)

Renewal decisions for new charter systems first converting in 2014 or later will be based in part on whether the system “beat the odds” in each of the first four years of its first charter term (Years 1-4).

Goal 2: During each year of its first five-year charter term, each System Charter School shall “beat the odds” as determined by a formula measuring expected student growth. If each System Charter School fails to beat the odds in Year 1 of the charter, the Charter System shall decrease the number of System Charter Schools not beating

**Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent**



**Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent**  
*"Making Education Work for All Georgians"*

the odds during Years 2 and 3 at a rate so that all System Charter Schools will beat the odds in Year 4.

Renewal decisions for new charter systems first converting in 2014 or later will be based in part on whether each System Charter School "beat the odds" in each of the first four years of its first charter term (Years 1-4).

Goal 3: The Charter System will demonstrate proficiency and/or improvement on the CCRPI.

- A. Measure 1: For new Charter Systems first converting in 2015 or later, using Year 1 of the charter term to establish a CCRPI baseline, the Charter System's CCRPI score shall be equal to or better than the State in Year 2, and better than the State in Years 3-5 of the charter contract.
- B. Measure 2: If the Charter System's first-year CCRPI score is lower than the State, the Charter System shall have until the end of Year 2 of the charter term to close the gap between the Charter System and the State.
- C. Measure 3: In Years 3-5 of the charter term, the Charter System's CCRPI score shall be better than the State.

Renewal decisions for new Charter Systems first converting in 2015 or later will be based in part on whether the Charter System's CCRPI score was equal to or better than the State in Year 2, and better than the State Years 3-4 of the charter contract.

## LOCAL SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

A key characteristic of charter systems is their distributed leadership decision-making structure. Within such a structure, a charter system must implement school level governance and grant decision-making authority in personnel decisions, financial decisions, curriculum and instruction, resource allocation, establishing and monitoring the achievement of school improvement goals, and school operations per O.C.G.A. 20-2-2063(d).

10. Explain how your system will transition from Local School Advisory Councils to effective and fully functioning decision-making Local School Governance Teams (LSGTs).
  - Provide a timeline that shows all the major steps in this transition, including the timing of the formation of LSGTs, the training of principals and LSGTs, and anything you deem important in making this critical transition for decentralized/distributed decisionmaking.
  - Include information about the steps that have already occurred or will occur to inform all stakeholders of the new governance structure.
11. Address the formation of the local School Governing Teams, including how members are selected, the terms of members, and how and why members may be removed.

**Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent**  
**July 2014 • Page 6 of 11**



**Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent**  
*"Making Education Work for All Georgians"*

- Be specific!
12. Use the Charter System Application – Local School Governance Matrix found at this link <http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Charter-Schools/Pages/Charter-Petition-Application.aspx> to show how the Superintendent will share with Local School Governance Teams his/her authority to develop recommendations to the Board of Education.
  13. Highlight the differences between the current local school advisory council structure and the new structure your new charter system will implement.
  14. Describe the governance training to be provided to principals and members of the Local School Governing Teams in order to build the capacity needed to make decisions in the areas included in the spreadsheet.
    - Note that training should occur before the charter begins because your local School Governance Teams will be expected to make decisions beginning in Year 1 of your charter. Be sure to show this in the timeline requested in #10 above.
  15. Provide the name of the provider(s) of local School Governing Team training that you are considering approaching, if known.
    - Note that such providers can be internal or external to the school district.
  16. Provide the name and contact information of an employee of the charter system that will facilitate communications between the Department and the chairpersons of the Local School Governing Teams in your charter system.
  17. Explain how your system will transition its central office from a Compliance Culture (where success is measured by simply achieving requirements) to an Achievement Culture (where success is measured by achieving high expectations).



**Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent**  
"Making Education Work for All Georgians"

## ASSURANCES FORM AND SIGNATURE SHEET

The law requires your school district to provide assurances that it will do certain things and comply with certain laws. This Assurance Form enumerates all of these requirements and, when you submit this signed Signature Sheet with this Assurance Form as part of your Charter System Application Package, you are providing the legal assurance that your charter system understands and will do these things. This form must be signed by a duly authorized representative of the school system.

As the authorized representative of the applicant, I hereby certify that the information submitted in this application for a charter for *(name of school system)* located in County is true to the best of my knowledge and belief; I also certify that if awarded a charter the school system:

1. Shall be nonsectarian in its programs, admissions policies, employment practices, and all other operations;
2. Shall not discriminate against any student or employee on the basis of race, color, ethnic background, national origin, gender, disability or age;
3. Shall be subject to all federal, state, and local rules, regulations, court orders, and statutes relating to civil rights; insurance; the protection of the physical health and safety of school students, employees, and visitors; conflicting interest transactions; and the prevention of unlawful conduct;
4. Shall be subject to the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-1050 requiring a brief period of quiet reflection;
5. Shall ensure that the system and the system charter school's governance boards are subject to the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1 et seq. and O.C.G.A. § 50-18-70 et seq.;
6. Shall ensure that the system charter school governance board members may only receive compensation for their reasonable and actual expenses incurred in connection with performance of their duties;
7. Shall ensure that all teachers will be certified or highly qualified in compliance with No Child Left Behind;
8. Shall comply with the accountability provisions of O.C.G.A. § 20-14-30 through § 20-14-41 and federal accountability requirements, and participate in statewide assessments;



**Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent**  
*"Making Education Work for All Georgians"*

9. Shall adhere to all provisions of federal law relating to students with disabilities, including the IDEA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1974, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as applicable;
10. Shall provide state and federally mandated services for English Language Learners, as applicable;
11. Shall provide for supplemental educational services as required by federal law and pursuant to SBOE Rule 160-4-5-.03, and for remediation in required cases pursuant to SBOE Rule 160-4-5-.01;
12. Shall notify the state of any intent to contract with a for-profit entity for education management services;
13. Shall be subject to the requirement that it shall not charge tuition or fees to its students except as may be authorized by local boards by O.C.G.A. § 20-2-133;
14. Shall comply with federal due process procedures regarding student discipline and dismissal;
15. Shall be subject to all laws relating to unlawful conduct in or near a public school;
16. Shall have a written grievance procedure to resolve student, parent, and teacher complaints;
17. Shall have a written procedure for resolving conflicts between the system charter schools and the local board of education;
18. Shall comply with the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-211.1 relating to fingerprinting and criminal background checks;
19. Shall remit payments to TRS on behalf of employees;
20. Shall ensure that if transportation is provided for its students, the system shall comply with all applicable state and federal laws;
21. Shall ensure that if the charter system participates in federal school meals programs, then each participating system charter school shall comply with all applicable state and federal laws;
22. Shall prepare a safety plan in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-1185 and submit and obtain approval from the Georgia Emergency Management Agency;
23. Shall comply with the state facility requirements regarding site codes, facility codes, the submission of architectural plans for any new facility that the system may build or occupy during the charter term and all other facility requirements as established by the Department;
24. Shall be subject to all reporting requirements of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-160, subsection (e) of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-161, O.C.G.A. § 20-2-320, and O.C.G.A. § 20-2-740;



**Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent**  
*"Making Education Work for All Georgians"*

- 25. Shall be subject to an annual financial audit conducted by the state auditor or, if specified in the charter, by an independent certified public accountant licensed in this state;
- 26. Shall acknowledge that all criteria used to calculate QBE funding may not be waived;
- 27. Shall follow any and all other federal, state, and local laws and regulations that pertain to the applicant or the operation of the charter system; and
- 28. Shall use any funds appropriated for the QBE weight for charter systems, in accordance with recommendations of the school governance teams or to advance student achievement goals and school level governance training.
- 29. Shall ensure that all new principals and other school leaders, central office staff, superintendents, and Board of Education members receive a detailed orientation session on their charter system commitments as part of their "on-boarding" process.

This Charter System Application, Assurance Form, and attached Exhibits were approved by the Board of Education on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 201\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair, Local Board of Education

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

If a Charter is granted, all Petitioners assure that the proposed charter system programs, services, and activities will operate in accordance with the terms of the Charter and all applicable federal, state, and local laws, rules, and regulations.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair, Local Board of Education

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



**Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent**  
*"Making Education Work for All Georgians"*

## EXHIBITS

The following Exhibits are required to complete your Charter System Application Package. Please tab the Exhibits to match the item numbers below. Exhibits should be as limited in size as possible (no more than 5 pages per Exhibit). The only exceptions to this size limitation for Exhibits are your most recent annual audit and your most recent accreditation report.

1. Signed local Board of Education resolution approving the creation of the charter system.
2. Notice that was sent to each principal within the proposed charter system regarding required hearings on the charter system application.
3. Description of how stakeholders, including parents and community members, were involved in the development of the Charter System Application.
18. This is where you can describe the process you used to develop your Application.
4. A list of all schools to be included in the charter system, including new schools or college and career academies that will be formed throughout the life of the charter, with an indication of which existing schools are currently in Needs Improvement status.
5. A brief description of the charter system that includes the name, the mission, grades served, the focus of the curriculum, instructional methods to be used, including any distinctive or unique instructional techniques or educational programs to be employed, and other pertinent information.
19. Your description will be used by the Department to provide information to the public about applicants and new charter systems.
6. Local school governance training timeline including training topics.
7. Conflict of interest policy for local school governing teams.
8. A list of business arrangements or partnerships with existing schools, educational programs, businesses and non-profits and the nature of the services provided, including disclosure of any potential conflicts of interest.
9. A brief description of the system's fiscal history and whether the system is or has ever operated under a fiscal deficit.
10. Online link to the school system's most recent annual audit.
11. Online link to the school system's most recent accreditation report.
12. Online link to the school system's most recent strategic plan.