



Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent
“Making Education Work for All Georgians”

Guidelines for Charter Systems to accompany State Board of Education Rule 160-4-9-.07

**Georgia Department of Education
Guidelines for Charter Systems**

Table of Contents

Document Version History2

Introduction3

Part 1: Charter System Petition Submission.....4

Part 2: Charter System Petition Review Procedures5

Part 3: Charter System Petition Requirements6

Part 4: Charter System Accountability Requirements7

Document Version History

Version Number	Date Approved by State Board of Education	Description
Version 1	TBD	Initial document release.

Georgia Department of Education

Guidelines for Charter Systems

Introduction

This Guideline document is incorporated by explicit reference in Georgia State Board of Education Rule 160-4-9-.07 CHARTER SYSTEMS. The contents of this document are considered to have the same effect and requirement as any rule promulgated by the Georgia State Board of Education. Any future substantive revision to this document will require approval by the Georgia State Board of Education.

This document sets forth a list of criteria for Charter Systems.

Inquiries concerning this Guideline document should be directed to the Charter Schools Division at the Georgia Department of Education by email at jclarkedodd@doe.k12.ga.us or by telephone at 404-657-0515.

Georgia Department of Education Guidelines for Charter Systems

Part 1: Charter System Petition Submission

(A) LETTERS OF INTENT. Letters of intent to submit a charter petition are *required* to be submitted to the Georgia Department of Education (Department) at least six (6) months prior to the date on which the petition will be submitted to the Department. The Department *recommends* that a letter of intent be submitted to the Department one (1) year prior to the date on which the petition will be submitted to the Department. At minimum, a letter of intent should include the following:

- a. The name of the potential applicant;
- b. Contact information for an authorized representative including phone number, mailing address and email address; and
- c. The date by which the applicant plans to submit a petition.

Petitioners should consult the Charter Schools Division website for additional content and formatting requirements. Petitions not preceded by a timely and complete letter of intent may be delayed or not considered until the following petition cycle.

(B) LOCAL BOARD RESOLUTION.

- (1) Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2063.2, a local board seeking to create a charter system must adopt a resolution approving the proposed charter system petition prior to submission to the Department.
- (2) The resolution shall contain the following:
 - a. A statement that the Local Board of Education (LBOE) wishes to submit a charter system application to the Department for consideration by the State Board of Education (SBOE);
 - b. A statement that indicates the LBOE seeks the broad flexibility offered by charter system status to increase student achievement; and
 - c. A statement that indicates that the LBOE understands and promotes the maximization of school level governance if the application is approved.

(C) PUBLIC HEARINGS.

- (1) Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2063.2, a local board seeking to create a charter system must hold two public hearings prior to submission to the Department.
- (2) Each public hearing must include the following:

Georgia Department of Education Guidelines for Charter Systems

- a. An explanation of the charter system concept, including broad flexibility and school level governance;
 - b. An opportunity for the community to ask questions and provide feedback on any proposed charter system initiatives; and
 - c. Engagement of business and industry stakeholders.
- (3) The Department encourages, *but does not require*, each system to utilize an online website to promote transparency and community engagement.
- (4) Where possible and as appropriate, Petitioners are encouraged to have additional community meetings to fully engage the community in the process.

(D) CHARTER PETITIONS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.

- (1) Petitioners should consult the Charter Schools Division website regularly for annual timelines and formatting requirements. Timelines and requirements may change throughout the year with the most substantive changes occurring during the summer months.
- (2) Failure to comply with timelines or formatting requirements may delay or prohibit consideration of the petition in the current petition cycle.

Part 2: Charter System Petition Review Procedures

- (A) **PETITION REVIEW BY DEPARTMENT.** Department staff shall review all charter system petitions to ensure that the proposed charter system will comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws, including but not limited to, the Charter Schools Act [O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2060 *et seq.*].
- (B) **APPLICANT SITE VISIT AND INTERVIEW.** Petitioners shall participate in a site visit and interview with Department staff and Charter Advisory Committee (CAC) members as part of the petition review process.
- a. The goal of the interview and site visit is to gauge the petitioners' overall capacity to sustain operations of a high-quality charter system with regard to academics, operations, governance and finance.
 - b. The site visit and interview shall demonstrate the following:
 - i. The petitioner's need for broad flexibility;
 - ii. Possible innovations and their expected impact; and

Georgia Department of Education
Guidelines for Charter Systems

- iii. Engagement of all stakeholders and maximization of local school level governance.
 - c. Representatives from stakeholder groups in the community, including but not limited to, district and school staff, local board members, parents, business and industry and other community members shall participate in the site visit and interview.
- (C) NOTIFICATION OF DEFICIENCIES. After initial review by Department staff, the Department shall, in writing, notify the Petitioners of any deficiencies associated with their petition. After this notification, Petitioners may elect to:
- a. Clarify or provide supplemental information;
 - b. Revise and resubmit the petition to the Department after securing necessary local board approval;
 - c. Withdraw the petition from consideration; or
 - d. Have the original petition submitted to the SBOE for a vote.

Unless all material deficiencies are addressed, Department staff will submit the petition to the SBOE for a vote with a recommendation for denial.

- (D) REQUIRED TRAINING. The Department reserves the right to require petitioners to complete Department training prior to petition submission, if and when such training is developed and becomes readily available to any interested party.

Part 3: Charter System Petition Requirements.

All charter system petitions, including renewal charter system petitions shall contain the following elements:

- (A) STATEMENT OF NEED AND INTENT. A description of how the proposed charter system promotes the legislative intent of the charter system initiative to “increase student achievement through academic and organizational innovation,” in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2061. The statement of intent must include a description of proposed innovations and their anticipated academic or organizational impact.
- (B) STATEMENT REGARDING WAIVERS. A statement that the system shall utilize the broad flexibility from law, rule, and regulation permitted by O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2065(a). The statement shall include an illustrative description of the system’s anticipated waivers and the innovations that each waiver will promote.
- (C) STATEMENT OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES. The petition must list and describe in detail the specific performance-based goals and measurable objectives, which at a minimum shall include goals and objectives that are related to the state and federal assessment standards, measurable on at least an annual basis, attainable, and reflect the

Georgia Department of Education Guidelines for Charter Systems

mission set forth in the petition. The petition shall demonstrate that the performance-based goals and measurable objectives will result in continuous improvement in student achievement and will comply with the Single Statewide Accountability System. Failure to meet the specific performance-based goals and measurable objectives may result in charter termination. The petition shall also include a description of the specific actions the petitioner will take to meet the performance-based goals.

- (D) **SCHOOL LEVEL GOVERNANCE.** A description of how parents, members of the community including business and industry, and teachers will be involved in school level governance. The petition shall describe the following aspects of the local school governance teams: duties, composition, how and when members shall be selected, trained, how long they shall serve, how members may be removed from office, and how members shall avoid conflicts of interests. Members of the local board and the superintendent of the local school system are prohibited from serving on the local school governance teams, unless otherwise stipulated by the Department. Local school governance teams shall be comprised of a majority of parents and community members who are not otherwise employed by the local district. The petition shall also include a description of how the system will maximize school level governance in accordance with these Guidelines and a description of the governing authority of each LSGT in each of the following areas: personnel decisions, financial decisions and resource allocation, curriculum and instruction, establishment and monitoring the achievement of school improvement goals and school operations. For those decisions which are shared with other LSGTs or central office staff, the charter petition shall articulate how each LGST has input into those decisions and how that input will be taken into account prior to final decision making.
- (E) **DISTRICT SUPPORT.** A description detailing how the local district will ensure effective support of the charter system and school level governance, including, what, if any, changes it will make to its central office to ensure that the charter system and all system charter schools are properly supported.
- (F) **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.** The petition may require additional information as necessary. Such additional information may include, but is not limited to:
- (1) The system's mission;
 - (2) The focus of the curriculum;
 - (3) Instructional methods to be used, including any distinctive or unique instructional techniques or educational programs to be employed; and
 - (4) A governance training timeline.

Georgia Department of Education
Guidelines for Charter Systems

(G) CHARTER SYSTEM RENEWAL. In addition to the requirements above, petitions for charter system renewal must also include data on the academic and organizational performance of the applicant during the current charter term. Renewal applicants should demonstrate whether they met, made progress toward, or did not meet their charter performance goals. Applicants that demonstrate compliance with the law and Rules, in addition to meeting charter performance goals, may warrant expedited renewal at the discretion of the Department.

Part 4: Charter System Accountability Requirements

- (A) All charter systems will be held accountable for student performance as outlined in the charter system contract. Student performance may be measured by the following:
- (1) The statewide accountability system;
 - (2) Expected student growth; and
 - (3) Progress toward other charter goals.
- (B) All charter systems will be held accountable for the fiscal targets as outlined in the charter system contract. Fiscal targets may include, but are not limited to, cash reserves and audit findings.
- (C) All charter systems will be held accountable for the school culture targets as outlined in the charter system contract. School culture targets may include, but are not limited to, student absenteeism, parental satisfaction and student discipline.
- (D) All charter systems will be held accountable for maximizing school level governance. Local school governance teams (LSGTs) must exercise decision-making authority in each of the following categories and shall meet the minimum requirements as described below:
- a. Personnel decisions – Charter systems shall develop processes to meaningfully engage LSGTs in the selection of the principal or school leader. LSGTs shall recommend the principal or school leader to the Superintendent for selection by the LBOE;
 - b. Financial decisions and resource allocation – LSGTs shall have input into the final recommendations for the school budget, including number and type of personnel, curriculum costs, supply costs, equipment costs and maintenance and operations costs;
 - c. Curriculum and Instruction – LSGTs shall have input into the selection of the curriculum and accompanying materials consistent with the district’s Essential and Innovative Features as included in the charter contract and the school’s Improvement Plan;
 - d. Establishing and monitoring the achievement of school improvement goals – LSGTs shall approve the school improvement plan and provide oversight of its implementation; and

Georgia Department of Education
Guidelines for Charter Systems

- e. School operations – LSGTs shall have input into school operations that are consistent with school improvement and charter goals.

In addition to the minimum requirements set forth above, the LBOE may grant each LSGT additional authority above the minimum. Although constitutional authority remains with the LBOE, both the Superintendent and LBOE shall give due consideration to recommendations and input from the LSGTs. Charter systems shall create processes that allow for meaningful input from LSGTs.

- (E) All charter systems will be held accountable for providing annual training to the following:
 - a. LSGT members – shall be trained in the roles and responsibilities of the LSGT;
 - b. Principals – shall be trained on how to work with the LSGT;
 - c. LBOE members – shall be trained on what it means to be a charter system and the maximization of school-level governance;
 - d. Essential central office staff – shall be trained on the role of central office in supporting the charter system and empowering LSGTs; and
 - e. Superintendent – shall be trained on what it means to be a charter system, the maximization of school-level governance, and relationship management between principals, LSGTs and the LBOE.
- (F) All charter systems shall submit an Annual Report each year. The Department shall establish timelines, formatting requirements and other requirements annually in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2067.1.
- (G) All charter systems will be held accountable for compliance with any other requirements as described in law or the charter contract.

Adopted: 11/6/2014