



## Charter School Programs

### Introduction

In May 2021, Governor Reynolds signed two bills into law that affect the operations of new charter schools in Iowa. [House File \(HF\) 813](#) establishes new procedures for charter schools effective July 1, 2021. The new procedures are codified in Iowa Code chapter 256E, which replaces a rescinded chapter of Iowa code and represents a revision of prior Iowa charter school law. Division IX of [HF 847](#) modifies chapter 256E by clarifying charter school governing board requirements, chief administrator requirements, student enrollment deadlines, and requirement for submission of an annual report.

This guidance is structured around the following topics:

- [Purposes of Charter Schools](#);
- [Charter School Models](#);
- [Charter School Application](#);
- [Charter School Contract](#);
- [Charter School General Operating Powers and Duties](#);
- [Funding](#);
- [Performance Framework](#);
- [Oversight, Corrective Action, Contract Renewal, and Revocation](#);
- [Procedures for Charter School Closure](#); and
- [Reports](#).

### Guidance Applicability

The intended audiences for this guidance are district school boards and independent founding groups considering establishing a charter school. Existing charter schools, or those established prior to July 1, 2021, are not subject to the new laws in Iowa Code chapter 256E but will continue to operate under the former regulations for charter schools (Iowa Code § 256F.12). While chapter 256F remains in effect for charter schools established prior to July 2021, no additional charter schools may be established under 256F.

### Purposes of Charter Schools

Charter schools are a part of the state's public education program. Iowa Code outlines the following purposes of charter schools:

- Improve student learning, well-being, and postsecondary success.
- Increase learning opportunities for students in areas of need, including but not limited to science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), and science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM).
- Increase opportunities for work-based learning, early literacy intervention, and serving at-risk populations.
- Accelerating student learning to prevent learning loss during the COVID-19 pandemic and other significant disruptions to student learning.
- Encourage the use of evidence-based practices in innovative environments.
- Require the measurement and evaluation of program implementation and learning outcomes.
- Establish models of success for Iowa schools.
- Create new professional opportunities for teachers and other educators.

- Investigate and establish different organizational structures for schools to use to implement a multi-tiered system of supports for students.
- Allow greater flexibility to meet the education needs of a diverse student population and changing workforce needs.
- Allow for the flexible allocation of resources through implementation of specialized school budgets for the benefit of the schools served.
- Allow greater flexibility for districts and schools to focus on closing gaps in student opportunity and achievement for all students from preschool through postsecondary preparation. (Iowa Code § 256E.1(3))

## Charter School Models

A charter school may be established by either a district school board's founding group (i.e., School Board-State Board Model) or an independent founding group (i.e., Founding Group-State Board Model). These models are detailed in the following sections.

### School Board-State Board Model

A school board may create a founding group to apply to the Iowa State Board of Education (State Board) for approval to establish and operate a charter school within and as a part of the school district by:

- Establishing a new attendance center (i.e., school building),
- Creating a new school within an existing attendance center, or
- Converting an existing attendance center to charter status (Iowa Code § 256E.4(1)).

### Founding Group-State Board Model

A founding group may apply to the State Board for approval to establish and operate a charter school within the boundaries of the state that operates as a new attendance center independently from a public school district (Iowa Code § 256E.5(1)).

## Charter School Application

The charter school application must:

- a. Demonstrate the academic and operational vision and plans for the proposed charter school,
- b. Demonstrate the founding group's capacity to execute the vision and plans, and
- c. Provide the State Board a clear basis for assessing the founding group's plans and capacity (Iowa Code §§ 256E.4(1) and 256E.5(1)).

The State Board must adopt rules to establish appropriate application timelines and deadlines for the submission of charter school applications (Iowa Code §§ 256E.4(2) and 256E.5(2)).

## Content of Application

The requirements for a charter school application differ slightly based on the charter school's selected model (i.e., School Board-State Board Model, Founding Group-State Board Model). The requirements for each model are provided in Table 1, with differences between the models underlined (if applicable).

Table 1. Comparison of Charter School Model Application Requirements

| School Board-State Board Model<br>(Iowa Code § 256E.4(4))  | Founding Group-State Board Model<br>(Iowa Code § 256E.5(4))  | Same Content |
|--|--|--------------|
| 4. <u>An application</u> submitted under this section shall also include all of the following items related to the proposed charter school:  | 4. <u>The applications</u> submitted under this section shall also include all of the following items related to the proposed charter school:  | No           |
| a. An executive summary.   | a. An executive summary.   | Yes          |
| b. The mission and vision of the proposed charter school, including identification of the targeted student population and the community the <u>charter school</u> intends to serve.                      | b. The mission and vision of the proposed charter school, including identification of the targeted student population and the community the <u>school</u> intends to serve.                              | No           |
| c. The location of the proposed charter school or the proposed geographic area within the <u>school district</u> where the school is proposed to be located.   | c. The location of the proposed charter school or the proposed geographic area within the <u>state</u> where the school is proposed to be located.   | No           |
| d. Identification of the grades to be served each school year during the duration of the charter school contract.  | d. Identification of the grades to be served each school year during the duration of the charter school contract.  | Yes          |
| e. Minimum, planned, and maximum enrollment per grade for each school year during the duration of the charter school contract.   | e. Minimum, planned, and maximum enrollment per grade for each school year during the duration of the charter school contract.   | Yes          |
| f. Evidence of need and community support for the proposed charter school.   | f. Evidence of need and community support for the proposed charter school.   | Yes          |
| g. Background information on the members of the founding group and background information on the governing board, administration, and management personnel of the proposed charter school, if available. | g. Background information on the members of the founding group and background information on the governing board, administration, and management personnel of the proposed charter school, if available. | Yes          |
| h. The charter school's proposed operations calendar and sample daily schedule.  | h. The charter school's proposed operations calendar and sample daily schedule.  | Yes          |
| i. A description of the academic program and identification of ways the program aligns with state academic standards.  | i. A description of the academic program and identification of ways the program aligns with state academic standards.  | Yes          |

| School Board-State Board Model<br>(Iowa Code § 256E.4(4))   | Founding Group-State Board Model<br>(Iowa Code § 256E.5(4))   | Same<br>Content |
|---|---|-----------------|
| <i>j.</i> A description of the charter school’s instructional model, including the type of learning environment, class size and structure, curriculum overview, and teaching methods.   | <i>j.</i> A description of the charter school’s instructional model, including the type of learning environment, class size and structure, curriculum overview, and teaching methods.   | Yes             |
| <i>k.</i> The charter school’s plan for using internal and external assessments to measure and report student progress on the performance framework in accordance with section 256E.9.  | <i>k.</i> The charter school’s plan for using internal and external assessments to measure and report student progress on the performance framework in accordance with section 256E.9.  | Yes             |
| <i>l.</i> Plans for identifying and serving students with disabilities, students who are limited English proficient, students who are academically failing or below grade level, and gifted students, including but not limited to compliance with applicable laws and regulations.   | <i>l.</i> Plans for identifying and serving students with disabilities, students who are limited English proficient, students who are academically failing or below grade level, and gifted students, including but not limited to compliance with applicable laws and regulations.   | Yes             |
| <i>m.</i> A description of cocurricular and extracurricular programs and how the programs will be funded and delivered.   | <i>m.</i> A description of cocurricular and extracurricular programs and how the programs will be funded and delivered.   | Yes             |
| <i>n.</i> Plans and timelines for student recruitment, enrollment, and transfers, including enrollment preferences and procedures for conducting transparent admissions selections, including admissions lotteries.   | <i>n.</i> Plans and timelines for student recruitment, enrollment, and transfers, including enrollment preferences and procedures for conducting transparent admissions selections, including admissions lotteries.   | Yes             |
| <i>o.</i> The proposed code of student conduct, including applicable procedures and disciplinary sanctions for both general students and special education students.  | <i>o.</i> The proposed code of student conduct, including applicable procedures and disciplinary sanctions for both general students and special education students.  | Yes             |
| <i>p.</i> A chart or description of the charter school’s organizational structure and the duties and powers of each position or group, including the delineation of authority and reporting between the governing board, <u>administration</u> , staff, and any related bodies or external organizations that have a role in managing the charter school. | <i>p.</i> A chart or description of the charter school’s organizational structure and the duties and powers of each position or group, including the delineation of authority and reporting between the governing board, staff, and any related bodies or external organizations that have a role in managing the charter school. | No              |
| <i>q.</i> A staffing chart for the charter school’s first year and a staffing plan for the duration of the charter school contract.   | <i>q.</i> A staffing chart for the charter school’s first year and a staffing plan for the duration of the charter school contract.   | Yes             |
| <i>r.</i> Plans for recruiting and developing school administrators, staff, and governing   | <i>r.</i> Plans for recruiting and developing school administrators, staff, and governing   | Yes             |

| School Board-State Board Model<br>(Iowa Code § 256E.4(4))  | Founding Group-State Board Model<br>(Iowa Code § 256E.5(4))   | Same Content |
|--|---|--------------|
| board members and the charter school's employment policies, including performance evaluation plans.  | board members and the charter school's employment policies, including performance evaluation plans.   |              |
| s. Proposed governing bylaws for the charter school.   | s. Proposed governing bylaws for the charter school.  | Yes          |
| t. Identification and explanation of any partnerships or contractual relationships with <u>the founding group or any of the founding group or school board's members</u> that are related to the charter school's operations or mission.   | t. Identification and explanation of any partnerships or contractual relationships with <u>an education service provider</u> that are related to the charter school's operations or mission.  | No           |
| u. The charter school's plans for providing transportation services, food service, and all other operational or ancillary services.  | u. The charter school's plans for providing transportation services, food service, and all other operational or ancillary services.   | Yes          |
| v. Proposed opportunities and expectations for parent involvement.   | v. Proposed opportunities and expectations for parent involvement.  | Yes          |
| w. A detailed school start-up plan and five-year plan, including all relevant assumptions used, identifying timelines for charter school finances, budget, and insurance coverage, facility construction, preparation, and contingencies, and the identification of persons or positions responsible for each such item.   | w. A detailed school start-up plan and five-year plan, including all relevant assumptions used, identifying timelines for charter school finances, budget, and insurance coverage, facility construction, preparation, and contingencies, and the identification of persons or positions responsible for each such item.  | Yes          |
| x. Evidence of anticipated fundraising contributions, if any.  | x. Evidence of anticipated fundraising contributions, if any.   | Yes          |
| y. Evidence of the [school board-established] <u>founding group's</u> success in serving student populations similar to that which is proposed in the application and if the <u>founding group</u> operates other charter schools, evidence of past performance of such other charter schools and evidence of the <u>founding group's</u> capacity for <u>an additional charter school</u> . | y. <u>If the application includes a proposal that the governing board contracts with an education service provider</u> , evidence of the <u>education service provider's</u> success in serving student populations similar to that which is proposed in the application and if the <u>education service provider</u> operates other charter schools, evidence of past performance of such other charter schools and evidence of the <u>education service provider's</u> capacity for <u>growth</u> . | No           |
| z. A description of the <u>proposed charter school's</u> staff performance evaluation measures and compensation structure, methods of contract oversight and dispute resolution, investment disclosures, and conflicts of interest.  | z. <u>If the application includes a proposal that the governing board contracts with an education service provider</u> , a description of the <u>education service provider's</u> staff performance evaluation measures and compensation structure, methods of contract   | No           |

| School Board-State Board Model<br>(Iowa Code § 256E.4(4))  | Founding Group-State Board Model<br>(Iowa Code § 256E.5(4))  | Same<br>Content |
|--|--|-----------------|
|  | oversight and dispute resolution, investment disclosures, and conflicts of interest.   |                 |
| aa. A proposed duration and outline of the charter school contract, including designation of roles, authority, and duties of the governing board and the charter school staff.   | aa. A proposed duration and outline of the charter school contract, including designation of roles, authority, and duties of the governing board and the charter school staff.   | Yes             |
| ab. The specific statutes and administrative rules with which the charter school does not intend to comply. The department shall provide technical assistance to the applicant concerning statutes and administrative rules that may be waived under the charter school contract in order to facilitate the goals of the charter school. | ab. The specific statutes and administrative rules with which the charter school does not intend to comply. The department shall provide technical assistance to the applicant concerning statutes and administrative rules that may be waived under the charter school contract in order to facilitate the goals of the charter school. | Yes             |

## State Board Application Review, Approval, and Denial

Each application review by the State Board must include:

- A thorough evaluation of the written application,
- An in-person interview with the applicant, and
- An opportunity in a public forum for local residents to learn about and provide input on each application (Iowa Code §§ 256E.4(6) and 256E.5(5)).

### SCHOOL BOARD-STATE BOARD MODEL: SCHOOL CONVERSION REQUIREMENT

If the school board-established founding group proposes to convert an existing school in the district to a charter school, the founding group must submit evidence that the majority of the school’s teachers and the majority of the school’s parents or guardians voted in favor of the conversion. The State Board must establish procedures by rule for voting (Iowa Code § 256E.4(5)).

### APPLICATION DECISIONS AND TIMELINE

Following review of a charter school application, the State Board must do all of the following:

- Approve a charter school application only if the applicant has demonstrated competence in each element of the approval criteria and if the applicant is likely to open and operate a successful charter school.
- Make application decisions on documented evidence collected through the application review process.
- Adhere to the policies and criteria that are transparent, based on merit, and avoid conflicts of interest or any appearance thereof (Iowa Code §§ 256E.4(7) and 256E.5(6)).

The State Board must approve or deny a charter school application no later than 75 calendar days after the application is received. If the State Board denies an application, the State Board must provide notice of denial to the applicant in writing within 30 days after the State Board’s action. The notice must specify the exact reasons for denial and provide documentation supporting those reasons (Iowa Code §§ 256E.4(8) and 256E.5(8)).

### APPEALS

A decision of the State Board relating to an application is not appealable, but an unsuccessful applicant may subsequently reapply to the State Board (Iowa Code §§ 256E.4(9)-(10) and 256E.5(9)-(10)).

## Charter School Contract

Within 30 days following approval of a charter school application or upon the satisfaction of all reasonable conditions imposed on the applicant in the charter school approval (if any), whichever is later, a charter school contract must be executed between the founding group and the State Board (Iowa Code § 256E.6(1)). A charter school approved under chapter 256E must not commence operations without a valid charter school contract executed and approved in an open session of the State Board (Iowa Code § 256E.6(5)).

The initial contract must be granted for a term of five (5) school budget years and must include the beginning and ending dates of the charter school contract term. An approved charter school may delay its opening for a period of time not to exceed one school year in order to plan and prepare for the charter school's opening. If the charter school requires an opening delay of more than one school year, the charter school may request an extension from the State Board (Iowa Code § 256E.6(2)).

A charter school contract may be amended to govern multiple charter schools operated by the same applicant and approved by the State Board. However, each charter school that is part of a charter school contract must be separate and distinct from any other charter school governed by the contract (Iowa Code § 256E.6(7)).

## Charter School General Operating Powers and Duties

In order to fulfill the charter school's public purpose, a charter school established under chapter 256E must be organized as a nonprofit education organization (Iowa Code § 256E.7(1)).

### Powers to Carry Out Contract

A charter school must have all the powers necessary for carrying out the terms of the charter school contract including but not limited to:

- a. Receive and expend funds for charter school purposes.
- b. Secure appropriate insurance and enter into contracts and leases.
- c. Contract with an education service provider for the management and operation of the charter school so long as the governing board retains oversight authority over the charter school.
- d. Incur debt in anticipation of the receipt of public or private funds.
- e. Pledge, assign, or encumber the charter school's assets to be used as collateral for loans or extensions of credit.
- f. Solicit and accept gifts or grants for charter school purposes unless otherwise prohibited by law or by the terms of its charter school contract.
- g. Acquire from public or private sources real property for use as a charter school or a facility directly related to the operations of the charter school.
- h. Sue and be sued in the charter school's own name.
- i. Operate an education program that may be offered by any noncharter public school or school district. (Iowa Code § 256E.7(1))

### State and Local Statutes, Rules, Regulations, and Policies

A charter school established under chapter 256E is exempt from all state statutes and rules and any local rule, regulation, or policy, applicable to a noncharter school, except that the charter school must do all of the following:

- a. Meet all applicable federal, state, and local health and safety requirements and laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, religion, ancestry, or disability. If approved under a school board-State Board model, the charter school must be subject to any court-ordered desegregation in effect for the school district at the time the charter school application is approved, unless otherwise specifically provided for in the desegregation order.

- b. Operate as a nonsectarian, nonreligious school.
- c. Be free of tuition and application fees to Iowa resident students between the ages of five and 21 years.
- d. Be subject to and comply with chapters 216 and 216A relating to civil and human rights.
- e. Provide special education services in accordance with chapter 256B.
- f. Be subject to the same financial audits, audit procedures, and audit requirements as a school district. The audit must be consistent with the requirements of sections 11.6, 11.14, 11.19, and 279.29, and section 256.9, subsection 20, except to the extent deviations are necessary because of the program at the school. The department, the auditor of state, or the legislative services agency may conduct financial, program, or compliance audits.
- g. Be subject to and comply with the requirements of section 256.7, subsection 21, and the educational standards of section 256.11, unless specifically waived by the State Board during the application process.
- h. Provide instruction for at least the number of days or hours required by section 279.10, subsection 1, unless specifically waived by the State Board as part of the application process.
- i. Comply with the requirements of chapter 256E. (Iowa Code § 256E.7(2)).

## Other Requirements

An approved charter school or charter school governing board must also do the following:

- Employ or contract with teachers as defined in section 272.1, who hold valid licenses with an endorsement for the type of instruction or service for which the teachers are employed or under contract.
- Have a chief administrator that must be one of the following:
  - Who holds a valid license under chapter 272.
  - A teacher who holds a valid license under chapter 272.
  - An individual who holds an authorization to be a charter school administrator issued by the board of educational examiners under chapter 272. The board of educational examiners must adopt rules for the issuance of such authorizations not later than December 31, 2021, and such authorizations must only be valid for service or employment as a charter school administrator.
- Not discriminate in its student admissions policies or practices on the basis of intellectual or athletic ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, or status as a person with a disability. However, a charter school may limit admission to students who are within a particular range of ages or grade levels or on any other basis that would be legal if initiated by a school district.
- Give enrollment priority to the siblings of students enrolled in a charter school.
- Must enroll an eligible student who submits a timely application unless the number of applications exceeds the capacity of a program, class, grade level, or building. In this case, students must be accepted by lot.
- Upon enrollment of an eligible student, must notify the public school district of residence not later than March 1 of the school year preceding the year of enrollment.
- Adopt a conflict of interest policy and a code of ethics for all board members and employees.
- Adopt a policy regarding the hiring of family members to avoid nepotism in hiring and supervision. The policy must include but is not limited to a disclosure to the governing board of potential nepotism in hiring and supervision. Any person subject to the policy with a conflict must not be involved in the hiring decision or supervision of a potential employee.
- Prohibit individuals compensated by an education service provider from serving as a voting member on the governing board unless the State Board waives such prohibition.
- If operated by an education service provider, the governing board of the charter school must have access to all records of the education service provider that are necessary to evaluate any provision of the contract or evaluate the education service provider's performance under the contract.
- Have a majority of the membership of the governing board be residents of the geographic area served by the charter school. Each member of the governing board who is not a resident of the geographic area served by the charter school must be a resident of Iowa.

- Post the charter school's annual budget on the charter school's website for public viewing within 10 days of approval of the budget. Each posted budget must continue to be accessible to the public on the website for all subsequent budget years. (Iowa Code § 256E.7(3)-(11), as amended by HF 847).

## Funding

Each student enrolled in a charter school must be counted, for state school foundation purposes, in the student's district of residence (Iowa Code § 256E.8(1)).

## Funding Formula

The school district of residence must pay to the charter school in which the student is enrolled an amount equal to:

- The state cost per pupil for the previous school year, and
- The teacher leadership supplement state cost per pupil for the previous fiscal year, and
- Any monies received for the student as a result of the non-English speaking weighting for the previous school year multiplied by the state cost per pupil for the previous year (Iowa Code § 256E.8(2)"a").

## Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program

If a student is an eligible pupil under the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program, the charter school must pay the tuition reimbursement amount to an eligible postsecondary institution as provided in section 261E.7 (Iowa Code § 256E.8(2)"a").

## Special Education

For a student requiring special education, the resident school district must pay to the charter school the actual costs incurred in providing the appropriate special education (Iowa Code § 256E.8(2)"b").

## Medicaid Reimbursement

The charter school must complete and provide to the students' school districts of residence all documentation necessary to seek Medicaid reimbursement for eligible services (Iowa Code § 256E.8(3)).

## Students Not Included in the Previous Year's Resident District Actual Enrollment

For each student enrolled in the charter school who was not included in the actual enrollment of the district of residence in the previous school year, the amount required to be paid to the charter school for the student's initial year of enrollment must be paid by the Department instead of being paid by the resident district. In this case, the Department will use its annual appropriation from the general fund to pay all applicable amounts to charter schools (Iowa Code § 256E.8(2)"c"-“d”).

## First School Year Funding

Funding amounts required for the first school year of a new charter school must be based on enrollment estimates for the charter school included in the charter school contract. Initial amounts paid using estimated enrollments must be reconciled during the subsequent payment based on actual enrollment of the charter school during the first school year (Iowa Code § 256E.8(4)).

## Performance Framework

The performance provisions within the charter school contract must be based on a performance framework adopted by the State Board that clearly sets forth the academic and operational performance indicators, measures, and metrics that will guide the evaluation of the charter school by the State Board, without compromising individual student privacy (Iowa Code § 256E.9(1)).

## Content of Performance Framework

The framework must include but is not limited to:

- a. Student academic proficiency.
- b. Student academic growth.
- c. Achievement gaps in both proficiency and growth between specific populations or groups of students, including groups based on gender, race, poverty, special education status, limited English proficiency, and gifted status.
- d. Attendance.
- e. Enrollment attrition.
- f. Postsecondary readiness for students in grades nine through 12.
- g. Goals specified in the charter school's mission.
- h. Financial performance and sustainability.
- i. Governing board performance and stewardship, including compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and terms of the charter contract. (Iowa Code § 256E.9(1))

## Other Requirements of Performance Framework

Annual performance targets must be agreed upon between the charter school and the State Board and must be included in the contract. The performance targets contained in the charter school contract may be amended by mutual agreement after the charter school is in operation and has collected initial achievement data for the charter school's students (Iowa Code § 256E.9(2)).

The State Board is responsible for collecting, analyzing, and reporting all data from state assessments and other state data sources in accordance with the performance framework. All efforts must be made to eliminate or reduce duplicative data reporting requirements (Iowa Code § 256E.9(3)).

Multiple charter schools operating under a single charter school contract must be required to report their performance data as separate, individual schools, with each charter school held independently accountable for performance (Iowa Code § 256E.9(4)).

Each charter school established under chapter 256E must be evaluated and graded by the Department using the Iowa School Performance Profiles system developed and adopted by the Department (Iowa Code § 256E.9(5)).

## Oversight, Corrective Action, Contract Renewal, and Revocation

### Oversight

The State Board must monitor the performance and compliance of each charter school it approves. Oversight may include inquiries and investigation of the charter school so long as:

- The activities are consistent with the intent of Iowa Code chapter 256E,
- Adhere to the terms of the charter school contract, and
- Do not unduly inhibit the autonomy granted to the charter school (Iowa Code § 256E.10(1)).

### Annual Report

The charter school must submit an annual report to assist the State Board in evaluating the charter school's performance and compliance with the performance framework. Any performance report resulting from an inquiry or investigation must be included in the annual report (Iowa Code § 256E.10(2)).

### Corrective Action

If a charter school's performance under the charter school contract or compliance with applicable laws or rules is unsatisfactory, the State Board must notify the charter school of the perceived problem and provide reasonable opportunity for the school to remedy the problem, unless the problem warrants revocation (Iowa

Code § 256E.10(3)). The State Board may take appropriate corrective actions or impose sanctions (other than revocation) in response to deficiencies in the charter school's performance or compliance with applicable laws and rules. Such actions or sanctions may include requiring the charter school to develop and execute a corrective action plan within a specified time period (Iowa Code § 256E.10(4)).

## Renewal

A charter school contract may be renewed for periods of time not to exceed an additional five (5) years (Iowa Code § 256E.10(5)). Annually, by June 30, the State Board must issue a charter school performance report and charter school contract renewal application guidance to each charter school whose charter school contract will expire during the following school budget year. The charter school must have 60 days to respond to the performance report and submit any corrections or clarifications for the report (Iowa Code § 256E.10(6)).

The renewal application guidance must, at a minimum, include the criteria that will be used when assessing charter school contract renewal decisions and provide an opportunity for the charter school to:

- a. Present additional evidence, beyond the data contained in the performance report.
- b. Describe improvements undertaken or planned for the charter school.
- c. Describe the charter school's plans, including any proposed modifications, for the next charter school contract term (Iowa Code § 256E.10(7)).

No later than October 1, the governing board of a charter school seeking renewal must submit a renewal application to the State Board. A renewal or denial must be approved by resolution of the State Board within 60 days following the filing of the renewal application (Iowa Code § 256E.10(8)). Unless eligible for expedited renewal, when reviewing a charter school contract renewal application, the State Board must do all of the following:

- a. Use evidence of the school's performance over the term of the charter school contract in accordance with the applicable performance framework.
- b. Ensure that data used in making renewal decisions is available to the charter school and the public.
- c. Provide a report summarizing the evidence that served as a basis for the decision (Iowa Code § 256E.10(9)).

## Expedited Renewal

If a charter school has been evaluated and graded to be in the exceptional category (or the highest rated category under a succeeding evaluation system for the immediately preceding two school years) and is in compliance with the current charter school contract and all other provisions, the charter school's application renewal must be renewed for an additional period of time equal to the length of the original charter school contract or the most recent renewal of the contract, whichever is longer unless the State Board provides written notice to the charter school of the State Board's rejection of the expedited renewal within 60 days of the filing of the application. The State Board must not reject an expedited renewal application unless the State Board finds exceptional circumstances for the rejection or seeks material changes to the charter school contract (Iowa Code § 256E.10(13)).

## Revocation

A charter school contract may be revoked at any time or not renewed if the State Board determines that the charter school did any of the following:

- a. Committed a material violation of any of the terms, conditions, standards, or procedures required under the charter school contract or Iowa Code chapter 256E.
- b. Failed to meet or make sufficient progress toward the performance expectations set forth in the charter school contract.
- c. Failed to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management.

- d. Violated a provision of law from which the charter school was not exempted (Iowa Code § 256E.10(10)).

The State Board must develop charter school contract revocation and nonrenewal standards and procedures that do all of the following:

- a. Provide the charter school with a timely notice of the possibility of revocation or nonrenewal and of the reasons for possible revocation or nonrenewal.
- b. Allow the charter school a reasonable period of time to prepare a response to any notice received.
- c. Provide the charter school an opportunity to submit documents and give testimony challenging the decision to revoke the charter school contract or the decision to not renew the contract.
- d. Allow the charter school the opportunity to hire legal representation and to call witnesses.
- e. Permit the audio or video recording of such proceedings described in paragraphs “c” and “d.”
- f. Require a final decision to be conveyed in writing to the charter school. (Iowa Code § 256E.10(11))

A decision to revoke or to not renew a charter school contract must be by resolution of the State Board and must clearly state the reasons for the revocation or nonrenewal (Iowa Code § 256E.10(12)).

## Procedures for Charter School Closure

The State Board must develop a closure protocol, with specific actions, timelines, and responsible parties, to ensure:

- Timely notice to parents and guardians;
- Orderly transition of students and records; and
- Proper disposition of funds, property, and assets (Iowa Code § 256E.11(1)).

In the event of a charter school closure, the charter school’s assets must be used in the following order to satisfy outstanding:

- Payroll obligations for employees of the school,
- Obligations to creditors of the school,
- Obligations to the public school district in which the charter school operated (if applicable), and
- Obligations to the state general fund (Iowa Code § 256E.11(2)).

## Reports

Each approved charter school must report to the Department annually. The reports are public record and must, at a minimum, include the following information:

- Student achievement, including annual academic growth and proficiency;
- Graduation rates; and
- Financial performance and sustainability (Iowa Code § 256E.12(1)).

Each year, by December 1, the State Board must prepare and file a comprehensive report of charter school program findings and recommendations, including whether the charter school program is meeting its established goals and purposes, to the general assembly. The report must contain the following information for each charter school:

- Copy of the charter school's mission statement,
- Attendance statistics and dropout rate,
- Aggregate assessment test scores,
- Projections of financial stability, and
- The number and qualifications of teachers and administrators (Iowa Code § 256E.12(2)).

## Questions and Additional Guidance

If you have questions, please contact Janet A. Boyd at [janet.boyd@iowa.gov](mailto:janet.boyd@iowa.gov). For additional charter school guidance and information, please visit the Department's [Charter Schools webpage](#).