



**MONTANA
COMMUNITY
CHOICE SCHOOLS**

Renewal Application Guide for Schools

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Section I: Purpose and Intent of Community Choice School Performance and Renewal

The premise of the charter school movement is autonomy in exchange for accountability. A Community Choice Charter School is granted an initial contract for five years of operation. Renewal of that contract is not a given, it must be earned through consistent evidence of a high quality academic program, efficient operations, and sustainable financial health. A fair, transparent, and strong renewal process is critical to sustaining autonomy, holding schools to high standards, and ensuring the trust of the Community Choice Schools community, the greater public, and lawmakers.

In accordance with the Community Choice Schools Act 20-11-117. (1) The performance provisions within the charter contract must be based on a performance framework that clearly sets forth the academic and operational performance indicators, measures, and metrics that will guide the authorizer's evaluations of each choice school. The performance framework must include indicators, measures, and metrics for, at a minimum:

- (a) student academic proficiency;
- (b) student academic growth;
- (c) achievement gaps in both proficiency and growth between major student subgroups;
- (d) attendance;
- (e) recurrent enrollment from year to year;
- (f) postsecondary readiness;
- (g) financial performance and sustainability; and
- (h) governing board performance and stewardship, including compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and terms of the charter contract.

(2) Each choice school, in conjunction with its authorizer, shall set annual performance targets designed to help each school meet applicable federal, state, and authorizer expectations.

(3) (a) The contract performance framework must include rigorous, valid, and reliable indicators proposed by a choice school to evaluate its performance that are consistent with the purposes of this part.

(b) The authorizer shall collect and analyze data from each choice school it oversees in accordance with the performance framework.

(c) Multiple schools operating under a single charter contract or overseen by a single governing board shall report their performance as separate, individual schools. Each school must be held independently accountable for its performance.

(4) (a) An authorizer shall monitor the performance and legal compliance of the choice schools it oversees, including collecting and analyzing data to support ongoing evaluation according to the charter contract. Every authorizer has the authority to conduct or require oversight activities that do not unduly inhibit the autonomy granted to choice schools but that enable the authorizer to fulfill its responsibilities under this part, including conducting appropriate inquiries and investigations consistent with the intent of this part, and to adhere to the terms of the charter contract. Required oversight activities may not encumber the choice school financially and may be appealed by the choice school through the commission.

(b) Each authorizer shall annually publish and provide as part of its annual report to the commission a performance report for each choice school it oversees, within the performance framework set forth in the charter contract and **20-11-112**. The authorizer may require each choice school it oversees to submit an annual report to assist the authorizer in gathering complete information about each school, consistent with the performance framework.

(c) In the event that a choice school's performance or legal compliance appears unsatisfactory, the authorizer shall promptly notify the choice school of the perceived problem and provide a reasonable opportunity for the school to remedy the problem.

(d) An authorizer may take appropriate corrective action or exercise sanctions short of revocation in response to apparent deficiencies in choice school performance or legal compliance. The action or sanctions may include, if warranted, requiring a choice school to develop and execute a corrective action plan within a specified timeframe.

(5) (a) A charter contract may be renewed for successive 5-year terms, although the authorizer may vary the term based on the performance, demonstrated capacities, and particular circumstances of each choice school. An authorizer may grant renewal with specific conditions for necessary improvement to a choice school.

Section II: Renewal Policy and Timeline

May

1. Renewal Procedures Meeting: The Commission Director will schedule a meeting with the school leadership team and governing board representative to introduce the renewal process, provide the Renewal Application Guide, and discuss any concerns regarding school outcomes.

June

2. Performance Report and Charter Renewal Application Guide: No later than June 30 of the year prior to charter contract expiration, the Commission shall issue a Community Choice School Performance Report and Charter Renewal Application Guide.

September

3. School's Response to Performance Report: The Community Choice School shall respond to the Performance Report and submit any corrections or clarifications within 90 days.

October - November

4. Campus Renewal Visits: Schools host the Commission Director and Commission Renewal Subcommittee on campus to observe the school in action and meet with members of the school community which may include: students, families, teachers, leadership team, and/or governing board members. The Director and school leader will collaborate to determine the visit agenda.

December

5. Renewal Application: The governing board of a Community Choice School seeking renewal shall submit a Renewal Application to the Commission pursuant to the Renewal Application Guide. The Renewal Application is due on (12/XX/XX). The Commission Director and Renewal Subcommittee will review each Renewal Application providing an Executive Summary to the Commission.
6. Public Posting: The Renewal Applications shall be posted on the Board of Public Education's website under the Community Choice Schools tab with directions for submission of written public comment.

January - February

7. Commission Action: The Commission shall rule by resolution on the Renewal Application no later than 30 days after the filing of the Renewal Application (1/XX/XX). Deliberations and vote will occur in a public meeting. Choice Schools that are approved for renewal will proceed to contracting. Choice Schools that are not renewed, move to the non-renewal hearing process.
8. Non-renewal Hearing: The Commission will provide the charter contract holders an opportunity to submit documents and testimony at a hearing to challenge the rationale for the non-renewal recommendation and in support of the continuation of the school. The charter contract holders may be represented by counsel and call witnesses on their behalf. Recording of the proceedings is permitted as are all open meeting laws. The Director and Choice School governing board will arrange the date of the hearing within 5 business days of the Commission's decision to open a hearing.
9. Final Determination: The Commission will deliberate and take action as the final step in the hearing. The hearing will abide by Montana's (MCA) open meeting laws.

10. Closure Protocol: If closure is determined, within 48 hours of final closure determination, a meeting will be held between the Commission Director, school leadership team, and governing board members to review the School Closure Protocol and establish a plan specific to the school.

Section III: Criteria Guiding Renewal

In making charter renewal decisions, the Commission must adhere to the following pursuant to 20-11-117, Community Choice Schools Performance and Renewal. (1)The performance provisions within the charter contract must be based on a performance framework that clearly sets forth the academic and operational performance indicators, measures, and metrics that will guide the authorizer's evaluations of each choice school.

1. The Commission will place emphasis on the following Performance Framework metrics: academic growth, steady enrollment, and financial sustainability.
2. The Commission will use the following Guiding Questions:
 - a. Is the school delivering on its promise?
 - b. Is the school an academic success?
 - c. Is the school a safe and welcoming environment conducive to learning?
 - d. Is the school an effective and viable organization?
 - e. Is the school fiscally sound?

Section IV: School Renewal Site Visit Protocol

The Renewal Site Visit serves to provide the Commission context and insight as to how the school model and mission are implemented that may not be captured in the Renewal Performance Report and the Renewal Application. The visit provides the school an opportunity to highlight aspects of the school community climate and culture that are not easily captured in the Performance Framework. Additionally, the site visit affords the Commission the opportunity to dig into areas of growth and strength that may have surfaced over the contract term. The site visit agenda will provide opportunity to:

- Observe how the school's key design elements are being implemented;
- Evidence of the school's mission in practice;
- Experience the school's climate and culture;
- Understand the perspective of students, staff, families, and governing board members.

The Director and school leader will design an agenda that is appropriate to the school's programming and current areas of improvement. The Commission has provided a sample agenda as a resource and highly encourages creativity in the site visit agenda to best highlight the school's implementation of its mission. Following the site visit, the Director will prepare a visit summary of the qualitative and contextual information gathered to include in the Final Recommendation Report to the Commission to consider in making their renewal decision.

Charter Renewal Site Visit Planning Checklist

- Initial Planning Meeting between Director and School Leader
 - Identify the renewal visit date
 - Schedule a pre-visit meeting one week prior to the visit to review the final agenda
 - Discuss agenda items for the visit
- School Leader Preparations
 - Ensure that no field trips, special events, or school-wide testing is scheduled for the day of the site visit
 - Draft an agenda for the visit based on the items discussed in the initial planning meeting with the Director, including:
 - Selecting participants for interviews and focus groups
 - Ensuring proper space for meetings with staff, board members, and family forums

- Review the agenda and visit purpose with staff and others who are involved

Sample Agenda

- Welcome Meeting between Commission representatives and School Leadership
- Observation of Student Arrival
- Parent Forum (3-5 parents for 20-30 mins)
- Student Led Tour with Classroom Observations
- Conversation with School Leadership Team
- Conversation with Staff Groups
- Conversation with Board Members
- Lunch with Students
- Conversation with Staff Groups
- Student Led Tour with Classroom Observations
- Conversation with Staff Groups
- Parent Forum (3-5 parents for 20-30 mins)
- Observation of Dismissal
- Visit Summary with School Leader and Board Members

Section V: Renewal Application Requirements (see report template)

20-11-117 (6) The renewal application must, at a minimum, provide an opportunity for the choice school to:

(a) present additional evidence, beyond the data contained in the performance report, supporting its case for charter contract renewal; (b) describe improvements undertaken or planned for the choice school; and (c) detail the choice school's plans for the next charter contract term.

Cover Sheet

1. School's Name & Address
2. School Leader Name & Contact Information
3. Governing Board Chair Name & Contact Information
4. Grades Served
5. Current Enrollment
6. Enrollment at Capacity
7. School Mission

Narrative Responses

1. What additional evidence should the Commission consider beyond the Performance Framework?
2. What improvements has the school undertaken in the current charter contract?
3. What modifications and or additions are you planning for the next charter contract?



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School Renewal Application Template

School Information	
School Name	
Address	
Grades Served	
Current Enrollment & Enrollment at Capacity	
Mission	
School Leader Name	
School Leader Phone & Email	
Governing Board Chair Name	
Governing Board Chair Phone & Email	

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Section I: Additional Evidence

What additional evidence should the Commission consider beyond the Performance Framework?

Section II: Improvements Undertaken

What improvements has the school undertaken in the current charter contract?

Section III: Future Plans

What modifications and or additions are you planning for the next charter contract?

Appendix A: Renewal Performance Report

Appendix B: Site Visit Summary