



Montana Board of Public Education
Public Charter School Application Evaluation Criteria
2026-2027

Title 20, Chapter 6, Part 8, MCA, authorizes the establishment of public charter schools in Montana and tasks the Montana Board of Public Education as the sole entity authorized to enter into public charter school contracts with a governing board. 20-6-805, MCA, requires the Board to issue the criteria that will guide the Board’s decision to approve or deny a charter proposal, and limit the estimated annual state cost of new public charter schools to \$1M each year. This document is designed to fulfill that obligation, yet not intended to limit review or feedback on the Board’s application review and evaluation process.

The scoring or evaluation of a public charter school application is intended solely to inform and guide the Board’s deliberations and does not constitute approval of the proposed public charter school. A public charter school is not authorized until the Board takes formal action to approve the public charter school. Accordingly, any preliminary scoring, recommendation, or indication of support should not be interpreted as a guarantee or assurance until final approval.

PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICANT: _____

GENERAL ASSURANCES

Does the proposal include:

- | | |
|--|-----|
| The school district in which the public charter school is proposed to be located and operate; | Y N |
| The grades to be served each year for the full term of the charter contract; | Y N |
| The minimum, planned, and maximum enrollment per year for the term of the charter contract; | Y N |
| An executive summary; | Y N |
| Is the applicant a group of residents of the located school district or county of the located school district? | Y N |
| Is the applicant a school board of the located school district? | Y N |

Does the applicant demonstrate a commitment to create an innovative public charter school? _____/10

Does the applicant demonstrate a commitment to create a high-performing public charter school? _____/10

Does the applicant demonstrate a commitment to and robust understanding of personalized and proficiency-based learning? _____/10

Additional Comments:

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Does the proposal include:

- | | |
|---|-----|
| Mission & vision of proposed public charter school; | Y N |
| Identification of targeted student population & community the school proposes to serve; | Y N |
| Plans and timelines for student recruitment and enrollment, including lottery procedures; | Y N |
| Description of the academic program, including: | |
| (i) plans to formally assess student achievement on an annual basis; and | Y N |

(ii) variances to existing standards that the proposed public charter school requires;	Y	N
Description of proposed public charter school's instructional design, including the type of learning environment, class size & structure, curriculum overview, teaching methods;	Y	N
Proposed public charter school's plans for identifying and successfully serving students with disabilities, students who are English language learners, students who are academically challenged, and gifted students, including but not limited to compliance with applicable laws and regulations; and	Y	N
Proposed public charter school's student discipline policies, including those for special education students.	Y	N

Overall, the ACADEMIC PROGRAM of the proposed charter school is:

- Consistent with a high-quality public charter school. (1 point)
- Partially consistent with high-quality public charter school. (.5 points)
- Inconsistent with a high-quality public charter school. (0 points)

Additional Comments:

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

Does the proposal include:

An organizational chart that clearly presents the proposed public charter school's organizational structure, including lines of authority and reporting between the governing board, staff, related bodies such as advisory bodies or parent and teacher councils, and external organizations that will play a role in managing the school;	Y	N
Clear description of the roles/responsibilities for the governing board, the proposed public charter school's leadership & management team, and other entities shown in the organizational chart;	Y	N
A staffing chart for the proposed public charter school's first year and a staffing plan for the term of the charter;	Y	N
A detailed school startup plan, identifying tasks, timelines, and responsible individuals;	Y	N
Plans for recruiting and developing school leadership and staff;	Y	N
Proposed public charter school's leadership and teacher employment policies, including performance evaluation plans;	Y	N
Proposed governing bylaws;	Y	N
Explanations of partnerships/contractual relationships central to the proposed public charter school operations/mission; and	Y	N
Specific evidence of the proposed public charter school's proposed calendar and sample daily schedule.	Y	N

Overall, the SCHOOL GOVERNANCE of the proposed charter school is:

- Consistent with a high-quality public charter school. (1 point)
- Partially consistent with high-quality public charter school. (.5points)
- Inconsistent with a high-quality public charter school. (0 points)

Additional Comments:

BUSINESS OPERATIONS

Does the proposal include:

Proposed public charter school's plans for providing transportation, food service, all other significant ancillary services;	Y	N
Description of cocurricular or extracurricular programs, if any, and how the programs will be funded and delivered;	Y	N
Description of proposed public charter school's financial plan & policies, including financial controls/audit requirements;	Y	N
A description of the insurance coverage the proposed public charter school will obtain;	Y	N
Startup and 5-year budgets with clearly stated assumptions;	Y	N
Startup and first-year cash flow projections with clearly stated assumptions;	Y	N
Evidence of anticipated fundraising contributions, if claimed in the proposal; and	Y	N
A sound facilities plan, including backup or contingency plans, if appropriate.	Y	N

Overall, the *BUSINESS OPERATIONS* of the proposed charter school is:

- Consistent with a high-quality public charter school. (1 point)
- Partially consistent with high-quality public charter school. (.5 points)
- Inconsistent with a high-quality public charter school. (0 points)

Additional Comments:

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND NEED

Does the proposal include:

Specific evidence of significant community support for the proposed public charter school; and
Opportunities and expectations for parent involvement.

___/10

Additional Comments:

BOARD ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Does the proposal meet identified education needs AND promote a diversity of education choices, including:

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| Increasing standards for student achievement; | Y | N |
| Closing achievement gaps between high-performing and low performing groups of public school students; | Y | N |
| Increasing educational opportunities within the public education system; | Y | N |
| Providing alternative learning environments for students who are not thriving in traditional school settings; | Y | N |
| Lowering the dropout rate; | Y | N |
| Creating new professional opportunities for teachers/school personnel; | Y | N |
| Encouraging the use of different models of teaching and learning; and | Y | N |
| Providing students, parents, community members, local entities with expanded opportunities for involvement. | Y | N |

The Board is tasked with denying charter proposals that fail to provide clear and convincing proof of likelihood of success.

Has the applicant demonstrated clear and convincing proof of the likelihood of success? ___/1

The Board shall grant charters only to applicants that have demonstrated competence in each element of the board's published approval criteria and are likely to open and operate a successful public charter school; base decisions on documented evidence collected through the proposal review process; follow charter-granting policies and practices that are transparent and are based on merit and avoid conflicts of interest or any appearance of conflict; and weigh heavily evidence of community support, projected student enrollment, input received under subsection; only approve charters whose promise of improved educational outcomes outweighs potential increased costs to state & local taxpayers.

Has the applicant demonstrated that they are likely to open and operate a successful public charter school? ___/1

Overall, it is recommended that the Montana Board of Public Education:

- Authorize the proposed public charter school based on the current application. (1 point)
- Authorize the proposed public charter school if the public charter school is able to clarify the aspects of its current application as identified below.
- Decline to authorize the proposed public charter school at this time. (0 points)

Additional Comments: