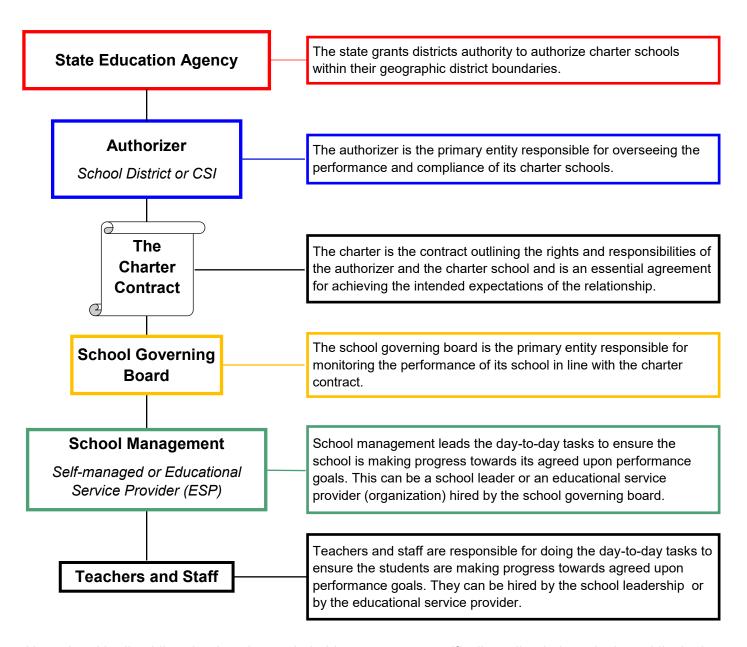
Understanding Charter School Oversight

Overview

This resource seeks to clarify the roles and responsibilities of key charter school stakeholders. The oversight structure of charter public schools loosely parallels that of traditional public schools: high-level oversight by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE); ongoing oversight, monitoring and technical assistance provided by charter school authorizers; key policy-setting, performance goal setting/monitoring and decision making charter school boards; and, day-to-day operations managed by charter school leaders or through contracted educational service providers.



Note: As with all public schools, a key stakeholder group not specifically outlined above is the public. In the case of charter public schools, parents and community members also hold the school accountable, including their support through enrollment of children at the school, community partnerships that support the school, and membership on the charter school board.



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Roles and Responsibilities

State Education Agency

Authorizer School District or CSI The Charter Contract

School Board

School Management

Self-managed or Educational Service Provider (ESP)

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) provides high level oversight to all public schools and local education agencies to ensure a "uniform system of public education" per the Constitution.

Key responsibilities include:

- Assessing authorizer and school performance based on academic outcomes via the District Performance Framework (DPF) and School Performance Framework (SPF), respectively
- Considering requests for waivers of state law for charter schools, districts, and CSI;
- Overseeing the administration of federal programs and disbursement of federal funds, including charter school program grants;
- Ongoing monitoring of all authorizer performance, including review of improvement plans, as required to address deficiencies:
- Hearing appeals on charter school denials and the imposition of unilateral conditions;
- Granting, and, as appropriate, revoking, exclusive chartering authority;

Colorado charter school authorizers include most school districts as well as the statewide Charter School Institute (CSI) in certain circumstances.

Key responsibilities include:

- Reviewing and either accepting or rejecting new school proposals;
- Establishing and negotiating clear, meaningful goals and expectations outlined in the contract between the authorizer board and charter school boards;
- On-going oversight and monitoring of charter school performance metrics, with a focus on compliance with relevant state and federal laws, as well as terms of the contract between the authorizer and school boards;
- Providing technical assistance to charter school boards and schools, as needed;
- Conducting required annual school assurances, ongoing compliance monitoring and school site visits;
- Reviewing school financial and enrollment records on a regular basis;
- Reporting to CDE on issues of significant concern or school's failure to comply with legal obligations;
- Requiring, reviewing and approving corrective action plans to address issues of concern, if and when they arise: and.
- Taking appropriate action with schools that fail to meet expectations, including consideration of nonrenewal or closure in the most serious situations.

CSI is called out in statute to serve as a model authorizer in Colorado. To that end, CSI offers support and technical assistance to district authorizers in implementing high quality charter school authorization practices.

All charter public schools operate under the authority of a board of directors. Board members must be free of conflicts of interest, and their meetings and records are subject to "Sunshine" and open record laws.

Key responsibilities include:

- Negotiating and agreeing to the contract metrics and expectations with the authorizer;
- Providing oversight of school operations to assure compliance with state and federal laws, and requirements outlined in the board's contract with the school's authorizer including academic, financial, and organizational performance expectations;
- Establishing policies that inform school operations and monitoring compliance with those policies;
- Serving as good stewards of public funds by providing transparent fiscal oversight; and,
- Hiring, monitoring, and evaluating school management (school leader or educational service provider), and if necessary, developing and/or monitoring corrective action plans.

Boards may choose to have a self-managed school led by board-hired school leadership or contract with one or more educational service providers (ESP). A self-managed school would be responsible for all of the following. Contracted services with an ESP may include the following.

Key responsibilities include:

- Managing, and in some cases, providing day-to-day school operations, including facilities, technology, food service and safety/security;
- Assuring statutory and contractual compliance;
- Providing strategic budget and fiscal support;
- Managing personnel/HR, including recruitment, hiring, supervision, benefits management and professional development;
- Providing curriculum in alignment with state standards and performance contract metrics;
- Servicing data needs, including student testing, student records and input/ upload of CDE-required data such as enrollment;
- Providing student services such as discipline, athletics, and extra-curricular activities;
- Acquiring or providing PR, marketing and recruitment; and.
- Coordinating stakeholder relations/communications.

The **Colorado League of Charter Schools** (CLCS) is a nonprofit membership organization that supports charter schools across the state. Key responsibilities include: providing local, state, and federal advocacy; extending professional development opportunities for charter school staff and boards; providing marketing and communications support; and offering guidance, support, and technical assistance for new school developing groups, and members wishing to replicate or expand their school.

