



SCSC Accountability: Charter Renewal Process

For Charter Terms Ending on
June 30, 2025

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Introduction

State charter schools with charter terms expiring on June 30, 2025 will participate in the SCSC charter renewal process during the 2024-2025 school year. This guidance:

- 1) explains the SCSC charter renewal process- school site visit, application, and interview, followed by recommendations and decisions, and provides a relevant timeline for each step in the process.
- 2) describes what outcomes state charter schools can expect following the SCSC's renewal decision, and
- 3) outlines SCSC performance expectations for state charter schools seeking charter renewal.

The SCSC is committed to ensuring that its charter renewal process—including but not limited to the evaluation of state charter school performance—is completed in an equitable and timely manner. The SCSC seeks to make renewal and non-renewal decisions as early as possible during the final year of a school's charter contract to allow students, parents, and school personnel as much time as possible to prepare for the following school year. However, the timing of renewal and non-renewal decisions is contingent on when the SCSC receives all necessary academic, financial and operational performance data. This typically is in late fall. Performance data from the final year of a school's charter contract term is not considered during the renewal process as the data are lagging and not available until after the charter contract term expires.

All questions regarding the SCSC charter renewal process should be directed to Katie Manthey, SCSC Director of Research and Evaluation, at katie.manthey@scsc.georgia.gov.

Charter Renewal Process

Overview

A state charter school's renewal application serves as the school's official request for a new charter term. The renewal process allows SCSC staff to collect and assess information pertinent to a renewal decision. This is also an opportunity for schools to present evidence of any dynamic external event that may have affected performance or to request changes for the upcoming charter term if the school is renewed. There are three main components of the renewal process: 1) the Renewal Site Visit, 2) the Renewal Application, and 3) the Renewal Interview.

Site Visit

Every state charter school will participate in a site visit in the last year of the charter term. SCSC staff will work with schools to schedule the site visit to occur in September, October, or November. SCSC commissioners, the SCSC Executive Director, and other SCSC staff, as relevant, will participate in the site visit. It is important for the school leader and at least one board member (ideally the board chair) to be onsite for the visit. Typically, site visits begin with a school tour. The opportunity to observe classrooms is expected and appreciated. Following the tour, SCSC staff will review the school's track record toward renewal according to the renewal criteria and answer any questions about the renewal process. Additionally, the school can then share any information they would like the SCSC to know. Renewal site visits are not compliance-based. There is no evaluation rubric or specific structure that they must adhere to. Instead, it is an opportunity for the SCSC to see the school in action and provide time for open discussion about the school's successes and areas for growth.

Application

The SCSC renewal application is far more streamlined than a school's original petition for authorization. The purpose of a renewal application is to allow the charter authorizer to evaluate a school's track record of performance in meeting obligations under its charter contract. Because state charter schools are obligated to meet the academic, financial, and operational performance standards outlined within the CPF, the school's performance track-record as measured by the CPF is the primary component of the school's renewal application.

The renewal application consists of three sections:

- 1) Applicant Information – The school will designate one individual to serve as the official contact for the application. The applicant information section requires the applicant to identify key components of the school (such as its mission, innovative features, attendance zone, grades served etc.) and provides an opportunity to request changes to its educational and/or operational programs if granted renewal;
- 2) CPF Performance – The school will complete a section that identifies the school's academic, financial, and operational performance on the CPF during the relevant years of its charter contract; and

- 3) Optional Narratives – The school may identify mitigating factors and efforts to remediate previously identified performance issues if the school did not meet academic, financial, operational performance standards. Additionally, the school may describe other pertinent information, such as external dynamic events that affected school performance.

State charter schools will submit renewal applications through the online SCSC Administration Portal. SCSC staff are available to provide technical assistance on how to use the portal and submit the application.

Interview

Following submission of the school’s renewal application, SCSC staff will contact the school’s board chair and the school’s designated contact as identified in the renewal application to schedule an interview with the governing board and school administration. The SCSC interview panel will consist of SCSC staff and at least one SCSC Commissioner. The school’s interview contingency should include—at a minimum—the school leader, one board member who can speak to the school’s academic performance, one board member who can speak to the school’s financial performance, and one board member who can speak to the school’s operational performance. Although the SCSC will take special circumstances into account when possible, the availability of SCSC Commissioners and SCSC staff will largely dictate the scheduling of interview dates.

The primary purpose of the interview is to assess the school’s ability to meet the obligations of a future charter contract in light of its performance during the previous charter term. While this will necessitate discussion of the school’s prior performance, the interview panel will not entertain excuses or anecdotal evidence of success. Instead, the school will be expected to discuss its performance and any meaningful actions to improve performance.

Schools that meet the requirements for a standard five-year renewal may be exempt from renewal interview participation. However, the SCSC retains the right to require an interview for any school. For instance, if the school requests significant program changes upon renewal in its application, an interview may still be required.

Recommendation

In accordance with SCSC Rule 691-2-.03 *State Charter School Monitoring*, the CPF will serve as the basis for academic, financial, and organizational accountability. Therefore, in the absence of an external dynamic event (unforeseen and beyond the school’s control) that significantly impacted a school’s performance, SCSC staff will base recommendations for renewal or nonrenewal on a school’s CPF performance during relevant years of the charter term. SCSC staff will formulate a recommendation after participating in the onsite visit, reviewing the school’s renewal application, and conducting the interview. SCSC staff will provide the recommendation to the school prior to releasing the recommendation to the general public. Recommendations will be published on the SCSC’s website approximately one week prior to the SCSC meeting. Some petitioners may choose to withdraw their applications for renewal prior to the public

dissemination of a nonrenewal recommendation and/or prior to action by the SCSC. A school may withdraw its application for renewal at any time.

Decision

The final decision to approve or deny a renewal application for a state charter school will be made by the SCSC board of commissioners at a public meeting. The SCSC typically allows one representative of a petitioning school to address the commission for up to five minutes prior to its vote on the application; however, the specific parameters of any public discussion of a petition remain within the discretion of the SCSC. A majority of SCSC commissioners must vote to renew a charter contract in order for the school to receive a new charter term.

The State Board of Education (SBOE) may overrule the renewal of a state charter school within 60 days of the SCSC's action to renew the school's charter contract. The SBOE may not overrule a decision to non-renew a state charter school. Additionally, Georgia law does not provide for an appeal of the SCSC's decision to not renew a state charter school.

Timeline

Please note that the following timeline is contingent on the timely acquisition of relevant data. The SCSC prefers to make renewal decisions as early as possible to allow students, parents, and school personnel adequate time to prepare for the next school year.

- September – November 2024 – Renewal Site Visits
- November/December 2024 – GaDOE 2023-2024 School Year CCRPI Scores Released
- November 1, 2024 – School Independent Financial Audits Due
- November 4, 2024 – Renewal Application Released
- January 3, 2025– Applications Due*
- January 27 – 31, 2025 – Renewal Interviews
- February 12, 2025 – Recommendations Letters Sent to Schools
- February 19, 2025 – Recommendations Posted
- February 26, 2025 – Commission Votes on Recommendations

* If data for the 2023-2024 school year are not available at the time renewal applications are due, schools will submit the application with data that is available to allow the renewal process to proceed pending the release of pertinent data.

Renewal Outcomes

Renewal

If the SCSC votes to approve a renewal application and the SBOE does not overrule the approval within 60 days, the school will be authorized to continue operation as a state charter school for the term designated in the approved renewal recommendation. Additionally, SCSC staff will share a draft charter contract with the school for review. The charter contract for the new term may include additional provisions or conditions to address specific areas of performance identified during the school's previous charter term. Because the SBOE will not affirm the SCSC's approval of a petition without a finalized charter, the charter school will need to indicate agreement to its terms by a date as determined by SCSC staff.

Closure

In the event the SCSC votes to deny the school's renewal application, the school will need to prepare to discontinue operations at the end of the 2024-2025 school year. The governing board of the school will retain responsibility for the winding down of the school's affairs. The SCSC provides guidance to assist schools and governing boards in the closure process. The orderly transition of students to alternate educational options is paramount, but the school must also carefully manage staff and protect the school's assets throughout school closure. Although the SCSC understands that the closure of a school is a deeply emotional process, school governing boards and leadership must maintain their commitment to students and families to ensure a smooth closure process and the appropriate use of public resources.

Expectations for Charter Renewal

Comprehensive Performance Framework

Charter school authorizers utilize performance frameworks to establish standards for school performance that are clear, quantifiable, rigorous, and attainable. The SCSC Comprehensive Performance Framework (CPF) includes academic, financial, and organizational performance measures that establish expectations, guide practice, assess progress, and inform decision-making over the course of the charter term and at renewal or revocation.

All state charter schools seeking renewal in the 2024-2025 school year will be evaluated based on the school’s academic achievement, financial management, and organizational compliance as measured by the SCSC CPF. The CPF will serve as the primary consideration for the SCSC’s decision to renew or non-renew the school’s charter contract. During the charter renewal process, the SCSC will review each school’s performance track record to determine whether the school fulfilled its contractual obligation to provide its students with a better educational opportunity.

Renewal Terms

The SCSC may exercise discretion in approving renewal terms outside of these guidelines and may consider other factors outside of those described below when making renewal decisions. The renewal criteria define four potential outcomes for state charter schools coming to renewal for the first time and three potential outcomes for state charter schools that have received renewal in a prior cycle. Two-year probationary renewal terms are not available to schools in their second or subsequent charter term.

Renewal Term Recommendations	
First Charter Term	Subsequent Charter Term
1. Standard 5 Year	1. Standard 5 Year
2. Abbreviated 3 Year	2. Abbreviated 3 Year
3. Probationary 2 Year	3. Non-Renewal
4. Non-Renewal	

Schools may be considered for a renewal term greater than five years when the following conditions are met: 1) the school has met standards in each section of the SCSC CPF for ten consecutive years, 2) the school earned an “Exceeds” standards designation in the academic section of the CPF in at least three of the most recent four years for which data are available, and 3) the school has not been placed on probation in the current or previous charter term.

Renewal Criteria

SCSC renewal eligibility criteria are meant to serve as a guideline to inform renewal recommendations and are for informational purposes only. The SCSC may consider other factors and take actions outside of those described below when making renewal decisions.

Term Recommendation	Performance Expectations		
	Academics	Finances	Operations
5 Year	Earns a Meets or Exceeds designation a majority of the term and in the most recent year.	Earns a Meets or Approaches designation at least 50% of the term and in the most recent year.	Earns a Meets or Approaches designation at least 50% of the term and in the most recent year.
3 Year	Performs no more than two points below the comparison score* a majority of the term and in the most recent year.	Earns a Meets or Approaches designation at least 50% of the term.	Earns a Meets or Approaches designation at least 50% of the term.
2 Year (only available to schools in the first charter term)	Performs no more than two points below the comparison score* at least 50% of the term OR meets/exceeds in the most recent year.	Mixed record of performance designations with significant financial concerns.	Mixed record of performance designations with significant compliance concerns.
Non-Renewal	Earns a Does Not Meet Designation a majority of the term or has any other performance record other than those noted above.	Earns a Does Not Meet Designation a majority of the term.	Earns a Does Not Meet Designation a majority of the term.

* in all grade bands or CCRPI Single Score

In addition to the information presented above, additional factors may be considered when making renewal decisions. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Grade band enrollment and performance
- Student enrollment trends
- Performance trends across years
- Proximity to other high-quality school options
- External dynamic events
- Governing board capacity
- Stability of school leadership
- Probation history
- High-risk financial monitoring history
- Sufficiency of operating funds
- Demonstrated ability to appropriately manage funds
- Serve or persistent school compliance or oversight concerns

The SCSC understands that a school might not fit neatly into each box within the given term row. The table is meant to be used as a matrix where academic performance is the main driver behind renewal recommendations. Excellent financial and operational scores do not excuse poor academic performance. However, conversely, if a school's financial or operational position is concerning or puts the school at risk of imminent closure, an abbreviated charter term or

nonrenewal may be recommended even if the school is achieving academically. The other factors listed will be considered to provide additional context to a school's situation across all areas of school performance.

External dynamic events are circumstances that are outside the influence of the school and could not have been mitigated through school operations. Examples of external dynamic events include, but are not limited to, natural disasters, acts of terror or war, or other acts or interference by third parties in the school's operation. Student body composition, difficulty of the school's academic model, poor governance and/or leadership, teacher/staff/governing board turnover **do not** constitute external dynamic events that will be considered by the SCSC.