



# Growing a Brighter Future

*The State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia  
Strategic Plan*



*Adopted by the State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia  
June 29, 2022*

A background image showing a group of diverse students in a classroom. Some students are standing and looking towards the camera, while others are sitting or standing in the background. There are educational posters on the wall, including one with musical notes labeled 'Sol', 'La', 'Ti', and 'Do'.

## VISION

***Innovative** and **superior** charter schools advancing education in **every community**.*

The State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia (SCSC) believes that every child deserves access to a quality education. Our vision, adopted in September 2021, enshrines this belief and guides our strategic plan.

## MISSION

*To **improve public education** by authorizing **high-quality charter schools** that provide students with **better educational opportunities** than they would otherwise receive in traditional district schools.*

Whereas our Vision describes future success, our Mission guides our everyday decision-making. Accomplishing our Mission will help us achieve our Vision.





# Introduction

## **Who We Are**

The State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia (SCSC) is Georgia's state-level, independent charter school authorizing board. The SCSC was established via a constitutional referendum in 2012 after the passage of House Bill 797.

## **What We Do**

Although the SCSC's duties are outlined in law and extend beyond simply authorizing schools, some of the SCSC's principal obligations include:

- *Reviewing petitions for state charter schools and supporting the establishment of state charter schools throughout Georgia;*
- *Developing and promoting best practices to encourage the development of high-quality charter schools;*
- *Promoting high standards of accountability for state charter schools; and*
- *Monitoring and annually reviewing the academic, operational, and financial performance of state charter schools, and holding the schools accountable for their performance under the charter.*





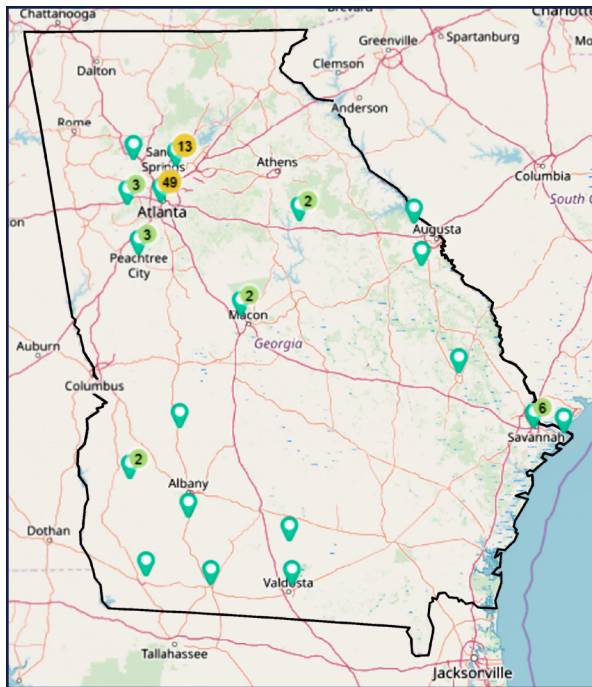
## ***Fast Facts***

- The State Charter School Commission (SCSC) consists of seven total members who are appointed by the State Board of Education. Three of these members are nominated by the Governor, two by the Speaker of the State House of Representatives, and two by the Lt. Governor.
- As of May 2022, the SCSC authorizes 39 operational state charter schools across Georgia serving more than 35,000 students in K-12 with 9 additional schools in the pipeline to open.
- Models of existing state charter schools include dual language immersion, single-gender, arts-integration, classical, and STEM.
- Our portfolio also includes two statewide virtual schools – Georgia Connections Academy and Georgia Cyber Academy.
- State charter schools operate as their own local districts and are responsible for meeting all Local Education Agency (LEA) obligations (e.g. serving students with disabilities, data collections, administration of federal programs, etc.).



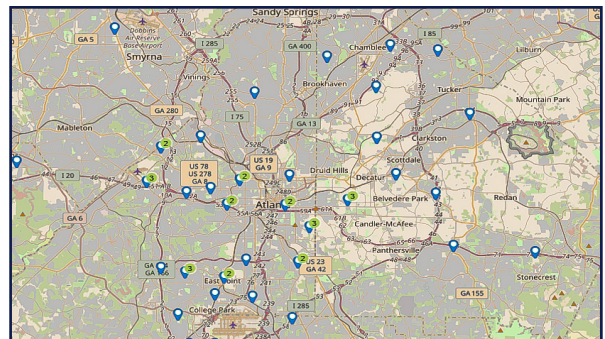


# Environmental Scan



## Focus Area 1

Map shows all locally-approved and state charter schools



## Focus Area 2

Map shows all locally-approved and state charter schools offering a middle and/or high school grade

Based on an environmental scan of the state charter school landscape, two main areas of focus emerged. These are reflected in the Objectives, Strategies, and Action Plans for charter schools.

- **Focus Area 1:** State charter schools are currently heavily concentrated in the metro-Atlanta area and relatively sparse or nonexistent in other areas of the state. As a result, many communities do not have any access to public school choice options.
- **Focus Area 2:** Elementary is the most served grade band, including in metro-Atlanta. Middle and high school choice options are less available. Therefore, geography notwithstanding, communities have fewer choice options with regard to middle and high school generally.



# Development of Strategic Plan

- ***June 2021***

SCSC Commissioners, understanding the need for a strategic plan to facilitate the intentional development of state charter schools in Georgia, requested that SCSC staff begin the strategic planning process.

- ***September 2021***

During its Governance and Policy Retreat, SCSC staff and commissioners engaged in vision development exercises and formally adopted the organization's Vision:

***Innovative and superior charter schools advancing education in every community.***

This Vision complements the existing Mission, which was adopted in 2013:

***To provide students with better educational opportunities than they would otherwise receive in traditional district schools.***

- ***December 2021***

SCSC staff utilized its Staff Retreat to brainstorm and begin the development of objectives, strategies, and action plans to further the SCSC's vision and mission.

- ***March 2022***

The culmination of these activities was presented to stakeholders as a draft strategic plan to gather stakeholder feedback.

- ***April 2022***

The strategic plan was revised and finalized using stakeholder feedback (e.g. Georgia Charter Schools Association, State Charter Schools Foundation, SBOE Charter Committee, etc.).

- ***June 2022***

SCSC Commissioners formally adopted the strategic plan to guide the SCSC's work over the coming years.

- ***Moving Forward***

Once adopted, the SCSC Strategic Plan will be utilized to direct the day-to-day work of the SCSC staff. Staff-level action plans with concrete deliverables will be implemented in accordance with the strategic plan.



# Objectives, Strategies & Action Plans

## Objective 1:

Increase charter school choice in communities with few or no options.

Strategies	Action Plans
<i>Utilize strategic partnerships and outreach to create informed communities.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize data to assess area needs</li> <li>• Evaluate advertising and marketing strategies</li> <li>• Cultivate local partnerships</li> <li>• Facilitate coalition-building across communities</li> <li>• Develop and disseminate targeted information, including testimonials, infographics, and other engaging content</li> </ul>
<i>Encourage applications from under-served communities.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage applications from under-served communities.</li> <li>• Utilize targeted outreach to solicit applications</li> <li>• Explore school incubator support outside of the metro-Atlanta area</li> <li>• Implement petition priorities to address over-saturation</li> <li>• Evaluate replication opportunities</li> </ul>
<i>Identify and eliminate barriers to the implementation of choice options.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate access to quality leadership</li> <li>• Evaluate facility access</li> <li>• Assess funding landscape</li> <li>• Analyze local policy</li> <li>• Develop targeted communications training</li> </ul>

To provide Georgia's children with an excellent education, community needs should be met with intentional education solutions; however, many Georgia communities do not have access to school choice options. Educating local communities about the benefits of public school choice and creating a supportive environment to facilitate successful applications are key to changing this situation. With informed communities and the elimination of common obstacles, public school choice can become a reality in under-served communities.



**Objective 2:**  
Expand high-quality middle and high charter school choice

Strategies	Action Plans
<i>Promote the growth of middle and high school grade bands.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold targeted training</li> <li>• Provide additional support opportunities</li> <li>• Assemble a specialized cohort focused on replication and expansion</li> <li>• Assess application processes</li> <li>• Evaluate financial support</li> </ul>
<i>Identify and eliminate barriers to high school development.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess availability of qualified leadership</li> <li>• Analyze student enrollment trends</li> <li>• Evaluate funding and facilities landscape</li> <li>• Investigate access to extra-curricular options</li> </ul>
<i>Utilize existing tools to aid growth efforts.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate stakeholders</li> <li>• Leverage enrollment priorities and matriculation patterns</li> <li>• Develop awareness of grant funding</li> <li>• Assess potential leadership pipelines through strategic partnerships</li> </ul>

The SCSC portfolio currently lacks middle and high school choice opportunities. Understanding and addressing the reasons for this is key to increasing available options. Key action plans will leverage incentives, such as support during the expansion process, and address obstacles, such as lack of qualified leadership. Appropriate education and resources can successfully increase high-quality middle and high school options.





### Objective 3:

Increase the number of academically superior state charter schools.

Strategies	Action Plans
<i>Identify state charter schools providing academically superior options based on state academic data.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess state charter school performance data to identify academically superior schools</li> <li>Acknowledge academically superior state charter schools</li> </ul>
<i>Promote academic improvement of existing state charter schools.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hold targeted trainings</li> <li>Assess the viability of SCSC micro-grants</li> <li>Establish requirements for SCSC's annual return grant for schools not meeting standards</li> <li>Uphold standards to address poor performance</li> </ul>
<i>Recruit new academically superior state charter schools.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop recruitment plans for high-quality Education Service Providers and school leaders</li> <li>Refine application processes to solicit, review, and approve superior options</li> </ul>
<i>Establish mechanisms to share critical insight from "superior" schools.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disseminate best practices</li> <li>Establish mentorship and networking opportunities</li> <li>Leverage annual training opportunities</li> </ul>

State charter schools are consistently outperforming the schools from which they enroll students, thus meeting SCSC academic standards. In the most recent school year (2020-21), 87% of state charter schools met academic standards, up from 76% in previous years. Highlighting superior schools, those that offer both a better educational opportunity than the surrounding schools and an elevated education beyond that minimum standard, will improve transparency and families' ability to make informed choices. These strategies and action plans will focus on incentivizing better performance from existing schools and stress the importance of quality when establishing new schools. For new and existing schools alike, mechanisms to share insight are essential for making meaningful adjustments to their academic programs in pursuit of academic excellence.



**Objective 4:**  
Promote pre-opening success for approved state charter schools.

Strategies	Action Plans
<i>Leverage resources to provide critical pre-opening information.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold targeted trainings for schools in the pre-opening process</li> <li>• Develop engaging content focused on pre-opening milestones and obstacles</li> <li>• Establish networking and mentorship opportunities</li> </ul>
<i>Enhance services and supports for schools in the pre-opening phase.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore financial resources, including grant support</li> <li>• Develop meaningful implementation supports</li> </ul>
<i>Implement authorizing practices to determine pre-opening readiness.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforce the petition evaluation process to better assess readiness</li> <li>• Utilize comprehensive pre-opening reviews to assess readiness</li> <li>• Develop policies and procedures to address opening and deferral situations</li> </ul>
<i>Identify and eliminate common barriers to opening.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate historical trends</li> <li>• Assess barriers to facility site selection</li> <li>• Collaborate with stakeholders to enhance transparency, access, and quality of facility financing</li> <li>• Educate schools on potential revenue streams in the pre-opening phase</li> </ul>

A successful state charter school is not solely dependent on petition approval. School plans are solidified during a pre-opening year to ensure academic, financial, and operational success. Every school faces unique challenges; however, access to resources and information is key to success. Schools with strong beginnings are more likely to be successful. Therefore, as an authorizer, the SCSC must assess pre-opening readiness as a metric for charter school success. Schools unable to demonstrate requisite readiness will be suspended from opening.



### Objective 5:

Empower all state charter schools to leverage autonomy, flexibility, and resources to meet the needs of their community.

Strategies	Action Plans
<i>Develop content to educate state charter schools on autonomy, flexibility, and available resources.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Research impact of flexibility on academic performance</li><li>• Develop targeted content to address knowledge gaps, boundaries, expectations, and common areas of confusion and concern</li><li>• Facilitate a broader understanding of in-kind and financial resources</li><li>• Clarify and educate state charter schools on the role of the SCSC as their authorizer</li></ul>
<i>Enhance services and supports to encourage state charter schools to leverage their autonomy, flexibility, and available resources.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cultivate opportunities for internal and external technical assistance</li><li>• Assess opportunities for additional compliance support for state charter schools</li><li>• Develop frameworks for communication and escalation of issues within the purview of governing boards</li></ul>

Many charter schools fail to capitalize on autonomy, flexibility, and resources to operate most effectively and without undue interference. For charter schools to maximize their potential, education and support in these areas are crucial. Charter schools that can successfully leverage autonomy, flexibility, and resources are most likely to succeed and meet the needs of their community.





## Objective 6:

Develop and maintain a strong internal foundation that aligns with and supports the SCSC's mission and vision.

Strategies	Action Plans
<i>Implement an organizational structure that clarifies roles, responsibilities, and agency development.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an expanded organizational chart that identifies organizational divisions, division responsibilities, and growth opportunities</li> <li>• Ensure positions are strategically filled and aligned to address critical agency priorities</li> <li>• Facilitate cross-collaboration where appropriate</li> </ul>
<i>Enhance professional development and other training opportunities for staff.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure individual professional development opportunities for all staff</li> <li>• Cultivate annual or semi-annual whole-office professional development</li> </ul>
<i>Develop intentional onboarding processes for new employees.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leverage SCSC orientation to establish expectations and culture from day one</li> <li>• Implement transition plans for each new employee to outline their first 30-60-90 days</li> <li>• Utilize periodic check-ins with new employees to assess development, progress and implement corrective action as needed</li> </ul>
<i>Create and maintain appropriate organizational scaffolding to support work that aligns with the organization's mission and vision.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify gaps within current rules, policies, and procedures</li> <li>• Draft and adopt new rules as needed and required by law</li> <li>• Develop a comprehensive agency process manual to ensure continuity of critical work</li> </ul>

A successful authorizer must ensure that the organization is structurally aligned with the strategic plan. Identifying organizational gaps and considering growth is fundamental to a successful plan. Additionally, employee support, such as intentional onboarding and professional development, ensures that the organization and its culture remain focused on the mission and vision. Finally, policies and procedures ensure integrity and continuity in authorizing practices.



# Contact Us

(404) 656 -2837

504 Twin Towers West  
205 Jesse Hill Jr. Dr. SE  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334



[scsc.georgia.gov](http://scsc.georgia.gov)



[@SCSCGa](https://twitter.com/SCSCGa)



[facebook.com/SCSCofGa](https://facebook.com/SCSCofGa)

