



Public Access to Information on State Charter School Websites

As of August 1, 2016, all state charter schools are expected to adhere to rule 691-2-.03 *State Charter School Monitoring* that requires each state charter school to have a website with easy access for the public to the following information:

- Governing Board membership;
- Governing Board meeting calendar;
- Meeting agendas for upcoming Governing Board meetings;
- Meeting minutes for past Governing Board meetings (unless the Georgia Open Meetings Act limits their publication, e.g., executive session to discuss personnel matters);
- Procedure for contacting the school’s Governing Board;
- Procedure for contacting the school’s most senior school administrator;
- Any admissions application utilized by the school;
- Notification of enrollment and admission procedures required by SCSC Rule 691-2-.05, including the date, time, and location of any upcoming enrollment lottery; and
- The charter school’s charter contract

Additionally, O.C.G.A. § 20-2-167.1 requires that the summary of the proposed and adopted annual operated budgets of SCSC schools be posted on each school’s website.

The chart below lists items that state charter schools are required to have on their websites, along with guidance (if applicable) about the required information. Note that while the SCSC will monitor schools to ensure that this information specifically is included on their websites, this document is not meant to serve as a comprehensive list of all items that should be included on a school’s website.

Item Required	Notes
1. Governing Board membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List <u>all</u> board members’ first and last names
2. Governing Board Meeting Calendar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your school meets at a reoccurring time each month, you may either list reoccurring time or the specific meeting dates. • To ensure that the governing board meeting calendar is easily accessible to the public, do not <i>only</i> list board meeting dates in the general school calendar. List out the board meeting dates or the reoccurring meeting time where you have board information on your website. • If a special or called meeting (i.e., an unscheduled meeting to deal with a matter that cannot wait until the next meeting) is needed, the school should post information about the meeting on the school’s website as soon as reasonably possible and provide oral or written notice of the special meeting to the legal organ of where the school is located at least 24 hours prior to the meeting.

<p>3. Meeting agendas for upcoming Governing Board meetings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting agendas should be posted as far in advance as reasonably possible, but at some time during the two-week period immediately prior to the meeting, at a minimum. • Meeting agendas for special or called meetings (i.e., an unscheduled meeting to deal with a matter that cannot wait until the next meeting) should be posted as soon as reasonably possible.
<p>4. Meeting minutes for past Governing Board meetings (unless the Georgia Open Meetings Act limits their publication)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While there is no requirement regarding <u>when</u> meeting minutes should be posted, meeting minutes should be approved and made available for the public no later than immediately following the next regularly scheduled meeting. • Meeting minutes, at a minimum, must include the names of the governing board members present, a description of each motion or other proposal made, the identity of persons making and seconding the motion or other proposal, and a record of all votes. If a vote on a proposal is not unanimous, the names of each governing board member who votes for, against, and/or abstains should be recorded in the minutes. • If the governing board has an executive session meeting, the minutes from the executive session must specify each issue discussed but should not be posted publicly and are not subject to disclosure under the Georgia Open Meetings Act. • SCSC Rule does not limit the duration for which meeting minutes should be posted on the school’s website. Accordingly, a school that make all meeting minutes from previous meetings available on its website to the greatest extent possible. Meeting minutes that are not posted to the school’s website must still be made available if a member of the public requests to inspect them. For the purposes of website monitoring, the SCSC expects that the minutes of all meetings occurring during the preceding 12 months will be available on the school’s website.
<p>5. Procedure for contacting the school’s Governing Board</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SCSC will defer to individual schools for establish policies and procedures for ensuring that individuals can contact the school administration and governing board. These procedures may include an appropriate chain of command for stakeholders to follow prior to contacting the school administration and governing board. Most schools likely already have procedures they utilize that allow stakeholders to contact appropriate individuals in the chain of command.
<p>6. Procedure for contacting the school’s most senior school administrator</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SCSC will defer to individual schools for establish policies and procedures for ensuring that individuals can contact the school administration and governing board. These procedures may include an appropriate chain of command for stakeholders to follow prior to contacting the school administration and governing board. Most schools likely already have procedures they utilize that allow stakeholders to contact appropriate individuals in the chain of command.

<p>7. Any admissions application utilized by the school</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State charter schools should continue to make admissions applications available as long as they enroll students even though they may be oversubscribed. This allows the school to fulfill its open enrollment requirements as students completing applications during periods of enrollment will be added to the school’s waitlist. • Online admissions applications that require families to create an account and/or login before being able to access the admissions application creates an unreasonable barrier to open enrollment by precluding some families from accessing the admissions application. See page 4 of the SCSC’s Charter School Enrollment and Lottery Procedures guidance document for additional information.
<p>8. Notification of enrollment and admission procedures required by SCSC Rule 691-2-.05, including the date, time, and location of any upcoming enrollment lottery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrollment and admission procedures should be available in accordance with the school’s policies, but, at a minimum, must be made available no later than two weeks prior to an enrollment or admission opportunity pursuant to SCSC Rule 691-2-.05.
<p>9. The charter school’s charter contract</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school must post its charter contract and any charter amendments.
<p>10. The school’s current fiscal year budget</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school must, at a minimum, post a summary of its current state fiscal year budget as required by O.C.G.A. § 20-2-167.1. You may wish to refer to the SCSC’s Legal Obligations of a State Charter School guidance for more information. • State law does not distinguish an original annual operating budget from a revised operating budget. Accordingly, if a state charter school identifies the need to revise its budget during the school year, the school should conduct two public meetings to provide an opportunity for public input on the revised budget, and post a copy of the school’s budget on its website as required by O.C.G.A. § 20-2-167.1.

FAQs About 691-2-.03 State Charter School Monitoring

1. Why is the SCSC requiring schools to post this information?

Georgia is committed to ensuring transparent operations of school districts and charter schools. For example, O.C.G.A. § 20-2-167.1 (which went into effect on July 1), requires school districts and state charter schools to hold two public hearings prior to adopting an annual budget. The SCSC furthers this dedication to maintaining high standards of transparency both for its operations and the operations of state charter schools. Additionally, several state laws have been passed or proposed that require schools to promote transparency in their operations. While many state charter schools readily make information available on their websites, there is room for improvement across state charter schools as a whole. One of the leading concerns expressed to the SCSC from parents and other stakeholders is not knowing who and how to contact those responsible for the day-to-day operations of a school. By having this information available on state charter school websites, schools and the SCSC will increase efficiency by allowing stakeholders to directly access information that is often requested from multiple sources. Keeping this information up to date on state charter school websites will allow state charter school leaders to focus on school administration rather than responding to data requests. Additionally, SCSC staff will be able to access basic information regarding state charter schools, which will minimize its need to request data on an individual basis.

2. How often are state charter schools required to update this information?

Because the goal of this rule is to promote transparency, each state charter school should update information on its website as changes occur. The SCSC will defer to individual schools to establish policies and procedures for ensuring that updates occur in a timely manner. Failing to update data in a manner that creates consistent patterns of noncompliance may lead to additional requirements and regulation.

3. What does “easily accessible” mean?

The SCSC will defer to individual schools for the design and maintenance of their respective websites. However, this information should be available to stakeholders without the need to create accounts or otherwise provide or verify information.

4. What timeframes apply to posting governing board meeting agendas and minutes?

State charter schools must adhere to notification requirements provided in the Georgia Open Meetings Act. O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1(e)(1) requires agendas to be available as far in advance as reasonably possible but at some time during the two-week period immediately prior to the meeting, at a minimum. Meeting minutes are not required to be posted within a certain timeframe. Accordingly, the SCSC will defer to individual schools to establish policies and procedures for ensuring that minutes are posted in a timely manner.

5. Is there a specific contact procedure that schools should use for contacting the school’s administration or governing board?

The SCSC will defer to individual schools for establish policies and procedures for ensuring t that individuals can contact the school administration and governing board. These procedures may include an appropriate chain of command for stakeholders to follow prior to contacting the school administration and governing board. Most schools likely already have procedures they utilize that allow stakeholders to contact appropriate individuals in the chain of command.

6. When do admissions applications and enrollment procedures need to be published?

State charter schools should continue to make admissions applications available as long as they enroll students even though they may be oversubscribed. This allows the school to fulfill its open enrollment requirements as students completing applications during periods of enrollment will be added to the school’s waitlist. Enrollment and admission procedures should be available in accordance with the school’s policies, but, at a minimum, must be made available no later than two weeks prior to an enrollment or admission opportunity pursuant to SCSC Rule 691-2-.05.

7. Are there specific steps that a school needs to take prior to posting its operating budget or a revised operating budget on its website?

After July 1, 2016, a state charter school may not approve an annual operating budget unless the school has held at least two public meetings to provide an opportunity for public input on the proposed budget. State law does not distinguish an original annual operating budget from a revised operating budget. Accordingly, if a state charter school identifies the need to revise its budget during the school year, the school should conduct two public meetings to provide an opportunity for public input on the revised budget.

A state charter school may utilize regularly scheduled meetings or meetings held for other purposes if the school also utilizes a portion of the meeting to allow public comment on the proposed budget. The two meetings cannot occur within the same week. The state charter school must advertise the meetings in a local newspaper of general circulation in which other legal announcements for the jurisdiction are advertised. A state charter school with a statewide attendance zone and students residing in 25% or more of the state’s counties or students residing in at least three counties that are not geographically contiguous must conduct one meeting in a virtual manner and one meeting in the county in which its primary business office is located.

State charter schools must make a summary of the annual operating budget proposed and adopted by the governing board on a publicly available area of the school's website. The summary of the annual operating budget must include a notice that an individual may request an electronic copy of the school's line item detailed adopted annual operating budget at no cost. The summary of the operating budget must be maintained on its website until the annual operating budget for the next fiscal year is adopted by the state charter school's governing board. A state charter school may comply with this requirement by posting line item detailed proposed and adopted budgets on its website.

A state charter school must provide an electronic copy of its line item detailed adopted annual operating budget in a form that allows analysis to any person who requests the budget. The state charter school must provide the electronic copy of the budget within three business days and at no cost.