



SCSC Accountability: Charter Renewal Process

For Charter Terms Ending on
June 30, 2019

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Introduction

State charter schools with charter terms expiring on June 30, 2019 will participate in the SCSC charter renewal process during the 2018-2019 school year. This guidance:

- 1) explains SCSC performance expectations for state charter schools seeking charter renewal, the SCSC charter renewal process, and possible outcomes and actions of the charter renewal process;
- 2) outlines how the SCSC utilizes a Comprehensive Performance Framework (CPF) to assess whether or not a state charter school established a track record of performance that warrants renewal and details the process by which a state charter school will report its CPF performance to request a renewed charter contract.
- 3) describes what a state charter school can expect following the SCSC's renewal decision.

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/non-renewal decisions as early as possible during the fifth 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 the SCSC's 2019 renewal/non-renewal decisions is contingent on the state's release of academic performance data for the 2017-2018 school year. Specifically, the SCSC's 2019 renewal timeline is dependent, in part, on the Georgia Department of Education's release of 2017-2018 CCRPI data and the Governor's Office of Student Achievement's release of the 2017-2018 value-added impact report.

As stated at every SCSC Governance Training and as established by precedent in all preceding charter renewal proceedings at both the state and local levels, performance data from the fifth year of a school's charter contract term is not considered during the renewal process as the data is not available until after the charter contract term expires.

All questions regarding the SCSC charter renewal process should be directed to Morgan Felts, Associate General Counsel and Petitions Manager, at morgan.felts@scsc.georgia.gov.

SCSC 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 2019 chose to be evaluated by the measures and metrics outlined within the CPF in lieu of the goals and benchmarks contained in their original charter contracts. As a result, a school's academic achievement, financial management, and organizational compliance as measured by the CPF will serve as the primary consideration for the SCSC's decision to renew/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 or not the school fulfilled its contractual obligation to provide its students with a better educational opportunity. The SCSC's specific expectations of state charter school performance are discussed in detail in subsequent sections.

Five Year Renewals: Overall Performance Expectations

Each year, the SCSC calculates and publishes a report detailing each school's CPF results in the areas of academic achievement, financial management, and organizational compliance. These results are shared with school leaders and board members, and schools not meeting standards in any area of the CPF are required to present their improvement plans to SCSC commissioners at a public meeting.

At renewal, the SCSC utilizes a school's collective CPF performance track record over the course of the charter term to assess whether or not the school met the obligations of its charter contract. While the SCSC expects a state charter school to meet academic, financial, and operational standards every year of its charter contract, SCSC staff will recommend a school for renewal if the school meets performance standards in each of the three categories at least 75% of the time (3 of the first 4 years of the charter term). Additionally, when assessing a school's performance during its first charter term, SCSC staff will recommend a school for renewal if the school met academic standards at least 75% of the time (3 of the first 4 years of the charter term) and met financial and operational standards at least 50% of the time (2 of the first 4 years of the charter term).

More information regarding the CPF and the SCSC's assessment of academic, financial, and operational performance is available on the SCSC website [here](#).

Abbreviated/Probationary Charter Terms: Fourth Year Performance Expectations

The SCSC recognizes that a state charter school may encounter unique challenges in its first charter term that could impact performance. A state charter school that does not meet overall performance expectations but is able to demonstrate significant progress by meeting standards

in all three areas of the CPF during the fourth year of the charter contract school may warrant additional time to evidence its achievement. As a result, SCSC staff will recommend an abbreviated 3-year charter term for a state charter school in its first charter term that did not meet overall performance expectations but did meet standards in all three areas of the CPF during the fourth year of its charter contract. The abbreviated charter contract will provide the SCSC with three additional years of data to evaluate (year 5 of the initial charter contract and years 1 and 2 of the second charter contract) in order to determine whether the school is able to consistently meet SCSC performance standards. The SCSC considers all state charter schools up for renewal in 2019 to be in their first charter terms.

External Dynamic Events

Although a school's track-record of performance as measured by the CPF is the primary factor used to develop a recommendation for renewal/non-renewal, SCSC staff will give due consideration to any external dynamic events beyond the school's control that may have contributed to a school's failure to meet standards.

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.

SCSC 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.

Timeline

Please note that the following timeline is contingent on the timely release of academic data from the 2017-2018 school year by the Georgia Department of Education and the Governor's Office of Student Achievement. 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.

- November 2018 – Application Released
- December 2018 – 2017-2018 Academic Data Released and Analyzed
- January 2019 – Applications Due*
- January 2019 – Petitioner Interview
- February – April 2019 – SCSC Meeting for Renewal Actions

*If academic data for the 2017-2018 school year is 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 academic data.

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 SCSC 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, etc.) and provides the school an opportunity to request changes to its educational and/or operational programs if granted renewal;
- 2) **CPF Performance** – The school will complete a matrix that identifies the school's academic, financial, and operational performance on the CPF during the first four 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 will conduct a training webinar to demonstrate 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 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 it took to improve performance.

Schools that met standards academic, financial, and operational standards 75% of the time (3 out of the first four years of the contract term) are not required to participate in an interview.

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 Years 1-4 of the charter term. SCSC staff will formulate a recommendation after reviewing the school's renewal application and conducting an interview with the school's governing board and administration. 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 at which commissioners will make renewal/non-renewal decisions. 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 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 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.

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 in the 2019-2020 school year. Additionally, SCSC staff will share with the school a draft charter contract 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 2018-19 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.