
CONVERSION TO INDEPENDENT CHARTER SCHOOL SUMMARY OF KEY CONSIDERATIONS

The Charter Schools Division provides the following reference guide to summarize key considerations relevant to determining whether to convert a District school to an independent conversion charter school. This guide is not intended to be exhaustive but rather to highlight major factors related to conversion. By law, a charter school is considered a Local Education Agency (LEA) for all purposes except for special education. An independent charter school assumes full responsibility for the entire operation of what is essentially a school district. At minimum, the school must:

Governance

- Set up an appropriate governance structure (i.e., 501 (c)(3) nonprofit corporation; bylaws, conflicts of interest policies, stakeholder involvement, liability insurance, etc.).
- Recruit strong board members who have expertise, experience, commitment, and a clear understanding of their role as board members for a public entity. Engage stakeholders in the conversion decision and process (teachers, classified staff, parents, students, community members, etc.).
- Authorize a lead petitioner to coordinate the preparation of a charter petition application for submission to the District, including the required due diligence forms for the proposed executive director or equivalent, principal, and onsite financial manager, which are necessary to complete the background checks conducted by the District.
- Hire, support, evaluate, and hold accountable the school's principal/executive leader.
- Establish policies and procedures for all school programs and operations.
- Ensure full compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and District policies related to charter schools.
- Sign and ensure adherence to a District facilities use agreement.

School Leadership

- Establish a strong leadership team to manage and execute the core functions of the school.
- Determine clear roles and responsibilities.
- Ensure full compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and District policies.

Academic Program

- Implement charter's instructional program to meet or exceeds state content and performance standards (including the Common Core State Standards), in accordance with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies
- Serve and meet the needs of all students, including English Learners, students with disabilities, and socio-economically disadvantaged students.
- Comply with all Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) requirements, including the development of a Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP).
- Administer all programs, including special education (requires selection of Option 1, 2, or 3 in LAUSD SELPA and full compliance with applicable laws and Modified Consent Decree), GATE, testing, and after-school programs.
- Administer all state required assessments, such as the CAASPP (including the Smarter Balanced Assessments), and comply with all federal, state reporting requirements.

Operational Costs

- Pay costs of all functions and responsibilities related to operating an independent charter school, including but not limited to the following:
 - Staffing, including salaries and all benefits (e.g., retirement and health) and replacement of current employees who choose to stay with the District.
 - Programs, including after school and extra-curricular programs, GATE, and testing. Equipment, materials, and supplies Facilities-related services, including custodial, grounds maintenance, utilities, and pest control (may be paid via pro rata share).
 - Services, including security, nursing, food, SARB, and equipment maintenance and repair.
 - Insurance
 - Technology and telecommunications
 - Legal services
 - Cash flow allowance for deferrals
 - Charter oversight fees
 - Sports programs and related activities (High Schools)
- Pay interest and fees related to borrowing money or taking other measures as necessary to obtain revenues necessary to pay operating costs.

Operational Systems and Procedures

- Create, implement, and monitor systems, infrastructure, and procedures for:
 - Accounts payable
 - Payroll
 - Fiscal control, reporting, and auditing
 - Procurement and inventory
 - Benefits administration
 - Attendance
 - Admissions, including lottery and enrollment (School must give admissions priority to students residing within its former attendance boundary)
 - Employee and student records, including CALPADS
 - Student discipline, including suspension and expulsion, interim placements, etc.
 - Stakeholder complaints, including a Uniform Complaint Procedure
 - Federal program compliance
- Ensure full compliance with District charter school oversight requirements, including preparation for annual performance-based oversight visit and evaluation and submission of all required reports and certifications.

Employer-Employee Relations

- Collective bargaining (Please note: LAUSD-union collective bargaining agreements will no longer apply to the independent organization. Any collective bargaining agreements will have to be negotiated by the conversion organization, as appropriate).
- Perform all human resources functions, including staff hiring/firing, evaluation, discipline, and criminal background clearance.

Charter Authorization Requirements

- Develop, prepare, submit, and obtain LAUSD Board of Education approval of a complete new independent charter school petition application, which requires signatures of at least 50% of current certificated staff.
- Have adequate start-up funds (at least \$250,000 - larger schools likely will require more).
- Comply with facilities requirements under Education Code Section 47614 ("Proposition 39").
- (School may be required to submit Proposition 39 application every year for use of District site.)
- Adopt and submit a fiscally sound and viable budget that conforms to LCFF requirements.
- Develop, prepare, submit, and obtain LAUSD Board of Education approval of a complete renewal petition application every 5 years.

Please see Education Code Section 47600 *et seq.* for additional information on the Charter Schools Act or contact the Charter Schools Division at (213) 241-0399. If you are currently a District affiliated charter school, please also contact your respective ESC leadership for information and guidance.