

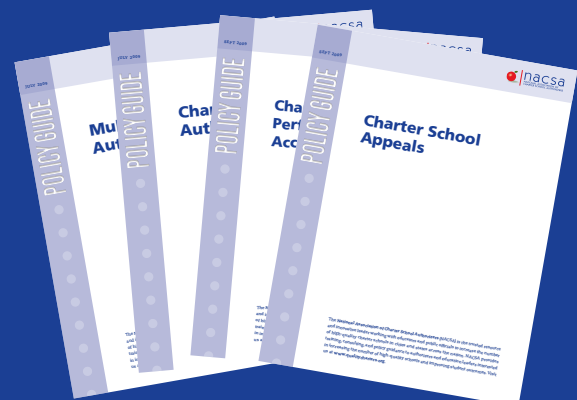
**AT A GLANCE**

**Key Components  
of a High Impact  
Public Charter  
School Authorizing  
Framework**

**NACSA**  
**Policy Guide Series**

After a dozen years of work in the field of charter school authorizing, NACSA has amassed the national repository of cutting edge authorizing practice. In order to maximize the application and availability of this knowledge base, we published a series of policy guides to the eight critical elements of the charter school authorizing life cycle. Based on practices developed in states and districts across the country, this series represents an opportunity for states to learn from each other, to share knowledge gained of experience, and to enhance their ability to cross-pollinate the best practices in charter school authorizing.

Each guide dives in depth into the statutory and regulatory necessities for authorizing that will result in a high-quality public charter school sector. NACSA aims to help policymakers and charter advocates strengthen their authorizing framework and practice, offer the public excellent accountability, and drive their state's public charter schools toward excellence.



Use this summary chart as a starting point for your exploration of cutting edge state policy regarding public charter school authorizing. This chart offers you highlights from NACSA's eight-part Policy Guide Series.

AUTHORIZING COMPONENT	STATUTORY POLICY	REGULATORY POLICY
<b>Multiple Charter Authorizing Options</b>	<p>Multiple authorizers significantly enhance a state's charter school sector and should be an element of strong state charter statutes. States should have at least two quality authorizer options.</p>	<p>Multiple authorizers in a single state should undertake to keep in contact and engaged with each other to maintain quality and prevent "forum shopping."</p>
	<p>All authorizers should be subject to an annual "check-up" and review by the state. The results should be easily accessible by the public and policy makers.</p>	<p>Each authorizer should maintain multiple schools in their portfolio to develop expertise and make efficient use of resources. This also requires adequate resources (see Charter School Authorizer Funding).</p>
<b>Charter School Authorizer Funding</b>	<p>Quality authorizing requires staff, expertise and time. States must ensure that adequate resources are available for authorizing. A combination of state appropriation and standard annual fees from charters is often the best approach.</p>	
	<p>Authorizer fee revenue from charters should be based on a percentage of the defined source, which should start with per pupil funding, and can include local, state or federal grants.</p>	
<b>The Charter School Application Process</b>	<p>Charter law should define the essential elements of a charter school application: educational, operational, governance and financial elements of the school design. Statutes should be used to ensure that a charter application is a detailed blueprint of the proposed school.</p>	<p>Authorizers should establish a fair, transparent and multi-dimensional authorizing process and should include public input, review of the application itself and assessment of the design team's capacity to run a school.</p>
	<p>State law should create an annual timeline for the charter school application cycle and define the time permitted for authorizer review; no fewer than 90 days but not more than 120 days should be taken for initial application review.</p>	
	<p>Authorizers should be required to execute binding contracts that outline specific outcomes expected and go beyond the blueprint of the charter application.</p>	<p>Authorizers should set quality standards for each major charter design element considered in the application; these standards should reflect national best practice for high-quality autonomous and accountable public schools.</p>

AUTHORIZING COMPONENT	STATUTORY POLICY	REGULATORY POLICY
<b>Charter School Performance Accountability</b>	States should require charter school contracts to focus on objective performance outcomes. They should be specific about measures, metrics and targets for all of the essential charter school performance plan indicators.	Authorizers must require charters to submit a clear performance plan before opening their school. This document should be the touchstone during the charter term.
	States should outline a process for authorizer responsibility for collecting and applying data in the charter oversight process; authorizers must be empowered to have ready access to outcomes information.	Authorizers should establish a regular process of collecting and analyzing student-level assessment data and should create benchmark analysis comparing charters to other relevant public schools.
	State law should define minimum performance standards and empower authorizers to set specific expectations; all charters must be held to the same academic standards that apply to other public schools.	Authorizers should guard against “regulatory creep” by rigorously focusing the oversight process on outcomes and not compliance for the charters’ operational decisions.
<b>Charter School Contracts</b>	Charter law should require charter schools and authorizers to execute a formal, legally binding contract before the school opens.	Authorizers should craft contracts with standard terms applicable to all charters but allow for school-specific terms to enhance the options created by opening charter schools.
	State law should define a minimum and maximum duration for each charter and renewal.	Charter contracts should include all material terms and should weigh toward ends over means.
<b>Charter School Appeals</b>	Appeals for non-renewal and revocations should be more robust than initial application rejections.	An alternative authorizer should be in place to oversee charters approved on appeal.
<b>Charter School Contract Renewal</b>	States should require non-renewal for charters chronically failing to meet minimum state performance standards.	Renewal review should be based on clear, multi-dimensional data sets and include: student performance, financial stewardship, management & governance strength, instructional strategy and leadership.
	Authorizers should be required to establish a transparent, consistent renewal process and define the basic elements for renewal evaluations.	Authorizers should avoid (or prohibit) incremental and partial term renewal.
<b>Charter School Replication</b>	Incentives for replication of high-quality charters should be included.	Authorizers should employ streamlined processes to approve replication of successful charters.
	A high bar for measurable student outcomes and operational performance should be set when allowing replication.	



Download hard copies of the NACSA Policy Guide Series on the web at [www.qualitycharters.org](http://www.qualitycharters.org). To order printed copies, please e-mail [info@qualitycharters.org](mailto:info@qualitycharters.org).

## NACSA Policy Guide Series

- *Multiple Charter Authorizing Options* (July, 2009)
- *Charter School Authorizer Funding* (July, 2009)
- *The Charter School Application Process* (September, 2009)
- *Charter School Performance Accountability* (September, 2009)
- *Charter School Contracts* (October, 2009)
- *Charter School Appeals* (September, 2009)
- *Charter School Contract Renewal* (October, 2009)
- *Charter School Replication* (July, 2009)



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