

## Generation 24 Application Information: FAQ

### **Application**

**1. What is the timeline for the application process?**

The application is due to TEA no later than 5:00 p.m. Central Standard Time, January 4, 2019. For details of the overall process, please see the Instructions and Guidelines document on TEA's charter school applicant [web page](#).

**2. At the application stage, should I apply for approval to serve more students than I actually plan to have?**

When applying, applicants should designate the maximum number of students that they plan to serve at the end of year five. Additionally, applicants should consider whether additional grade levels or geographic boundaries should be requested from the outset as expansions are not allowed until the end of the third year of operations. See [19 TAC §1033](#).

**3. May I still submit an application this year if I did not attend either of the information sessions on October 5 and 12, 2018?**

No. Attendance at one of the sessions is a requirement of the application. Note: If you did attend one of this year's information sessions, and decide to wait and submit an application next year, you must attend one of next year's information sessions.

**4. Can the composition of our governing board change during the application process?**

No. During the application process, the expectation is for the board composition to reflect the composition listed in the application forgoing exceptions such as a member moving out of state or withdrawing for personal reason. The governing body that applies is the governing body that will be answering questions should the application proceed to capacity interview. Should the applicant be awarded a charter, the board make-up may reflect a board member stepping down after that member has been hired to become the superintendent. For example, if a board member is tapped to take on the school's CEO/superintendent role, and the school's application scores highly enough to proceed beyond the external review period, that member could wait and step down after the formal interview.

**5. Can a charter school be located in a church?**

Although this is permissible it does create certain hardships. In order to adhere to the U.S. and Texas constitutions' requirements with respect to religion, the public charter school must be maintained in a nonsectarian fashion: For example, all religious iconography must be covered up or removed whenever school is in session, and religious classes are prohibited except in certain circumstances where the class is taught as literature.

**6. Are particular area(s) within Independent School District (ISD) boundaries allowed for the proposed charter school's geographic boundary?**

Yes. Geographic boundaries may include zip codes, street boundaries etc. within an ISD attendance zone.

**7. What is the impact of traditional and charter schools already in the area where my charter school is proposed to open?**

In evaluating an application submitted for a charter to operate an open-enrollment charter school, the commissioner considers the locations of existing open-enrollment charter schools, traditional independent school district campuses, the ratings of the campuses, as well as the demonstrated needs of the community.

**8. In my application's Financial Plan Workbook, may I include CSP startup grant funds as part of my assets?**

No, the CSP grant is a competitive grant that is not guaranteed. It should not be included in the financial workbook.

**9. Where can a sample of a completed Financial Plan Workbook be found?**

All prior applications, including the financial workbooks, submitted to the Agency are posted on the Agency's website for the [Division of Charter School Administration](#).

**10. What score does an application need to receive in order to advance to the interview stage?**

Applicants' Education Plans deemed complete by TEA staff, are rated by external reviewers. If an application's Education Plan scores 85% or higher, its Financial/Operational/Governance plan (FOG) advances to external review; if that plan scores 85% or higher, the applicant is invited to participate in a formal interview.

**11. Who are the external reviewers?**

The external reviewers respond to a request for qualifications solicitation and are chosen based on their expertise in the areas of academic, finances, operations, and governance. The identities of the external reviewers are withheld to help preserve impartiality. To prepare for the charter application cycle, reviewers participate in a 5 hour general training session, as well as a day of interrater reliability training.

**12. If my application is rejected, can I appeal?**

The application process provides a number of opportunities for applicants to support their applications: After an application is submitted and TEA staff has checked for completeness, certain corrections and omissions can be cured by the applicant upon notification by TEA. During external review of an application's Education Plan, if an application scores between 80%-84.9%, the applicant is afforded an opportunity to clarify concerns about the application, and the application could potentially be rescored to at least 85% and advance to review of the application's FOG plan. After review of the FOG plan, an applicant scoring 80%-84.9% has the opportunity to request a sixth review, and the score from the additional review would be factored into the initial scores of the FOG plan review. There is no appeal beyond this stage of the process.

## **Admissions and Enrollment**

**13. What admissions policy should a charter school follow to avoid discrimination?**

When recruiting students, charter schools should target all segments of the community. A charter school must recruit in a manner that does not discriminate against students of a particular race, color, national origin (including English language learners), religion, or sex, or against students with disabilities. See [Texas Education Code \(TEC\) §12.111\(a\)\(5\)](#).

**14. Are children of teachers eligible to attend the charter school if the children live outside the school's approved geographic boundary?**

No. Any students living outside the approved geographic boundary are not eligible to enroll. This would include children of teachers employed with the charter school if that child resides outside of the approved geographic boundary.

**15. What is per-pupil funding in the state of Texas?**

Actual per pupil funding differs from the amount provided for in the workbook. The amount listed in the workbook is a conservative amount. Information regarding per pupil funding may be found at

[https://tea.texas.gov/Finance\\_and\\_Grants/Financial\\_Compliance/Student\\_Attendance\\_Accounting\\_Handbook/](https://tea.texas.gov/Finance_and_Grants/Financial_Compliance/Student_Attendance_Accounting_Handbook/)

**16. Is there a requirement for the number of students a charter school may have?**

Yes. The Texas Administrative Code specifies in 19 TAC §100.1015(b)(1)(D) that an entity "must commit to serving a minimum of 100 students at all times or shall explain fully why such a number is not optimum and/or attainable." Additionally, it is generally accepted that a school relying on public funding cannot maintain educational standards without at least 250 students. The maximum number of students for which a school could receive funding would be detailed in that school's application for charter, and subject to approval by the state of Texas.

## **Academics and Accountability**

**17. If I wish to procure a Charter Management Organization (CMO) or other similar company, how much involvement can it have in the charter school?**

The charter school is to be operated by the governing board of the 501(c)(3) authorized to open the school, and its powers and duties may not be delegated. The governing body of a charter holder remains responsible for the management, operation, and accountability of the charter school operated by the charter holder. See [19 TAC §100.1101](#).

**18. Can a charter school have a daycare that serves infants?**

A daycare requires separate licensing from a separate state agency and must be paid for out of private funds not public education dollars. While it may be legally possible to have such a facility, it would require separate billing and cost accounting systems. This may present challenges and could be administratively taxing to oversee.

**19. Are charter schools subject to state instruction time requirements, and are they required to provide a certain amount of time for instruction of particular subjects?**

To receive full funding charter schools must offer 75,600 minutes of instruction, including intermissions and recess, minus any minutes waived by the TEA in writing. Texas does not

have “seat time” requirements for particular subjects; that is a local decision that would be detailed in a charter school’s education plan submitted with its application.

**20. Are charter schools rated under the A-F Accountability System?**

Yes. All public local education agencies (LEAs) i.e. independent school districts and public charter schools, received A-F accountability ratings beginning in August 2018. Campuses will receive A-F ratings beginning in August 2019. For more information on the accountability system, please see TEA’s [Performance Reporting](#) web page, and visit <https://txschools.org/> to review school report cards.

**21. Can charter school students “opt out” of STAAR?**

No. By law, students are required to take STAAR tests. See [Texas Education Code \(TEC\) §26.010\(b\)](#). As explained by TEA’s Performance Reporting Division at the 2018 charter applicant information sessions, a student’s “opting out” could not only be an impediment to the individual’s receiving a diploma; it could adversely affect a charter school’s attendance records: A student’s failure to take the required tests could be counted as an absence.

**22. What are the STAAR graduation requirements for a student who moves into a charter high school from out of state or country, or from a private school?**

Students whose high school credit has been earned out of state or country or from a private school, for a course in which there is a corresponding STAAR End of Course (EOC) assessment, are not required to take the corresponding STAAR EOC assessment to fulfill graduation requirements as long as the charter school accepts credit from the school in which the course was taken. The charter school has the primary responsibility of determining whether courses taken elsewhere meet standards required by the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). See the Texas Assessment Program [FAQ](#), and [19 TAC §74.26](#).

**23. What constitutes a passing score on a STAAR exam?**

The Texas Assessment Program [FAQ](#) states that “Approaches Grade Level” is the passing standard for the STAAR exams. You may also refer to TEA’s STAAR Performance Standards [web page](#) for more information.

## **Students**

**24. May a charter school have gender-specific campuses?**

Prohibiting a student based on their gender (sex) is a violation of Texas Education Code §12.111(a)(5). However, a charter may offer a single-gender environment provided it offers a substantially equal opportunity for the other gender as well.

**25. Do charter schools have to provide special education services?**

Yes. Charter schools, as Texas public schools, are required to assess need and provide special education services to any enrolled student entitled to receive them, starting from the first day of school. For specific questions regarding public schools’ responsibilities with regard to special education, please see TEA’s Special Education [web page](#) on the subject, or contact the [Texas Special Education Information Center](#).

**26. Can a charter school contract with another entity such as a local ISD to provide special education services?**

Yes. A charter school may enter into a contract for shared services with another entity to provide such services, but such a contract must be approved in writing by the commissioner of education before the services are provided. See [19 TAC §100.1001\(24\)](#). The charter school is responsible for transportation to the other entity providing contracted-for services, as it is responsible for providing any other transportation called for in a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

## **Staffing**

**27. Are teachers and administrative staff at open-enrollment charter schools required to be certified?**

Teachers at an open-enrollment charter school must have at least a baccalaureate degree. Special education and bilingual education/ESL teachers must also have the same certification, endorsement, and licensing requirements as all other public schools. For additional information, please see TEA's Special Education [web page](#) on the subject, or contact the [Texas Special Education Information Center](#). Superintendents and other administrative officials do not have to have to be certified, but they are required to fulfill training requirements set forth in [19 Texas Administrative Code \(TAC\) §§100.1102-1105](#). The governing body of a charter holder may set the qualifications for teachers and other staff at a standard above what state law requires.

**28. Are charter schools required to pay their professional staff according to the state's minimum salary schedule?**

No. But as part of their determination of an applicant's viability and quality of its education plan, application reviewers will take into account the fair market value of the positions and the charter school's own compensation schedule. Administrative salaries are reviewed according to criteria such as that set forth in the Administrative Cost Ratio indicator of the [School Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas \(FIRST\) for Charter Schools](#).