



IDAHO PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION

GUIDANCE: PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE RENEWAL PROCESS



Idaho Public Charter School Commission
304 North 8th Street, Room 242
Boise, Idaho 83702

Phone: (208) 332-1561
chartercommission.idaho.gov

Alan Reed, Chairman
Tamara Baysinger, Director

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Introduction

Idaho statute requires that all public charter schools in the state be periodically reviewed by their authorizer for the purpose of determining whether or not the charter should continue operations. Public charter schools are considered for renewal every five years.

The Public Charter School Commission (PCSC) seeks to make the renewal process as meaningful, transparent, and collaborative as possible. We encourage schools to review this guide thoroughly, taking care to meet deadlines and complete the renewal application accurately. We also encourage schools to start the process early and maintain communication with PCSC staff throughout.

The renewal process offers an opportunity for you, as a school, to reflect on your outcomes during your current performance certificate term; make an evidence-based case that your school represents a prudent use of student time and taxpayer funds; and present a compelling plan for your school's future.

The PCSC will make renewal decisions in accordance with Idaho statute, ultimately basing its decision on each school's outcomes with regard to the requirements and standards established in the performance certificate and framework.

We thank you for your thoughtful engagement in this rigorous but important process, and invite an atmosphere of honest communication and commitment to quality as we all work toward the goal of upholding Idaho's charter school movement and the students it serves.

Overview

The renewal process outlined in Idaho statute includes several deadlines and requirements of both authorizers and schools. This guide is intended to assist you in understanding these requirements and fulfilling your school's responsibilities in a timely and effective fashion. It will also explain the PCSC's role in the process, including procedures and possible outcomes.

Your charter, performance certificate, and framework contain a description of the school you have committed to provide for your community. The framework details academic, mission-specific, operational, and financial standards against which your outcomes are evaluated on an annual basis. These outcomes are provided to you by the PCSC in annual performance reports and indicate whether your school has exceeded, met, failed to meet, or fallen far below the standard for each measure.

Throughout the majority of your performance certificate term, very few (if any) sanctions are imposed even if your school's outcomes are not ideal. Instead, annual performance reports serve as guideposts to help shape your strategic planning as you celebrate your strengths and seek to improve upon any shortcomings.

During the renewal process, the PCSC will carefully evaluate your school, including implementation of your stated mission and key design elements, as well as academic, mission-specific, operational, and financial outcomes relative to the standards established

in the framework. We will examine the trajectory of your school throughout the performance certificate term, noting changes over time as well as the larger context in which they have occurred.

The renewal process includes opportunities for you to address the outcomes described in your annual reports, provide contextual detail and additional evidence, and describe improvements undertaken by your school. These opportunities include optional submission of auxiliary data, a site visit by a pre-renewal evaluation team, completion of a renewal application, and the opportunity for a public hearing.

The renewal application included with this guidance document is intended to answer the following questions:

1. Is the school an academic success?
2. Is the school organizationally sound and compliant with applicable laws and regulations?
3. Is the school a fiscally sound, viable organization?
4. If renewed, what is the school's plan for its next performance certificate term?

The process allows you to make your best case for renewal by providing additional information and offering explanations for any performance issues. Because the renewal timeline is tight, we encourage you to begin working to address any concerns identified in your annual reports as soon as possible.

Ultimately, there are several possible outcomes of the renewal process:

1. The PCSC may renew your charter for a new, 5-year term.
2. The PCSC may *conditionally* renew your charter for a new, 5-year term. If the specific, written conditions established by the PCSC are not met on the timeline specified, the PCSC may proceed with revocation of the charter prior to the end of the term.
3. The PCSC may non-renew your charter. Non-renewal obliges a school to permanently close at the end of the school year during which the non-renewal decision is made. In the event of a non-renewal decision, an appeal process is available.
4. Your school may voluntarily relinquish its charter. If this decision is made, the PCSC strongly encourages schools to close at the end of the school year, rather than mid-year, whenever possible.

Renewal Process

The PCSC endeavors to conduct a rigorous, transparent renewal decision process that leads to merit-based decisions in accordance with Idaho statute, the National Association of Charter School Authorizers' *Principles and Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing*, and the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools' *A New Model Law for Supporting the Growth of High-Quality Charter Public Schools: Second Edition*. This standard is embedded in the performance certificate and framework signed by each school. In accordance with statute, the performance certificate, PCSC policy, and best practices in authorizing, the PCSC will base its renewal decisions on each school's existing performance record.

Although the formal renewal process described in Idaho statute begins in fall of the renewal year, several stages lead up to the process:

Performance Certificate and Framework Adoption

Your school's performance certificate and framework were adopted and signed by both your board chair and the PCSC's chair at the beginning of the certificate term. The adoption process included multiple conversations between PCSC staff and school leadership, during which the certificate and framework were reviewed and customized to your school. The certificate and framework specify the academic, mission-specific, operational, and financial performance expectations to which both parties have agreed.

Mid-Term Years

Throughout your performance certificate term, your school received annual performance reports advising you of your outcomes relative to the performance expectations described in the performance framework. Each year, you had an opportunity to review a draft and provide documented responses in advance of the final report's publication. School leadership was encouraged to work toward resolution of any shortcomings identified in the annual reports.

Pre-Renewal Year

This stage comprises the school year prior to the one in which a renewal or non-renewal decision will be made. During this stage, PCSC staff meets with school leadership to discuss any concerns that may impact the upcoming renewal decision. As a school, you are invited (though not required) to submit auxiliary performance data to support your case for renewal.

Renewal Year

This stage comprises the school year in which a renewal or non-renewal decision is made. Early in the renewal year, an evaluation team makes a site visit to the school. Between November 15 and March 15 of the renewal year, the PCSC and school exchange final performance documentation. Your school's board is ultimately responsible for the school's participation in the renewal process, including timely submission of a thorough and accurate renewal application.

Renewal Timeline

Below is a timeline of the renewal process, including deadlines, beginning in the year preceding the renewal year and continuing through the PCSC’s final decision. Deadlines for schools are shown in blue. Schools qualifying for guaranteed, automatic renewal are exempt from participation in the site visit and submission of a completed renewal application.

Pre-Renewal Year	PCSC staff meets with school leadership to introduce the renewal process and discuss any concerns regarding school outcomes. PCSC issues renewal application and guidance.
July 15	Schools may submit auxiliary performance data (optional).
Fall of Renewal Year	Evaluation team makes a site visit to the school. School board members, administration, and business management personnel should plan to participate.
November 15	PCSC issues annual performance reports to all renewal-year schools.
December 15	Renewal-year schools submit completed renewal applications to PCSC.
January 15	PCSC staff issues renewal recommendations to all renewal-year schools. Schools may either elect to agree to the recommendations or request a public hearing.
Early March	Public hearings are held to consider evidence regarding renewal-year schools.
By March 15	PCSC makes making final renewal or non-renewal determinations.

Several of the deadlines above are statutory, and all are critical to ensuring a smooth renewal process during which both parties have an opportunity to review and respond to all relevant documentation. For this reason, PCSC policy provides that “schools that fail to submit their completed renewal application by the statutory deadline may be recommended for non-renewal.” Schools are encouraged to review this timeline frequently and contact PCSC staff with any questions.

Auxiliary Performance Data Submission

The renewal process described above includes an optional opportunity for you to submit auxiliary performance data of which the PCSC may not otherwise be aware. We invite you to use this opportunity to make your case for renewal by providing academic, mission-specific, operational, or financial information that is not already captured by the performance framework.

The auxiliary performance data submission deadline is July 15, and auxiliary data must be submitted using the Auxiliary Renewal Data Form. Be sure to follow the instructions carefully in order to ensure that your data is presented in a meaningful and useable manner. Remember to focus on measurable, objective evidence rather than on anecdote.

We strongly encourage you to take advantage of this voluntary submission in order to support claims about your school's outcomes. For example, if you believe that your SAT results are reflective of a population that is highly mobile, you could consider submitting the following:

- SAT results for all your students who took the test;
- The same data parsed by the length of time students have been continuously enrolled at your school prior to taking the test; and
- Analysis of the above data differentiating results of students who have been enrolled for a significant period from those of students who enrolled more recently.

As another example, perhaps you believe your ISAT proficiency rates reflect a population of students who were already struggling academically when they enrolled at your school. You could consider submitting the following:

- Student-level growth data (using a standardized assessment) for all your students;
- The same data parsed by how close to grade level students were when they entered your school; and
- Analysis of the above data demonstrating the rate of growth for students who enrolled below, at, and above grade level.

As a third example, perhaps you believe your four-year cohort graduation rate is reflective of a population that includes many students who were already behind their cohorts when they enrolled at your school. You could consider submitting the following:

- 4 year, 5 year, and 6+ year cohort graduation rates for all your students;
- Student-level data demonstrating which of your students graduated with which cohorts (4 year, 5 year, 6+ year);
- Student-level data demonstrating whether/how far behind cohort those graduates were when they enrolled at your school; and
- Analysis of the above data demonstrating the rate at which students who enrolled with or behind their cohorts progressed through graduation from your school.

The Auxiliary Renewal Data Form will help you organize your supporting documentation and explain the purpose for which you are submitting it. We will provide a secure file transfer site to ensure that individually-identifiable student information is protected.

Renewal Application

Below is a checklist to guide you through the development of your renewal application. The checklist is followed by guidance to assist you with development of the application narrative and exhibits.

Title Page

Please provide a title page with the title “Application for Charter Renewal.” Include the following information:

- School Name
- School Address
- Contact Information for Renewal Process Contact Person
 - Name
 - Title
 - Phone
 - E-mail
 - Mailing Address
- Date of Application Approval by School Board
- Application Submission Date

Table of Contents

Please provide a clear and comprehensive table of contents including, for all major sections and exhibits:

- Page Numbers
- Hyperlinks or Electronic Bookmarks

Executive Summary

Please provide an executive summary, limited to two (2) pages in length (no less than 11-point font, standard 1-inch margins), providing a concise and concrete overview of the renewal application, including:

- Summary of the school’s mission and key design elements, or defining characteristics
- Summary of major successes and challenges during the current performance certificate term
- Summary of the school’s responses to the four, central questions addressed in the application
- Signatures of your school’s board chair and administrator

Application Narrative

Please provide an application narrative, limited to twenty-five (25) pages in length (no less than 11-point font, standard 1-inch margins) addressing the four, central questions below:

- Is the school an academic success?
- Is the school organizationally sound and compliant with applicable laws and regulations?
- Is the school a fiscally sound, viable organization?
- If renewed, what is the school’s plan for its next performance certificate term?

Your responses to the first three questions should focus on credible evidence of the school's past performance outcomes and current status. Only the answer to question four should focus on plans for the future. Below you will find additional guidance to provide direction as you craft your response to each question.

Exhibits

Please attach any exhibits necessary to support your application narrative. All exhibits should:

- Be immediately relevant to evidence and analysis presented in your renewal performance report. (Any other information should already have been submitted by the optional July 15 auxiliary performance data submission deadline.)
- Provide clear and objective evidence, rather than anecdotal information, to clarify or correct the contents of the renewal performance report.
- Be in Word or Excel format.
- Be referred to using an exhibit number in the relevant portion of the table of contents and application narrative.
- Be clearly labeled (both file name and within the document) with the school name and exhibit number.

Application Narrative Guidance

The guidance below is intended to assist you with development of your renewal application narrative. Please review it carefully to ensure that your narrative is complete. Remember to use your renewal performance report as a guide for your response.

1. Is the school an academic success?

Students' academic success is the most important aspect of your school's efficacy, and it represents the PCSC's highest priority when evaluating schools for renewal. This portion of your application narrative should provide an honest, detailed, and data-driven discussion of your school's academic outcomes over the performance certificate term.

Be sure to address the key areas of proficiency, growth, and (in the case of high schools), college and career readiness. Include a discussion of both overall and sub-population achievement (Special Education, Free & Reduced Lunch, Non-White, and Limited English Proficiency). It may also be appropriate to consider other groups, such as at-risk students or students who have been continuously enrolled at your school for a certain period.

Also discuss your results on the mission-specific section of the framework, if applicable. The mission-specific measures reflect factors that your board self-identified as important for evaluation of the school. If your annual performance reports reflect weakness in any of these areas, please discuss how your school has responded to the identified shortcomings, focusing particularly on the documented impact of that response.

We invite explanation regarding the context of challenges faced by the school and discussion of how the school has adapted to meet them. Throughout this section, remember to focus primarily on outcomes, that is, the results of your efforts rather than the details of the efforts themselves.

You should also address the degree to which your school fulfills the promises made in your charter. Consider the key design elements listed in your performance certificate, as well as the educational program your charter describes. Does reality reflect the commitments made in your charter and performance certificate? Are you actually providing to your community the educational option and results that you described in your charter (as amended, if applicable)?

2. Is the school organizationally sound and compliant with applicable laws and regulations?

This portion of your narrative should address any concerns noted in the operational section of your annual performance reports. Include a description of actions you have taken to correct any outstanding issues, and focus on the outcomes of those actions.

Include a discussion of your school's student demographics by comparison to the state and surrounding district. If there are discrepancies, explain why you believe this is the case, any measures you have taken to ensure that all students feel welcome to enroll. Address the impact of your student demographics, whether they reflect diversity or lack thereof, on your academic outcomes.

It is also appropriate to discuss in this section any issues regarding topics such as organizational capacity, board oversight and governance, school leadership, school safety, and stakeholder satisfaction. Remember to focus on demonstrable evidence rather than anecdote.

3. Is the school a fiscally sound, viable organization?

This portion of your narrative should describe the school's financial status, both at present and over the long term. Any concerns noted in the financial section of your annual performance reports should be addressed. You should also discuss any concerns about independent fiscal audit findings, internal controls, and underenrollment. Be sure to explain the reasons the concerns came about, the actions you have taken to address them, and especially the outcomes of those actions.

If your school faces unresolved financial uncertainty, it is appropriate to discuss how you will ensure that your students' educational experience is not negatively affected while you work toward a stronger financial position.

4. If renewed, what is the school's plan for its next performance certificate term?

This portion of your narrative should discuss plans for the future of your school. Summarize your strategic plan, looking ahead to the upcoming five-year term.

If outstanding concerns remain in any of the areas considered earlier (academic, operational, or financial), this is an appropriate place to explain your action plan and timeline for resolving those concerns. It is particularly important to focus on the measurable results you expect to achieve by specified points in time.

You should also provide information regarding any intention to propose an expansion or replication, programmatic change, or other substantial modification to your school that may occur during the upcoming, five-year term.

Finally, include in this section a description of any plans you have to disseminate your successes for the benefit of other schools, teachers, and students.

Application Submission Instructions

Before submitting your application, verify that it meets the following checklist:

- The application includes a complete title page, table of contents, executive summary and narrative.
- The executive summary does not exceed two (2) pages.
- The executive summary is signed by the school's board chair and administrator.
- The narrative does not exceed twenty-five (25) pages.
- The narrative thoroughly addresses the topics described in the guidance above.
- Any exhibits are labeled and formatted according to the guidance above.

For data security purposes, the PCSC has established a secure File Transfer Protocol (FTP) site. **In order to protect confidential student data, you must submit your completed application and exhibits through the FTP site.** Do not submit or send your student level data through any other method (e-mail, file sharing website, etc.). Please follow these steps to submit data through the secure server:

5. Go to <https://sldstransfer.boardofed.idaho.gov>. Any staff member who has submitted ISEE reports will already have an account in this system through the State Department of Education. If you already have an account, proceed to step two. If you do not have an account, select "Other," then select "Registration."
6. Once you have registered, email Andy Mehl (Andy.Mehl@osbe.idaho.gov), the Office of the State Board of Education's information technology manager, letting him know that you have registered. He will then approve your access to the "Transfer" option. Once he has approved your request, you will be able to send documents in a secured environment.

When your data is ready to submit, log back in to <https://sldstransfer.boardofed.idaho.gov> and click on the "Transfer Files" icon. There will be the option to select a file recipient. Scroll down to find Charter Schools Program Manager's email address (Kirsten.pochop@osbe.idaho.gov). Then you can upload the file and send it. Be aware that you can only send one file at a time. Kirsten will receive an email when the file is received.

The PCSC thanks the National Association of Charter School Authorizers, Core Charter School Renewal Application and Guidance, www.qualitycharters.org for assistance in development of this renewal application and guidance.