

Snow College Charter Authorizer Board Authorization Process

Table of Contents

Quality Growth Plan	1
Four Phase Program	1
Phase 1	2
Phase 2	2
Phase 3	2
Phase 4	2
Approval Processes	3
New charter school	4
Charter school expansion	4
Satellite school	4
Application hearings	5

Snow College Charter Authorizer Board (Snow CAB) will develop a strong portfolio of high-quality charter schools that meet parent, educator, and community need for great public school choice options. Developing a strong portfolio includes authorizing new charters, charter school expansions, or satellite schools.

Quality Growth Plan

Snow CAB will select diverse charter school models and encourage growth in diverse geographies. Through Snow CAB’s quality growth plan, its charter schools will not only improve educational outcomes for the students they serve but will also improve the quality of public schools more broadly through the sharing of best practices that contribute to greater shared knowledge, collaboration, and ultimately improved student outcomes. Together with partners, Snow CAB will also work to support and strengthen the authorizing environment in the state.

Four Phase Program

Many charter school developers underestimate the amount of time and resources required for successful charter school creation. To help charter school developers prepare for opening a school, Snow CAB has created a School Development and Support program, organized into four phases. National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) recommend specific authorizing staff are assigned to oversee the application evaluation process. As such, Snow CAB’s four phase program will be overseen by an assigned staff member.

- Phase 1: Building a strong foundation
- Phase 2: Snow CAB application development, 5-year budget, and school design
- Phase 3: Authorization process
- Phase 4: Ensuring a smooth and on-time opening

Phase 1

Teams focus on building their team, developing a mission and vision, and identifying the big picture structures that will define their school. Activities during this phase include identifying team strengths and gaps; creating and executing a plan for recruiting team members to fill gaps; assigning work to committees and drafting work plans; drafting the vision, mission, and philosophy; researching program best practices and potential models (including school visits); etc. This phase typically takes teams between 3 – 6 months.

Phase 2

Teams focus on writing and revising the application and building a relationship with the authorizer. Activities during this phase include reviewing the application requirements; drafting content; developing sound policies; researching education service providers and forging relationships; creating a 5-year budget; implementing community outreach; etc. To assist developers, Snow CAB will provide detailed information about the application process, including timelines, evaluation criteria, previously submitted and reviewed applications, feedback and correspondence with prior applicants, and recordings of board meetings and application hearings.

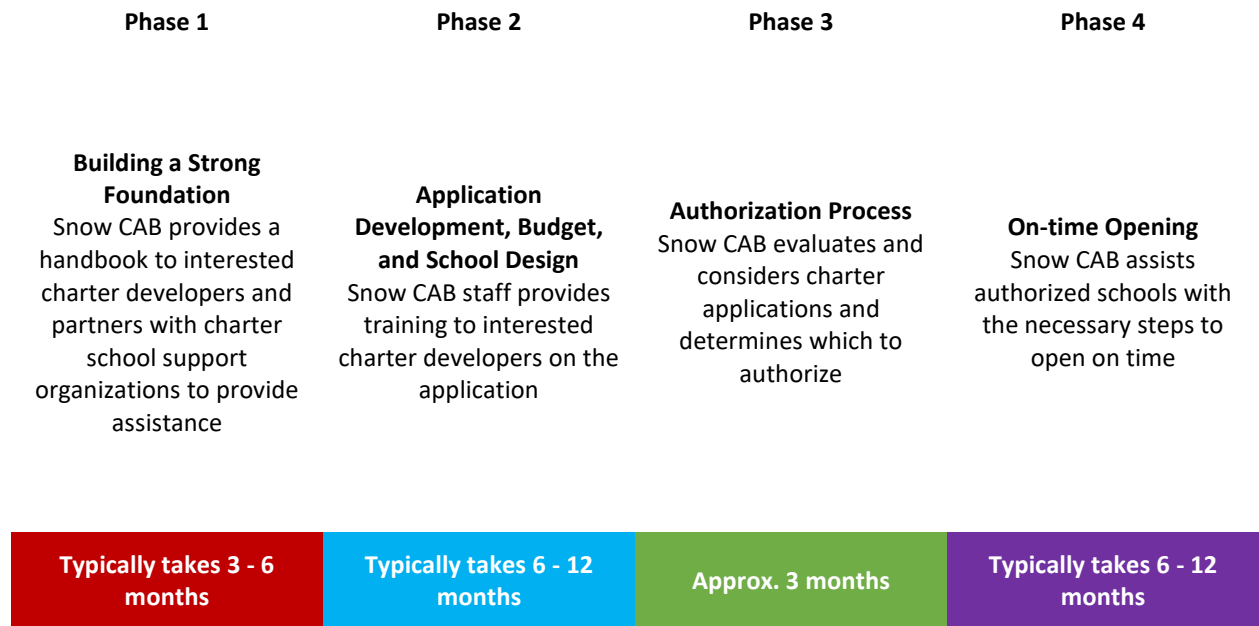
Snow CAB will ensure all application requirements have associated evaluation criteria and are formally evaluated, the application only includes elements necessary to evaluate the quality of the application, and evaluation criteria describe both the rigorous standard and the specific information required to meet the standard. This phase typically takes teams 12 months.

Phase 3

Teams focus on securing the approval of their application. Activities during this phase include making adjustments and additions to the application; increasing levels of community engagement; training governing board members; narrowing down facilities options; etc. This phase typically takes teams 3 – 6 months.

Phase 4

Teams focus on getting ready to open on time and ready to educate! Activities during this phase include finalizing accountability plans; applying for start-up funds and revolving loans, as appropriate; scheduling meetings and performing critical board functions; recruiting students; updating budgets and contingency plans; staffing; etc. This phase typically takes 6 – 12 months.



Approval Processes

Phase 3 requires the most work by the authorizer if it’s done right. Research from National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) (2018) documents the importance of a robust authorizing environment to ensure charter school quality, with clear principles and standards for core authorizing responsibilities including maintaining high standards for schools, upholding school autonomy, and protecting student and public interests. As such, it is important that Snow CAB set the tone for quality authorizing from the beginning.

Snow CAB staff secures the services of technical reviewers and forms a Technical Review Panel that vets charter applications, ultimately providing Snow CAB a recommendation of approval or denial for new charter applications. Technical reviewers are individuals with experience in school leadership, finance, operations, management, and knowledge of local context as each relates to Utah Charter Schools. Reviewers receive detailed training on the application criteria and are “normed” regarding what constitutes a successful application.

Snow CAB staff is systematic and formal about developing interview questions. Questions are developed ahead of the interview, are based on a thorough review of the written application, are coordinated across interviewers to eliminate redundancy, and are often scripted. Technical Review Panel members, Snow CAB staff, and Snow CAB members will interview all qualified applicants based on pre-existing standards established by Snow CAB. Interview team looks for both the content of the answers and also who answers the question. They look for and evaluate the degree to which there is broad understanding of the application, issues raised, and if appropriate people are answering key questions (e.g., if the service provider is answering questions that board members should answer).

Snow CAB has different requirements depending on the type of application received (i.e., new school, expansion, satellite), in-portfolio versus out-of-portfolio applicants, type of school

proposed (e.g., virtual, alternative education), and who is involved in the application (e.g., education service provider, independent). Snow CAB also has a different approval process depending on the type of application received.

New charter school

New charter school applications will be reviewed by a Technical Review Panel using a robust evaluation criterion with rigorous standards and the specific information required to meet the standard. Each member of the Technical Review Panel will individually review and evaluate each assigned application, then individually complete scoring rubrics for assigned applications, including evaluative comments addressing strengths and deficiencies. Then the Technical Review Panel will have a consensus call, coming to an agreement on the evaluation of each application. Technical Review Panel members, Snow CAB staff, and Snow CAB members will interview all qualified applicants based on pre-existing standards established by Snow CAB. The interview team will come to an agreement on the evaluation of each application.

The Technical Review Panel then provides a recommendation to Snow CAB for each application based on their review of the written application and the interview process.

Charter school expansion

In-portfolio charter school expansion applications will be reviewed by Snow CAB staff and Snow CABinet, a committee of charter school peers representing portfolio schools. These groups will use a robust evaluation criterion with rigorous standards and the specific performance required to meet the standard. Staff and committee members will individually review and evaluate each assigned application, then individually complete scoring rubrics for assigned applications. Then staff and committee members will have a consensus meeting, coming to an agreement on the evaluation of each application.

Snow CAB staff then provide a recommendation to Snow CAB for expansion applications based on their review of the written application and evidence of school performance.

Satellite school

In-portfolio charter school satellite applications will be reviewed by Snow CAB staff and Snow CABinet. These groups will use a robust evaluation criterion with rigorous standards and the specific performance required to meet the standard. Staff and committee members will individually review and evaluate each assigned application, then individually complete scoring rubrics for assigned applications. Then staff and committee members will have a consensus meeting, coming to an agreement on the evaluation of each application.

Out-of-portfolio charter school satellite applications will be reviewed by Snow CAB staff and Snow CABinet. These groups will use a robust evaluation criterion with rigorous standards and the specific performance required to meet the standard. Staff and committee members will individually review and evaluate each assigned application, then individually complete scoring rubrics for assigned applications. Snow CAB staff will also request information from the charter

school's current authorizer regarding their performance on the measures in their Charter Agreement. Then staff and committee members will have a consensus meeting, coming to an agreement on the evaluation of each application.

Snow CAB staff then provide a recommendation to Snow CAB for satellite applications based on their review of the written application and evidence of school performance.

Application hearings

Snow CAB will focus on the strengths and weaknesses of each applicant and reach an evidence-based recommendation via discussion, debate, and professional judgment. Snow CAB will ensure that all parts of the application are internally coherent and reinforcing. It will not evaluate an application solely by its ability to meet standards in the discrete areas of education, business/finances, and organizational capacity.

If conditional approval is granted, its purpose is to specify technical changes to the application that need to be made, not as a method to allow the developer to further develop and improve their proposal.

If an application is denied, Snow CAB will provide detailed feedback to (a) provide a public record of why an application was denied and (b) assist the developer in reapplying in a later cycle. Denying a developer (with clear feedback on the reasons for that denial) is not seen as a negative outcome for Snow CAB.

If an application is approved, the final submitted (and approved) application is a detailed blueprint for school opening and operation. Very little is left for later development. Only applications approved within the timeframe set forth by the USBE in R277-552 will be approved for an opening date the next year.