Authorizing North Dakota Charters for High-Quality Outcomes and Results

Charter School Application Overview

2026-27 Application Cycle | North Dakota Department of Public Instruction | ND ANCHOR

Is chartering right for me?

A public charter school is a public school that operates under a charter performance agreement with the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (NDCC 15.1-40-02). It is tuition free, open to every student who lives in North Dakota, nonsectarian, and taught in person. In exchange for autonomy over its program, staffing, and budget, the school is held to the outcome targets in its agreement. A school that does not meet them can have its agreement revoked or not renewed (NDCC 15.1-40-15).

Before applying, a founding team should be ready to:

- Commit to measurable student outcomes it will be held to for a five-year term.
- Form a governing board that operates as a public entity under North Dakota open meetings and open records law (NDCC 15.1-40-18).
- Serve every student who enrolls, including students with disabilities, as its own local education agency for special education (NDCC 15.1-40-17).
- Build a balanced five-year budget without tuition or fees beyond those the law allows (NDCC 15.1-40-02(12)).

Who may apply

- **New schools.** A founding team proposing a school that does not yet exist.
- **Conversions.** An existing public school converting to charter status. The application must include a petition signed by a majority of teachers and a majority of parents or guardians at the school (NDCC 15.1-40-07(2)).

Applications from existing operators are not accepted in this cycle.

When a school opens

Approved schools are not required to open in fall 2027. A school may delay its opening for up to one school year after approval and use that planning year ("Year 0") to complete Ready-to-Open requirements before serving students. A longer delay requires an extension from the Superintendent (NDCC 15.1-40-11(2)). The five-year charter term begins on the first day of operation, so a planning year does not shorten it (NDCC 15.1-40-11(1)).

What you submit

The New School Written Application has 56 questions in an Executive Summary and seven sections, with page limits by section. Submit these with it:

Item	Format
Appendix A: Enrollment Projection Template	NDDPI Excel workbook
Appendix B: Charter School 5 Year Budget (SFN 9149)	NDDPI Excel workbook
Appendix C: Governing Board Member Statement of Assurances	NDDPI form, one per board member
Year 1 monthly cash flow projection	Applicant's own format
Conflict-of-interest disclosures	Applicant's own format, one per board member
Resumes, bylaws, draft board policies, and other attachments	As listed in the Supplemental Attachments Checklist

How applications are reviewed

1. Completeness and eligibility screen, with a short cure period for missing items.
2. Written review using the published scoring rubric. Each section is rated Meets, Partially Meets, or Does Not Meet the Standard. Mission and Outcomes, Founding Team and Governance Capacity, and Financial Plan are Gateway sections.
3. Request for Clarifications if any section is rated below Meets.
4. Challenge Scenarios, in which the founding team responds to realistic situations.
5. A public interview, held in person at the State Capitol in Bismarck (NDCC 15.1-40-09(1)).
6. A written decision from the Superintendent within 90 days of the filing deadline (NDCC 15.1-40-09(3)).

Key dates

Milestone	Date
Application materials published	November 2, 2026
Applicant information session posted	November 16, 2026
Application window opens	December 2, 2026
Notice of Intent due (optional)	January 4, 2027
Last day to submit questions	February 2, 2027, 5:00 p.m. Central Time
Application filing deadline	March 2, 2027, 5:00 p.m. Central Time
Challenge Scenarios	Early April 2027
Public interviews	Late April 2027
Superintendent decision	Mid-May 2027
Charter performance agreement executed	Within 60 days of approval
Ready-to-Open	Following approval, before serving students
First day of operations	Fall 2027, or fall 2028 with a planning year

After approval

An approved application is not a charter. The school and the Superintendent execute a charter performance agreement within 60 days of approval (NDCC 15.1-40-10). Before serving students, the school completes the Ready-to-Open process, which verifies with documented evidence that it is prepared to open. NDDPI then evaluates the school every year under its performance frameworks.

Next step

Review the key dates, then submit your Notice of Intent by January 4, 2027. The notice is optional and non-binding, and it helps NDDPI plan the review. Read the Application Guidance before you begin writing.

Application materials: ND ANCHOR webpage (www.nd.gov/dpi/ndanchor)

Questions: DPICharterschools@nd.gov, by email only. Answers are posted to the public FAQ log.