



Department of Education

Introduction

Charter Operator Toolkit | June 2026



Department of
Education

© Tennessee Department of Education



Introduction

Successfully operating a charter school requires significant effort, from establishing a resourceful and dedicated founding team to the opening day of the school and beyond. The focus of this toolkit is to support newly authorized public charter schools to open and operate successfully. Once the founding team receives approval from the authorizer, many responsibilities and challenges arise. Successfully navigating these is crucial for the school to start strong and maintain good practices.

The Tennessee Department of Education (the department) provides support to all public schools and local education agencies, including public charter schools and their authorizers. This toolkit can be used by multiple audiences in multiple ways.

Toolkit Audience
<p>Primary audience: Founders of newly authorized public charter schools in Tennessee in their first year of authorization (i.e., the pre-opening year)</p> <p>Secondary audience(s): Founders and leaders (e.g., founding team, governing board members) of public charter schools in Tennessee that are in their first 1-2 years of operation</p>
Toolkit Purpose
<p>Provide guidance to help newly authorized charter founders successfully navigate the pre-opening year operational milestones and open schools on time</p> <p>Provide information about the role of the department, so charter founders know where to go to get additional tactical support</p>
Potential Uses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Charter founder reads and reviews the toolkit, referring to it throughout the pre-opening year (and beyond) as they encounter common hurdles.• Authorizers refer charter leaders to relevant parts of the toolkit when receiving questions or providing guidance to charter leaders.• Other State Agencies refer charter authorizers to relevant parts of the toolkit when receiving questions or providing guidance to authorizers.

Permission is granted to use and copy these materials for non-commercial educational purposes with attribution credit to the "Tennessee Department of Education". If you wish to use the materials for reasons other than non-commercial educational purposes, please contact the office of general counsel at (615) 741-2921.