

# Ready to Authorize

**Charter School Program Presentation To:  
Local District Authorizers**

**December 9, 2025**

---



1868



# Agenda

**01 Introductions**

**02 RTA Framework**

**03 Application Review**

**04 Next Steps**





# Agenda #1

---

## Introductions



# Introductions

- **South Carolina Department of Education**

- Meka Childs, Director of Education Choice and Family Engagement
- Beth Poff, Team Lead, Charter School Program
- Joseph Allotta, Charter School Program Manager
- Terri Prince, Charter School Program Grant Manager

- **Statewide Authorizers**

- South Carolina Public Charter School District
- Charter Institute at Erskine
- Voorhees University Charter Institute of Learning

- **National Network for District Authorizing**

- Alex Medler, Executive Director



# Agenda #2

---

# Ready to Authorize Framework



# The Purpose of Ready to Authorize

---

The objective of the Ready to Authorize process is to promote and support best practices in charter school authorizing and to help prospective South Carolina charter school authorizers develop, adopt, and implement practices that improve results for all students.



# Autonomy in Exchange for Accountability

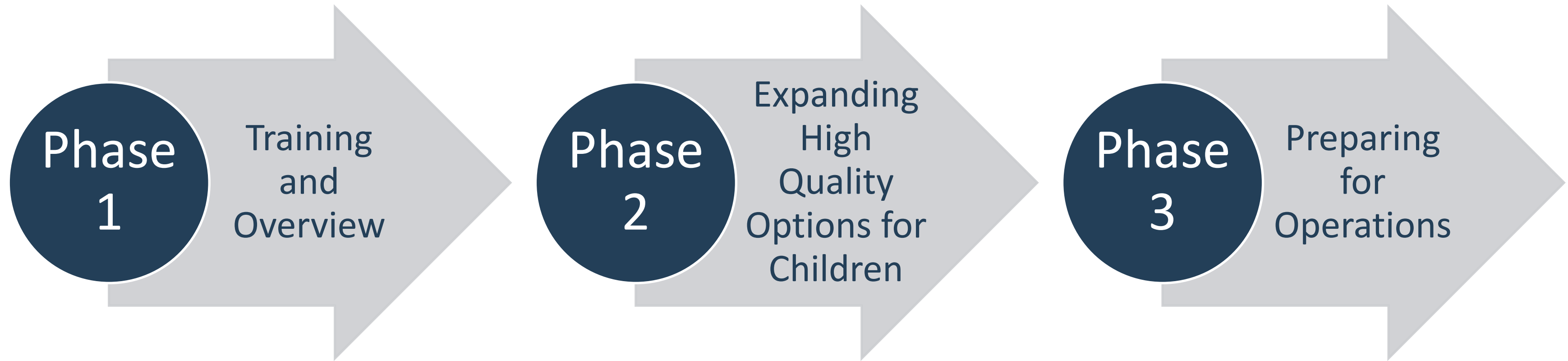
## Autonomy

- Day to day operations
- Financially autonomous
- Design and implement educational program's instructional strategies, curricular resources, and sequence
- Hire and fire leadership, faculty, and staff – most are at will employers
- Separate governing body from the sponsor/authorizer

## Accountability

- Must demonstrate compliance
- Financially accountable
- Student achievement must demonstrate mastery of state standards on state standardized tests and meeting mission driven goals in the charter
- Must demonstrate performance and meet goals in the charter
- Governing body is ultimately responsible for accountability and ensuring the school is advancing its mission

# Ready to Authorize - Milestones



# Ready to Authorize Framework:

---

Office	Point of Contact	Focus
Finance	Kendra Hunt	Financial Infrastructure Requirements
General Counsel	Henry Gunter	Governance and Policies
Research and Data Analysis	John Ralyea	Power School and Student Information Systems



# Ready to Authorize Framework:

---

Office	Point of Contact	Focus
Federal and State Accountability	Jewell Stanley	Statutory Compliance and Federal Grants
Chief Information Office	Jeff Henry	Shared Services
Special Education Services	Peter Keup	Special Education Responsibilities





# Agenda #3

---

# Application Review



# National Association of Charter School Authorizers

- A quality authorizer engages in responsible oversight of charter schools by ensuring that schools have both the autonomy to which they are entitled and the public accountability for which they are responsible.

# Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing

## 1. Agency Commitment and Capacity

- A quality authorizer engages in chartering as a means to foster excellent schools that meet identified needs, clearly prioritizes a commitment to excellence in education and in authorizing practices, and creates organizational structures and commits human and financial resources necessary to conduct its authorizing duties effectively and efficiently.

# Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing

## 2. Application Process and Decision Making

A quality authorizer implements a comprehensive application process that includes clear application questions and guidance; follows fair, transparent procedures and rigorous criteria; and grants charters only to applicants who demonstrate strong capacity to establish and operate a quality charter school.

# Recipe for Highly Effective Public Charter Schools

- ☑ Capacity at the school level and on charter school board
- ☑ Innovation = Ideas + Implementation
- ☑ Policy environment that supports autonomy of public charter schools with a strong understanding of how public charter schools operate and with clear authorizing language.
- ☑ Equitable Funding and Resources
- ☑ High accountability in exchange for autonomy including Charter School Authorizers with a clear process for their monitoring and oversight responsibilities.

# SCDE Resources

- [Charter School Application Guidance](#)
- [Application Evaluation Rubric](#)

A Charter School submits application on January 30, 2026, and receives approval from the sponsor. The Charter School would be in “planning” during the 2026-2027 school year and would open during the 2027-2028 school year.

# Charter School Application Process

## **Application**

An applicant shall submit a letter of intent at least (90) ninety days before submitting a formal application to the board of trustees or area commission from which it is seeking sponsorship and a copy to the South Carolina Department of Education. Application is submitted to charter sponsor and a copy to the SCDE Charter Schools Office. Applications are due on January 30, 2026. The sponsor shall rule on the application for a charter school in a public hearing, upon reasonable public notice, within (90) ninety days after receiving the application. The sponsor may request clarifying or additional information from the applicant during the review.

# Charter School Application Process

## **Approval**

The sponsor approves the charter school application. Before a charter school may open, the State Department of Education shall verify the accuracy of the financial data for the school within (45) forty-five days after approval.

## **Denial**

The sponsor denies the application and provides a written explanation of the reason(s) within (10) ten days. A final decision of the sponsor may be appealed by any party to the Administrative Law Court within 45-days as provided in Sections 1-23-380(B) and 1-23-600(D).

## **Final Word**

Either ALC Affirms sponsor's board Decision and the School is not approved and the Application process ends, -OR- ALC reverses sponsor's decision and approved charter school uses the following year to prepare for opening.

# Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing

## 3. Performance Contracting

A quality authorizer executes contracts with charter schools that articulate the rights and responsibilities of each party regarding school autonomy, funding, administration and oversight, outcomes, measures for evaluating success or failure, performance consequences, and other material terms. The contract is an essential document, separate from the charter application, that establishes the legally binding agreement and terms under which the school will operate and be held accountable.



# Agenda #4

---

## Next Steps



# Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing

## 4. Ongoing Oversight and Evaluation

A quality authorizer conducts contract oversight that competently evaluates performance and monitors compliance; ensures schools' legally entitled autonomy; protects student rights; informs intervention, revocation, and renewal decisions; and provides annual public reports on school performance.

# Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing

## 5. Revocation and Renewal Decision Making

A quality authorizer designs and implements a transparent and rigorous process that uses comprehensive academic, financial, and operational performance data to make merit-based renewal decisions, and revokes charters when necessary to protect student and public interests.

# Next Steps

---

- Receive follow-on communications
- Remain in contact with LOI schools
- Inform SCDE of decisions
- Connect with offices for Training
- Remain responsive



# Emails

Joseph Allotta – Charter  
School Program Manager  
[jaallotta@ed.sc.gov](mailto:jaallotta@ed.sc.gov)

Alex Medler – NN4DA  
[alex.medler@nn4da.org](mailto:alex.medler@nn4da.org)

John R. Payne– SCPCSD  
[jrpayne@sccharter.org](mailto:jrpayne@sccharter.org)

