



Georgia Charter School Replication and Expansion Cohort Program 2023-24

Thank you for your interest in the Georgia Strategic Charter School Growth Initiative! The initiative, led by the State Charter Schools Foundation of Georgia, seeks to expand charter school opportunities for Georgia's children.

The Charter Growth Initiative's Replication and Expansion Cohort program targets existing charter schools that have been approved to or are considering replication or expansion in the next five years. This unique cohort opportunity includes two phases. The first phase includes intensive strategic planning services with a national education consultant. The second phase offers technical assistance to take actionable steps to implement the strategic plan, petition preparation services, and facility and finance consulting services. Participants will identify their school/network's strengths and areas for growth and will leave with a plan to scale sustainably to serve more students. The program takes place over 12 months and includes in-person and virtual one-on-one consulting services, at least four in-person convenings with the cohort, and at least one visit to an existing charter school network.

The Replication and Expansion Cohort Program is free of charge to four selected participant charter schools/networks in Georgia. Participants will be required to participate in all activities and pay for any travel expenses. This opportunity is funded by the State Charter School Foundation of Georgia's FY22 CSP SE Grant. All existing charter schools/networks in Georgia in good standing with their authorizer are encouraged to apply.

2023-24 Timeline

August 18	Applications due. Email completed applications to info@findagacharter.org by 5:00 p.m. EDT.
August 21-22	Applicant interviews (as needed) – in-person or virtual.
August 24	Cohort selected and notified.
Week of August 28	Cohort kick-off.
September – December	Phase I – Long-range strategic planning and scaling, combination of in-person and virtual meetings and at least one in-person cohort convening; participants will have a complete strategic plan at the conclusion (expect 5+ hours/week of engagement plus school assignments). <i>Services provided by Bellwether.</i>
January – September	Phase II – Strategic plan implementation, facility and finance consulting, and/or petition planning, preparation, and submission for ready schools.

Selection Criteria

Participants for this cohort program will be selected through a competitive process. Applications will be reviewed by representatives from the Charter Growth Initiative partnership (SCSF, SCSC, Bellwether, and others). The application review team reserves the right to schedule an interview with prospective applicants to assess their readiness to participate in the cohort.

To be eligible, applicants must be a charter school/operator with at least one operational charter school in Georgia and remain in good standing with their existing charter school authorizer throughout the program. Charter schools may be authorized by a local school board or the State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia, and they may seek petition approval as a result of this program from any charter school authorizer in Georgia.

Applications will be rated on the following criteria:

- Responsiveness to community need – Applicants should demonstrate their responsiveness to community need and demand by describing the engagement they have had with their community. The school/network model should show strong alignment with community need. Schools/networks planning to locate in one of the SCSC’s geographic priority areas will be given priority for this cohort program. Applicants proposing to expand or replicate in an area of high charter school concentration must demonstrate strong community need for the unique model proposed.
- Growth mindset – Applicants should demonstrate their interest in expanding (number of seats and/or additional grade band) or replicating (opening a new school based on the existing model) within the next 2-5 years. Priority will be given to schools currently eligible to expand or replicate through their authorizer or the State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia. Applicants should also express their willingness to engage in open, transparent conversations with technical assistance providers and to welcome feedback with an open mind.
- Commitment – Applicants must identify 1-2 key individuals who will engage in the work of the program who are willing and able to devote at least 5 hours per week to meetings, convenings, and “homework.” Applicants must agree to participate in all activities and events and remain responsive to technical assistance providers.
- Readiness – Applicants must demonstrate their readiness to plan for expansion or replication. The evaluation team will review current and historical academic and operational performance, eligibility for expansion or replication, and mitigating factors. This cohort program is intended to support schools at various stages of readiness, but the applicant should demonstrate an initial plan or idea.

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Replication and Expansion Cohort Program Application

1. *General Information*

School/Network Name:

School/Network Address:

Charter School Authorizer(s):

Primary Participant Name:

Primary Participant Role:

Primary Participant Email:

What type of growth is your charter school/network currently considering? (please select all that apply)

- a. Vertical Expansion (adding additional grade bands)
- b. Horizontal Expansion (adding additional classrooms to existing grade bands)
- c. Replication (creating a new charter school under a new charter contract)

2. *Target Area(s) for Future Growth*

Describe the geographic areas or communities that you are targeting for future growth. This description should include some of the demographics of the target community, specific community needs and resources, and the need in the area for a high-quality charter school. Please also describe why you selected this area to target for your future growth. Applicants are not required to have a specific area identified at this time but should give an explanation of the region/communities being considered and/or the characteristics and demographics of the ideal community for replication or expansion.

3. Introduction

Tell us about your school/organization and your plans for expansion or a new school. Describe your school's purpose and core vision, instructional model, leadership structure, the need in the community it serves, and community demand for the school(s) (including number of students served and waitlist by grade).

4. Vision

What is your vision for your school/organization in 5 and then 10 years from now? Why expand or replicate, and why now? What discussions have you had about this, and with which stakeholders (i.e. board, leadership team, community)? Please describe how this replication or expansion will impact the organization's overall vision.

5. *Timing*

Describe when you plan to replicate or expand. Please provide any relevant details that you think may be helpful for the evaluation team.

6. *Statement of Interest*

How will this experience help bring your vision into existence? Please include 2-3 current or anticipated challenges and how you would work through them in this cohort to realize the vision you have described.

7. Commitment

Please indicate evidence of commitment to participate in the program, including the name and role of any individual(s) who would be serving as the school/network's representative(s). Please discuss the support of leadership and the governing board in exploring growth of your school/network.

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Replication and Expansion Cohort Program Participant Commitment & Assurances

Our school/network is applying to participate in the Georgia Strategic Charter School Growth Initiative Replication and Expansion Cohort Program, which begins September 2023 and concludes August 2024. This selective experience is intended to help charter organizations across Georgia grow their capacity to increase charter school opportunities for Georgia students through the replication or expansion of existing high-quality charter schools.

The Board Chair is required to sign this form and include it as an attachment to your application.

By signing this form, you are assuring:

- The existing school/network has developed a sound model and effective academic and operational foundation, and the school/organization recognizes that this cohort program will not focus on the improvement of the existing school's instruction or operations.
- The school/network will engage stakeholders actively in this process as needed for your organization, including at least one board member.
- The school/organization will actively collaborate and contribute to the cohort and all of its members as part of a community of practice.
- The school/network will be responsible for any travel expenses associated with participation in the program. Anticipated travel includes one two-day convening and other part-day convenings.
- The school/network is actively considering expanding or replicating your school to impact and reach more students. You have begun to create a general plan for growth that you'd like to pursue and would like strategic support in answering key questions about how to grow and evolve your organization accordingly.
- You have a school/network leader who, from September 2023 – September 2024, is prepared to commit to:
 - Roughly 15-20 hours per month to the Charter Growth Initiative Cohort program
 - Leading internal 1:1 and team conversations about growth-related topics
 - Completing structured pre-work documents to prepare for advisory calls
 - Participating in weekly or bi-weekly advisory calls/meetings with technical assistance providers
 - Attending convenings (approximately 4)
 - Capturing strategic growth approach in a codified document (usually PPT)
 - Overseeing the development of a financial model

By signing this form, you are further assuring the following:

- I endorse our school/network's growth exploration and the investment of resources in the Charter Growth Initiative as an organizational priority.
- I understand the time commitment required and will support leadership's investment in this initiative while also performing the important day-to-day responsibilities of her/his job.
- I am willing to participate in a launch interview and serve as a point person for leadership through this process, OR I have identified another board member who will serve in this role. Name, phone number, and email address of designated board member:

Board Chair Signature

Board Chair Name

Date

Board Chair Email Address

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