

# Rhode Island Charter Public Schools: **Readiness Handbook**

---

Office of Charter Schools

**Rhode Island Department of Education**

OFFICE OF CHARTER SCHOOLS | RIDE | 255 WESTMINSTER STREET | SIXTH FLOOR | PROVIDENCE, RI 02903

---

CONTACT: DREW ALLSOPP, CHARTER SCHOOL COORDINATOR

P: 401-222-8255

[drew.allsopp@ride.ri.gov](mailto:drew.allsopp@ride.ri.gov)

## Table of Contents

Overview .....	3
Final Approval Requirements .....	3
Pre-Opening Tasks and Deliverables .....	3
Review and Approval .....	3
Navigating the Handbook .....	4
• 30 days after preliminary approval. ....	4
• 90 days prior to intended date of final approval .....	4
• 30 days prior to intended date of final approval .....	4
• 30 days prior to school opening.....	4
Charter School Readiness Checklist .....	5
30 days after preliminary approval:.....	5
90 days prior to intended date of final approval:.....	6
March 15:.....	8
30 days prior to intended date of final approval:.....	8
30 days prior to opening:.....	9

## Overview

---

This handbook describes readiness criteria and provides guidance to charter school founders whose proposals have received preliminary approval from the Rhode Island Board of Education. The handbook provides detailed criteria and timetables for working toward final charter approval and the first day of school, including: a) tasks and deliverables required for final approval, and b) tasks and deliverables that should be completed prior to opening. The handbook also includes resources for support as schools engage in the readiness process.

### Final Approval Requirements

Rhode Island regulations<sup>1</sup> require that charter schools complete a series of tasks prior to final approval by the Board of Education. These items must be completed and reviewed by RIDE in order for the Commissioner to advance a recommendation of final approval. Items include final staffing plans and budgets, facility identification, hiring of a school leader, and development of a final charter. Final Approval Requirements are marked with a double asterisk (\*\*) throughout this Handbook.

### Pre-Opening Tasks and Deliverables

Pre-opening tasks and deliverables should be completed prior to a new charter school opening its doors to students. These items include facility preparations and approvals; furniture and equipment acquisition and installation; finalizing policies and handbooks addressing student, family, and staff relationships; hiring teachers; and finalizing operational policies and plans in line with the approved charter proposal. Completion of pre-opening tasks and deliverables will prepare schools to be compliant with a host of applicable laws and regulations, and will facilitate effective and responsible management of school operations. Pre-opening tasks and deliverables will lay the groundwork for the charter school to meet other performance expectations set by the school's charter.

Please note that this handbook does not, and does not intend to, itemize *every task* or action necessary to successfully open a new charter public school. Charter school founders will find that there are a number of additional priorities and tasks that they must attend to during the critical period between preliminary approval and the opening of the school.

### Review and Approval

The RIDE readiness review will consist of a combination of document submission and at least one on-site visit to the school site prior to opening with the goal of building an early collaborative relationship between RIDE and the charter school board and staff. RIDE will notify the Board of Directors of the school regarding the school's readiness. If the charter school does not complete required criteria, and/or is unable to meet deadlines described in the handbook, and RIDE determines that the school is not ready to receive students, RIDE may recommend that the Board of Education postpone or reconsider a recommendation of final approval to operate until RIDE can confirm that the school has satisfied all requirements.

---

<sup>1</sup> C-1-4. [Board of Regents Regulations Governing Rhode Island Public Charter Schools](#)

## Navigating the Handbook

---

This handbook is organized as a checklist around four primary deadlines:

- 30 days after preliminary approval. Typically, preliminary approval is issued in September or October. Immediately after preliminary approval, it is expected that the proposed charter school's board will incorporate the new entity with the RI Secretary of State. The founding charter school board should begin meeting publicly to take crucial early steps forward. If the board expects to receive federal or other planning funds, it must quickly prepare to set policies and hold meetings to oversee the use of funds.
- 90 days prior to intended date of final approval. Typically, final approval is issued in April or May. In January or February, school founders should have made significant progress on developing an organization, educational program, partnerships, personnel hiring (especially a school leader or principal), student outreach, and facilities acquisition.
- 30 days prior to intended date of final approval. All items required for final approval must be approved by the charter school board, submitted to RIDE, and reviewed and approved by RIDE in advance of the Board's decision. In most cases, both the Office of the Auditor General and RIDE must approve operational and financial plans and policies. The Final Charter must be finalized and prepared for the Board's signatures.
- 30 days prior to school opening. 30 days before students arrive, the operational details of the school must be finalized, the facility must receive all required approvals, and the board must approve all policies that govern the organization's relationships with staff, students, and families. Curriculum and assessment systems should be in place, and furniture and equipment should be installed.

During the readiness process, RIDE reserves the right to revise deadlines, should revised deadlines be necessary to effectively track a school's readiness to open. Deadlines stated in this handbook assume that the proposed charter school is on a typical timeline and has a planning period in advance of opening. Specific deadlines must be determined annually depending on the meeting calendar of the Board of Education, holidays, and other annual variations. If the target dates for final approval shift earlier or later, the deadlines for all tasks shift accordingly. The deadlines are designed to ensure that the new school and RIDE have enough time to review, discuss, and finalize all submissions in advance of any correspondence between the Commissioner and the Board of Education.

Immediately after preliminary approval, RIDE and school founders will begin using the handbook to track completion of readiness items. All requirements are presented within categories, which include governance, finances, operations, and personnel. The handbook also includes links to resources that will assist founders in learning more about or fulfilling particular requirements. Finally, the Handbook includes a column for notes for RIDE and founders to note progress or questions over time.

Office of Charter Schools  
**Rhode Island Department of Education**

**Charter School Readiness Checklist**

Name of School:

Anticipated Date of Final Approval:

Anticipated Date of Opening:

<i>Category</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Date Complete</i>	<i>Resources</i>	<i>Notes</i>
<b>30 days after preliminary approval:</b>				
<i>Governance</i>	File articles of incorporation with Office of the Secretary of State**		<a href="#">Application for Articles of Incorporation</a>	
	Submit names, contact info, and resumes of Directors founding the charter school board**			
	File ethics forms as required by the RI Ethics Commission**		<a href="#">RI Ethics Commission: Code and Regulations</a>	
	Submit RIDE/Board-approved bylaws**			
	Submit RIDE/Board-approved conflict of interest policies			
	Apply for Employer Identification Number (EIN)		<a href="#">Application for Employer Identification Number (EIN)</a>	
	If applicable, review RIDE comments on draft contract with management provider/essential partner			
	File for 501(c)3 status		<a href="#">Application to file as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization</a>	

<i>Finance</i>	Submit draft financial policies for RIDE review			
<i>Facilities</i>	Submit facility acquisition plan; review milestones with RIDE			
<i>Enrollment</i>	Submit draft student enrollment procedures for RIDE review; submit finalized student enrollment procedures prior to opening student enrollment		<a href="#">Lottery and Enrollment Guidance</a>	

**90 days prior to intended date of final approval:**

<i>Governance</i>	Submit draft of Final Charter**			
	Provide update on 501(c)(3) status			
	Submit updated names, contact info, and resumes of Directors and Officers			
	If applicable, enter into RIDE-approved contract with management provider**			
<i>Finance</i>	Submit first year operating budget**			
	Submit first year monthly cash flow**			
	Submit Board-approved financial policies**			
	Submit five-year operating budget**			
	Schedule training on UCOA financial reporting system			

<i>Facilities</i>	Submit evidence of completed milestones from facility acquisition plan		-	
<i>Personnel</i>	Submit final staffing plan **			
	Submit organizational chart**			
	Submit name, contact information, and resume for qualified chief administrator **			
<i>Educational Program</i>	Submit updated course/curriculum outline, if applicable		<a href="#">Common Core Standards</a>	
	Submit updated school schedule and school calendar		-	
	Schedule pre-opening training on RIDE data reporting systems			
	Schedule pre-opening training on RIDE assessment systems			
	Schedule pre-opening training with RIDE coordinators for English language learners		<a href="#">RIDE ELL resources</a>	
	Schedule pre-opening training with RIDE coordinators for students with disabilities		<a href="#">IDEA discipline guidelines and corresponding statutes</a>	
	Submit evidence of appointment of a qualified special education administrator			

	Schedule pre-opening training on health program requirements and reporting			
	Schedule pre-opening training regarding educator evaluation system		<a href="#">RIDE evaluation model</a>	
<b>March 15:</b>				
<i>Enrollment</i>	Submit March enrollment lottery report, including accepted and waitlisted students			
<b>30 days prior to intended date of final approval:</b>				
<i>Charter</i>	Prepare copies of Final Charter, including all attachments, for appropriate signatures**			
<i>Governance</i>	Submit complete list of names, contact info, and resumes of Directors and Officers			
	File all Ethics forms as required by the RI Ethics Commission			
	Submit board meeting calendar			
	Schedule RIDE presentation and discussion with school board			
<i>Finances</i>	Provide letter certifying approval of financial plans from Auditor General and/or RIDE**			

<i>Facilities</i>	Submit address of building(s) to be used for school operations**			
	Submit Facilities Requirements and Assurances with appropriate signatures**			
	Submit terms and conditions of building use (e.g. purchase and sale agreement, deed, lease)**			
<i>Enrollment</i>	Provide evidence that student applications have been received in a quantity equal or greater than 50% of intended first-year enrollment**			
	Enroll new students			
<b>30 days prior to opening:</b>				
<i>Finance</i>	Provide evidence of RIDE-approved accounting system in compliance with UCOA regulations		<a href="#">UCOA</a>	
	File ETF/ W-9 forms for direct deposit			
	File first quarterly financial report		<a href="#">Office of Municipal Finance</a>	
<i>Personnel</i>	Complete hiring of appropriately credentialed staff		<a href="#">RIDE Certification Office</a>	
	Establish staffing policies, including procedures for staff to legally challenge Board decisions			

	Ensure new staff enroll into Employees Retirement System of Rhode Island (ERSRI), as applicable		<a href="https://www.ersri.org/">https://www.ersri.org/</a>	
<i>Students and Families</i>	Enroll all students			
	Establish student discipline policies/ codes of conduct			
	Establish procedures for parents to legally challenge decisions			
<i>Facilities</i>	Ensure that classrooms are furnished with furniture, supplies, and equipment			
	Obtain Certificate(s) of Occupancy for school facilities		-	
<i>Operations</i>	File Annual Health Safety Report (ASHR)		<a href="#">Guidance on school health and safety plans and reporting</a>	
	Submit evidence of acquisition of RIDE-approved Student Information System and access to all data reporting systems			
	Finalize school safety, fire drill, evacuation and lockdown plans		<a href="#">RI School Safety Resources</a>	-
	Finalize student transportation services		<a href="#">RIDE transportation guidance</a>	
	Finalize food/nutrition services			
	Finalize school calendar			

	Finalize daily/weekly schedules			
	Finalize appropriate insurance coverage			
	Finalize plans for health program, including administration of student medication		<a href="#">School Health Regulations</a>	
<i>Educational Program</i>	Finalize professional development plans and calendar		<a href="#">RIDE PD resources</a>	
	Finalize plans and calendar for implementing a comprehensive assessment system		<a href="#">RIDE assessment resources</a>	
	Finalize instructional and curricular plans and obtain all resources			