




CALIFORNIA
CHARTER
AUTHORIZING
PROFESSIONALS

A grayscale background image showing several hands of different skin tones stacked in a circle, symbolizing unity and collaboration.

District & County Authorizer Needs Assessment Report - California

**A Publication of
California Charter Authorizing Professionals
July 2019**

**www.CalAuthorizers.org
(916) 244-3520**

California Charter Authorizing Professionals (CCAP) District & County Authorizer Needs Assessment Report

A National Charter School Dissemination Grant Project:
*An alliance with Colorado and Florida known as the Tri-State Alliance
to Improve District-Led Authorizing*

August 2, 2019

Introduction

This report provides an assessment of greatest needs and priorities for statewide model authorizing materials and other forms of assistance to strengthen the work of California school district and county authorizers in charter school authorizing. This needs assessment was conducted for the California Charter Authorizing Professionals (CCAP) to inform its prioritization of resources to be developed under its three-year grant as part of the Tri-State Alliance to Improve District-Led Authorizing (Tri-State Alliance).

The two primary sources of information for this report (which are described further within) are:

1. The 2019 California Authorizer Survey administered by CCAP in June 2019, and
2. Interviews conducted with active authorizers representing a range of authorizing experience and diverse communities across the state in May and June 2019.

This report is divided into the following sections:

1. **California Authorizing Context and Challenges**
2. **Overview of Priorities and Recommendations**
3. **CCAP 2019 Authorizer Survey Results**
4. **Input from Authorizer Interviews**

California Authorizing Context and Challenges

In California, where the Charter Schools Act was enacted in 1992, every school district, every county board of education, and the State Board of Education is a potential authorizer.¹ California has the largest state charter school sector in the country, in both number of schools and enrollment, and also has more charter school authorizers than any other state.

In the 2018-19 school year, California had 337 authorizers (336 districts/counties and the State Board of Education), which oversee 1,306 charter schools and seven all-charter districts, serving 652,933 students

¹ Information in this section is adapted from the Tri-State Alliance's federal CSP proposal, p. 5 and pp. 12-13, with data updates by CCAP in July 2019; and Mumma, Kristen Slungaard and West, Martin R. "Charter School Authorizing in California," *Getting Down to Facts II*, p. 1 (September 2018).

—or about 10 percent of public school students in the state.² There are over 1,000 individual school districts in California, each of which is a potential authorizer, and the vast majority of California’s authorizers are local school boards. The district-dominated chartering context is a result of the state’s strong emphasis on local control in education, derived from the state constitution.

California’s districts vary in size from single-school districts serving fewer than 100 students in rural communities, to the Los Angeles Unified School District, with 277 charter schools and over 154,000 students in 2017-18. While local school boards are the most common charter authorizers in the state, they typically authorize a very small number of charter schools. Of California’s 337 authorizers, 93% have portfolios of fewer than six charter schools, and 67% have only one or two schools. At the other end of the spectrum, the five largest authorizers account for 30% of the charter schools in the state, and 8% of authorizers account for 58% of California’s charter schools.

In addition to local school boards, county boards of education are significant authorizers in California. County boards may authorize charter schools of countywide benefit, as well as charters on appeal if denied by a local school board within the county. Similarly, the State Board of Education may approve charter schools of statewide benefit, as well as charters on appeal if denied at the local board and county levels.

CCAP was founded by a group of committed and experienced charter school authorizing staff members from district and county offices of education (COEs) from around the state who first came together in late 2013. The mission of CCAP is to *“advance quality public education for all students by providing charter school authorizing professionals with the support, resources, and collective voice necessary to foster high-performing, fiscally sound, autonomous, and accountable charter schools.”* CCAP’s membership includes 32 district and county office authorizers who collectively oversee approximately 425 schools, and almost one-third of the state’s charter schools.

In addition to CCAP, the Charter Authorizers Regional Support Network (CARSNet) was operated in 2015-2018 by the Alameda County Office of Education (ACOE) under a three-year federal grant, as a California resource organization focused primarily on small-scale authorizers (overseeing six or fewer charter schools) while supported by a network of COEs. That grant ended on June 30, 2018, and ACOE continues to operate CARSNet under a new name: the Charter Accountability Resource and Support Network. CCAP members have served as the trainers and presenters at all CARSNet activities, and the two organizations have collaborated to improve California’s authorizing sector. CCAP was designated in CARSNet’s federal grant proposal as the successor organization to continue its authorizing support work begun under that grant. Interviews and research to evaluate that program’s successes and challenges will also inform the implementation of this grant and the identified priority tasks.

The frequently reported challenges of authorizing in California are predictable for a state that has very little guidance in its charter school law and few implementing regulations. These challenges, which are also manifest in other states with district-dominated authorizing and other similar conditions, are magnified in California’s very large charter sector spread across hundreds of districts throughout the state. The following state conditions present ongoing challenges to the development and continued growth of authorizing capacity and expertise within district offices, as well as access to professional development opportunities for authorizers:

² California Department of Education DataQuest (2018-19 enrollment data).

- Constraints and lack of authorizing guidance in state law and policy. California’s charter school law and regulations provide relatively little implementation guidance to authorizers while also limiting their latitude for discretionary action and decision making. Given the hundreds of authorizers and relatively little state-level authorizing guidance, charter schools in California are “subjected to a patchwork of differing authorizing standards, requirements, and practices.”³
- Many small authorizers overseeing only one or two schools. Small authorizers (which are often, though not always, small rural districts) typically are inadequately staffed for authorizing, with authorizing added to the responsibilities of a staff member who already has a full plate of other responsibilities.
- Many rural authorizers and geographic dispersion. In addition to the limited resources of small, rural district offices, geographic distance prevents these authorizers from regular participation in in-person meetings and professional development opportunities, even though CCAP and CARNet members provide trainings regionally (in northern, southern, and central California).
- Frequent turnover in district staff assigned to authorizing. This challenge occurs in districts of all sizes. Frequent turnover in staff assigned to authorizing makes institutionalization of strong practices, or continual strengthening of authorizing practices, more difficult.
- Frequent changes in the composition of local school boards. Similarly, the changing composition of local boards of education regularly requires new board members to learn about their responsibilities as charter authorizers and can subject district authorizing policy and practices to changing political preferences.
- A highly politicized charter school sector and legislative/policy environment in constant flux. California’s charter school sector is subject to ongoing legislative and policy changes, including many that are currently pending and would have significant impact on authorizers if passed. In the very near term, model materials and professional development for authorizers will need to be developed or updated to keep pace with new changes and requirements in state law.

These challenges and some of their consequences were well-articulated in the Tri-State Alliance’s federal CSP proposal:⁴

³ “Time to Modernize Charter Authorizing in California: Analysis & Recommendations,” National Association of Charter School Authorizers (March 2016), p. 3.

⁴ Adapted from the Tri-State Alliance federal CSP proposal, pp. 9-10.

Multiple challenges can block the implementation of strong authorizing practices or undermine previously strong practices. These include: the absence of established policies and procedures, frequent turnover in school boards or authorizing staff, inadequate staff resources, infrequent charter petitions, and politicized public debates.

Authorizers with small charter portfolios are unlikely to have the capacity to implement the recommended practices that require comprehensive staff expertise in multiple substantive areas. They are unlikely to have a designated liaison, or if a person is assigned, it is often a fractional responsibility, with districts allocating as little as .1 FTE to the authorizing function. In these districts, there is often neither institutional knowledge or policy, nor a staff member with the knowledge to handle important authorizing functions. In many districts, when a charter petitioner applies for a charter, the district has literally never received a charter petition before, or no one who is currently employed by the district was on board the last time a petition was reviewed.

Meanwhile, California's charter school law requires an authorizer to design and execute a charter petition review and decision process within an extremely short time frame (holding a public hearing within 30 days, and approving or denying the petition within 60 days of receipt),⁵ which is especially challenging for new or inexperienced authorizers that have no well-practiced procedures in place. Without a merit-based, technically sophisticated approach to charter petition review, too many districts fall back on ad-hoc procedures that do not reflect best practice and can become highly politicized. District authorizers that are understaffed or new to this work are especially unable to adequately probe the capacity of a charter petitioner's governing board or conduct due diligence regarding operators with multiple schools, particularly within the short time frame required in California. Any and all of these circumstances can result in the approval of weak applicants or the denial of strong proposals.

Overview of Priorities and Recommendations

Following is an overview of the top priorities and recommendations for both model materials and other forms of authorizer assistance identified through the 2019 Authorizer Survey and authorizer interviews. These priorities and recommendations are detailed further within this report.

Several key takeaways:

- California authorizers need a variety of additional model materials and professional development in essential areas of authorizing responsibility (e.g., annual reviews, renewal evaluation, governance oversight).
- Authorizers need new or updated resources and training to align with the state's new accountability system and the significant number of recent legislative changes in California's constantly changing policy environment.
- Authorizers recommend and request that model materials and PD assistance be differentiated: 1) for district vs. county authorizers (tailored to their distinct requirements); and 2) for small, under-resourced authorizing offices vs. larger offices with greater capacity (i.e., small offices

⁵ This petition review timeline reflects current law as of the date of this report. Extending the review timeline is an element of AB 1505, which is currently being negotiated, with final approval expected in September 2019.

would like streamlined versions or options). The interest in differentiated tools may reflect a lack of understanding among some less-experienced authorizers of the full extent of the law's requirements for charter review and oversight.

- Experienced authorizers recommend that training be targeted to different levels of authorizing experience (e.g., 101, 201, 301) and would like regular PD addressing more advanced issues.
- This project should focus some attention on increasing understanding and implementation of [Essential Practices for quality charter authorizing](#), and on the [Proposed Guidance for Effective Charter School Authorizing in California: Values, Principles and Expectations](#),⁶ through both model materials and authorizer assistance, to encourage universal adoption by California authorizers.

Note: The first five sets of priorities set forth below – which all report results from the 2019 Survey – are simply a presentation of the top five ranked priorities in response to each particular question on the 2019 Authorizer Survey administered in California. The priorities or topics listed are the top-ranked survey items verbatim, taken directly from the survey, without interpretation or editing. (See Appendix 2 for complete survey summary results.) There is no additional detail regarding survey-identified priorities because these priorities are simply the survey respondents' top-ranked choices on the survey, not information from the authorizer interviews. Discussion by CCAP members will be necessary to understand better the priorities identified and to determine what CCAP should undertake for this project.

Top Priorities for Model Materials (top-ranked items in 2019 Survey) – see Table 1

1. Annual review material/rubric
2. Annual review report to charter schools
3. Model MOU
4. Templates and samples addressing non-compliance issues
5. Charter petition template and sample evaluation rubric

Top Priorities for Authorizer Assistance (top-ranked items in 2019 Survey) – see Table 2

1. An online archive of best practice procedures, materials, templates and forms
2. An online community where authorizers can post questions and share information/ideas with peers
3. Webinars and other remote training opportunities
4. Trainings and “bootcamps” for new district staff after they are assigned to charter school oversight
5. Regular updates and newsletters with news and developments in the field

Most Urgent Assistance Needs in Charter Authorizing (top-ranked items in 2019 Survey) – see Table 3

1. Charter oversight and monitoring
2. Charter evaluation and renewal decisions
3. Charter MOUs

⁶ Produced by CARSNet in partnership with CCAP and NACSA (September 2017).

4. Charter petition reviews
5. Special Education

Essential Practices Implementation (identified in 2019 Survey) – see Table 4

This project should provide model materials and assistance to increase California authorizer implementation of the [12 Essential Practices](#) for quality charter authorizing. Some of this work will require adapting the Essential Practices to California’s statutory context.

Priorities to Improve Access, Services, and Outcomes for Students in Charter Schools, Including English Learners (top-ranked items in 2019 Survey) – see Table 5

1. Clarity in state and federal English learner policy as it applies to charter schools
2. Review of English learner academic progress during oversight, renewal or revocation procedures
3. Communication and clarity about the rights of English learners during enrollment and admissions
4. Training for charter school boards and other stakeholders on the obligations to English learners in public schools
5. Funding and programming support for English learners

Additional Recommendations for Model Materials (suggested in authorizer interviews - *unranked*) – see for more detail

- Facility allocation protocol for Prop 39
- Governance oversight tools
- Financial oversight tools
- Technology tools
- Closure procedures
- Streamlined tools and resources for small and rural authorizers

Recommendations for Improving Access, Services, and Outcomes for Students with Disabilities and English Learners (suggested in authorizer interviews – *unranked*) – see Table 8 for more detail

- Additional support for Special Education, English Learners, and Accountability
- Petition review and annual oversight checklists for both special education and English Learner services
- Dissemination of best practices and toolkits for English Learner education to charter schools
- Guidance on improving oversight of services to students with disabilities
- Guidance on improving oversight of equity and access issues, including student discipline

Additional Recommendations for Authorizer Assistance (suggested in authorizer interviews - *unranked*) – see Table 10 for more detail

- Governance oversight training
- Financial oversight training
- CMO training for small/rural authorizers
- Ongoing training program culminating in certification by CCAP

Following is more detail on all of these priorities and recommendations identified through the 2019 Survey and authorizer interviews.

CCAP 2019 Authorizer Survey Results

In May-June 2019, CCAP administered an online survey to district authorizers throughout California to assess their needs and priorities for statewide model authorizing materials and other authorizer assistance that this project could potentially provide. Fifty-nine (59) authorizing staff representing 57 school districts or county offices of education (COEs) throughout the state responded to the survey. Tables 1-3 below show the top-ranked priorities for model authorizing materials, authorizer assistance, and “most urgent assistance needs related to charter authorizing” identified by survey respondents. The priority rankings were determined by calculating the weighted average of authorizers’ rankings of each item in the survey. Respondents also had the opportunity to write in additional priorities not listed. (For a complete summary and analysis of results from the 2019 Survey, see Appendix 2.)

Table 1. Survey Results – Top Priorities for Model Materials

Please rank the top 5 (you may rank all items if you prefer) of the <u>most useful types of model materials</u> for your district’s needs, with 1 being the most helpful.	Ranking
1. Annual review material/rubric	1
2. Annual review report to charter schools	2
3. Model MOU	3
4. Templates and samples addressing non-compliance issues	4
5. Charter petition template and sample evaluation rubric	5
6. Renewal standards	6
7. Templates for renewal/ nonrenewal review material	7
8. Model board resolution for best practices	8
9. Expansion/ replication rubric	9
10. New School opening checklist	10
11. “Year Zero” material (activities after charter approval and after school opening)	11

Table 2. Survey Results – Top Priorities for Authorizer Assistance

Please rank the top 5 (you may rank all items if you prefer) of the <u>most helpful types of authorizer assistance</u> , with 1 being the most helpful.	Ranking
1. An online archive of best practice procedures, materials, templates and forms	1
2. An online community where authorizers can post questions and share information/ideas with peers	2
3. Webinars and other remote training opportunities	3
4. Training and “bootcamps” for new district staff after they are assigned to charter school oversight	4
5. Regular updates and newsletters with news and developments in the field	5
6. Evaluations of my district’s/county office’s authorizing policies and practices	6
7. Opportunities to visit other authorizers and learn about their practices and policies	7
8. Regular face-to-face meetings with my peers and experts	8
9. Communications work to help the public and policymakers understand quality charter school authorizing	9
10. State-level policy and advocacy on behalf of quality charter school authorizing	10
11. Informally connecting me to network of peers	11
12. Mentoring with a colleague who partners with me one-on-one	12

Table 3. Survey Results - Most Urgent Assistance Needs in Charter Authorizing

Please rank the top 5 (you may rank all items if you prefer) of your district's/county office's <u>most urgent assistance needs related to charter authorizing</u> , with 1 being the most urgent.	Ranking
1. Charter oversight and monitoring	1
2. Charter evaluation and renewal decisions	2

3. Charter MOUs	3
4. Charter Petition reviews	4
5. Special Education	5 (tied)
6. Ensuring all students in our community have full access and appropriate services	5 (tied)
7. Admissions and enrollment	7
8. Activities after charter approval and before school opening (year zero)	8
9. Services for English Learners	9
10. Racial and ethnic balance of students attending charter school(s)	10
11. Charter replication and expansion in our district/county	11
12. Internal coordination within district offices	12
13. Facility allocation under Prop 39	13
14. Improving district-charter relations	14

Essential Practices for Quality Authorizing – Implementation Rates

The 2019 Authorizer Survey included a section to assess responding authorizers’ rates of implementation of the [12 Essential Practices](#) for quality charter authorizing, as defined by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA).⁷ These 12 Essential Practices are:

1. **Mission:** Have a published and available mission for quality authorizing.
2. **Staff:** Have staff assigned to authorizing within the organization or by contract.
3. **Contracts:** Sign a contract with each school.
4. **Application Criteria:** Have established, documented criteria for the evaluation of charter applications.
5. **Application Timeline:** Publish application timelines and materials.
6. **Application Interview:** Interview all qualified charter applicants.
7. **External Expert Panel:** Use expert panels that include external members to review charter applications.

⁷ See <https://www.qualitycharters.org/for-authorizers/12-essential-practices/>.

8. **5-Year Term Length:** Grant initial charter terms of five years only.
9. **Financial Audit:** Require and/or examine annual, independent financial audits of its charter schools.
10. **Renewal Criteria:** Have established renewal criteria.
11. **Revocation Criteria:** Have established revocation criteria.
12. **Annual Report:** Provide an annual report to each school on its performance.

See the [12 Essential Practices](#) and [“The Essential Practices: Why They Matter”](#) for more explanation of each of these practices.

Thirty-four (34) districts / county offices responded to this section of the 2019 Survey. The table below summarizes the survey results for Essential Practices implementation, in descending order of implementation by the responding districts or county offices:

	Application Interview	Expert Panel	Application Timeline	Authorizing Staff	Renewal Criteria	Contract	Revocation Criteria	5-year Initial Term	Annual Report	Published Mission	Application Criteria	Financial Audit
# Districts Implementing	23	23	21	21	20	19	15	14	14	7	0	0
Rate	68%	68%	61%	61%	59%	56%	44%	41%	41%	21%	0	0

Implementation of the Essential Practices is low among the 34 authorizers responding. Some of the low rates of implementation are predictable because the Essential Practices do not align with requirements in California’s charter schools law. Some of the work of implementing recommendations concerning the Essential Practices will require adapting them to California’s statutory context.

Table 5. Priorities to Improve Access, Services, and Outcomes for Students in Charter Schools, Including English Learners

The 2019 Authorizer Survey included a section to assess authorizers’ priorities for actions to improve access, services, and outcomes for students in charter schools, including a specific focus on English learners. In addition to addressing authorizers’ needs for broad-based authorizing tools and resources, CCAP’s Tri-State Alliance grant plan includes particular attention to English learners because of the high percentage of English learner students in California charter schools. Table 5 below shows the types of actions or activities that responding authorizers identified as highest priority in this area, and California

authorizers’ needs to support English learners are detailed in a separate assessment and report conducted for CCAP.⁸

Please rank the top 5 <u>items that could improve access, services, and outcomes for students in charter schools in your district/county, including English learners, with 1 being the item that could most improve outcomes.</u>	Ranking
1. Clarity in state and federal English learner policy as it applies to charter schools	1
2. Review of English learner academic progress during oversight, renewal or revocation procedures	2
3. Communication and clarity about the rights of English learners during enrollment and admissions	3
4. Training for charter school boards and other stakeholders on the obligations to English learners in public schools	4
5. Funding and programming support for English learners	5
6. Tools available for helping authorizers to track and intervene when charter schools fail to fulfill obligations in serving English learners	6
7. More attention to English learner services during the review of charter petitions	7
8. Improved relationships between charter schools and the district/county office	8
9. Willingness of charter operators to actively engage and recruit students with disabilities	9
10. Willingness of charter operators to expand the scope of services currently offered to students with disabilities	10
11. Technology-based tools to assist authorizers in monitoring required charter school submissions and provide greater public transparency of charter school governance, finances, and academics	11

Input from Authorizer Interviews

To augment authorizer input obtained from the 2019 Authorizer Survey conducted by CCAP, we interviewed 10 California district/county authorizers to obtain deeper perspectives on the needs of diverse authorizers throughout the state. The charter school authorizing officials who were interviewed

⁸ See Education First report for CCAP, “An Assessment of the Needs of California Charter Authorizers to Support English Learners” (July 2019). In addition, serving students with disabilities in Colorado and Florida is the focus of a separate study and report conducted for the Tri-State Alliance.

represent a wide range of chartering experience including both highly experienced and less experienced authorizers; rural, suburban, and urban environments; small-scale (overseeing only one or a few charter schools) to large-scale authorizers; and both small (one assigned staff member) to much larger authorizing offices.

In the interviews, we did not ask authorizers to rank priorities in response to a given list (as in the survey), but simply to offer their top recommendations for both statewide **model authorizing materials** and other **authorizer assistance** (e.g., professional development, mentoring). As a result, some of their recommendations naturally echoed items listed in the survey (e.g., “annual review material/rubric”), while other suggestions were not reflected in the survey and are thus additional ideas to consider. The following tables (6-10) summarize recommendations offered by authorizers in the interviews – separated into recommendations that correspond with priorities identified through the survey, and those that were not included in the survey.

Table 6. Priority Model Materials Recommended by Authorizers Interviewed

PRIORITY MODEL MATERIALS (corresponding to 2019 Survey items)	
<p>The authorizers interviewed echoed some of the priorities for statewide model materials as identified in the 2019 Survey results. Below are thoughts or comments they provided that relate to priorities identified through the Survey.</p> <p>General recommendation: Authorizers recommend and request that new or improved model materials and resources be differentiated in the following ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Tailored to the distinct statutory requirements of district vs. county authorizers – clearly identify what applies to districts and what applies to counties. (Annotation or asterisking could be sufficient) 2) Differentiated for small, under-resourced authorizing offices vs. larger authorizing offices with more staffing and capacity (i.e., provide a streamlined version or options for authorizers with less capacity) 	
Resource	Description/Authorizer Comments
Annual review material/rubric	<p>Authorizers agreed on the need for updated annual review and oversight materials, including annual site visit guidance and tools, to align with the new state accountability system and new statutory requirements for academic review, tiered intervention based on the state dashboard, and differentiated assistance to schools not making academic progress.</p> <p>Streamlined protocols and materials for small-office authorizers: Small, under-resourced authorizers would like to have streamlined protocols and materials (still meeting statutory requirements) that are realistic and manageable for their often single-person offices to carry out or use. An authorizer noted that FCMAT's current annual review template is too comprehensive ("like a mini renewal") for an under-resourced authorizing</p>

	office to implement; a streamlined version is needed to minimize burden on both the authorizer and charter schools.
Annual review report to charter schools	Authorizers agreed an annual report toolkit/template and guidance would be useful, especially since some California authorizers don't even know they are required to provide an annual report to the charter schools they oversee.
Model MOU	Authorizers agreed that a new state model MOU is needed to align with changes in state law (e.g., LCAP and the dashboard).
Templates and samples addressing non-compliance issues	Authorizers spoke to the need for templates to promote greater consistency and quality of oversight statewide.
Charter petition template and sample evaluation rubric	An updated charter petition review matrix aligned with new changes in law would be a tremendous help.
Renewal standards & Templates for renewal/nonrenewal review material	Authorizers expressed the need for a "one-stop" renewal toolkit - a statewide resource and clear protocol for the charter renewal process and decision making, to align with the current (new) state accountability system and guide authorizers in making judgments on measurable pupil outcomes based on a standard, state-accepted set of data.

Table 7. Additional Recommendations for Model Materials

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MODEL MATERIALS	
In addition to the above, authorizers interviewed suggested the following model materials that were not on the 2019 Survey list of items.	
Resource	Description/Authorizer Comments
Facility allocation protocol for Prop 39	District authorizers expressed great need for a protocol or processes for allocating facilities under Prop 39. In addition to a written resource, this would also be an in-demand topic for a training or forum.
Governance oversight tools	Authorizers agreed on the important need for stronger tools (accompanied by training – see Table 10) to oversee charter school governance. Authorizers need stronger tools, knowledge and skills to assess governance capacity in petition review, and to monitor and

	<p>evaluate governance effectiveness for operating schools. Useful new or improved tools suggested by authorizers include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) a board composition matrix to help authorizers assess strengths and areas of need on proposed and existing governing boards; 2) a tool/checklist and/or “Bylaws 101” training to assess the adequacy and quality of bylaws; 3) tools to oversee compliance with the new transparency and ethics requirements of SB 126 taking effect in January 2020; 4) tools to oversee various governance/corporate structures in California charter schools (including sole member corporations and LLCs). <p>Refine, repackage, and supplement existing CARSNet governance oversight tools as needed.</p>
Financial oversight tools (revised and repackaged)	An authorizer suggested revising and repackaging CARSNet’s Leading Indicators financial performance tools and updating the Excel-based fiscal evaluation tool.
Technology tools	An authorizer noted that very few small authorizers have benefited from any technology support to provide efficiency, transparency, and actionable data in charter oversight and renewal processes. Tools such as Epicenter, which was made available to some California authorizers through the CARSNet grant, should be made available to all authorizers, especially small authorizers.
Closure procedures	An authorizer suggested that more guidance on closure procedures would be helpful, particularly on how to support families during a closure.
Streamlined tools and resources for small and rural authorizers	(As noted in Table 6) Small, rural authorizers request streamlined tools and materials that will enable their under-resourced authorizing offices to meet compliance requirements and carry out responsible oversight as simply and efficiently as possible, without extra layers of work.

Table 8. Improving Access, Services, and Outcomes for English Learners and Students with Disabilities

<p>IMPROVING ACCESS, SERVICES, AND OUTCOMES FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES</p>
--

Most authorizers interviewed agreed that serving English learners and students with disabilities and ensuring equitable access and nondiscrimination remain a challenge in California’s charter school sector. Authorizers need better knowledge and tools to conduct quality oversight in these areas, and this should be a major focus for authorizer development through this project.

As mentioned earlier, improving services for English learners and students with disabilities are respectively the focus of separate reports conducted for CCAP and the Tri-State Alliance, so these topics are not detailed in this report, though suggestions from the interviews are included below.

Authorizers recommended the following to help California authorizers improve access, services, and outcomes for English learners and students with disabilities:

Recommendations	Description/Authorizer Comments
Additional focus by CCAP on Special Education, English Learners, and Accountability	Given the importance and ongoing challenges of these focal areas of oversight for California authorizers, an authorizer suggested that CCAP could develop distinct programmatic “arms” to focus on Special Education, English Learners, and Accountability, respectively.
Petition review and annual oversight checklists for both special education and English Learner services	An authorizer recommended providing explicit model checklists for both special education and English learner services, including legal requirements, for both petition review and annual oversight.
Dissemination of best practices and toolkits for English Learner education to charter schools	An authorizer recommended that CCAP stay abreast of current research to assess English learners in California (e.g., by the Sobrato Foundation) and the most effective tools to assist English learner education (e.g., from Loyola Marymount University), and facilitate disseminating best practices and resources to charter school leaders. CCAP could also disseminate best practices learned from schools that earn the California State Seal of Biliteracy Award.
Guidance on improving oversight of services to students with disabilities	Many authorizers noted that special education in California charter schools continues to be a challenge, and providing more training to authorizers on overseeing special education in charters is an excellent focus for CCAP. Authorizers need deeper understanding of the issues and better tools and strategies for carrying out their oversight role. Some authorizers need more information on how special education is funded and organized, and training in evaluating how well a charter school is implementing services to students with disabilities. Also mentioned was coordination and collaboration with SELPAs, as they also review an LEA’s compliance with special education law and a SELPA’s agreement with an LEA.

<p>Guidance on improving oversight of equity and access issues, including student discipline</p>	<p>Authorizers spoke about the need to strengthen oversight to ensure non-discrimination, equal access, and improved access for all students in charter schools. Tools, practices, and policies from experienced authorizers like LAUSD and LACOE on lottery and admission procedures and student discipline could be developed into statewide resources and shared in trainings. These include authorizer board policies; petition review of racial/ethnic balance plans and admissions policies; lottery and enrollment monitoring including “secret shopper” checks; review of school materials (lottery and enrollment forms/packets, handbooks, policies); and tiered intervention and restorative justice models for student discipline.</p>
---	--

Table 9. Priorities for Authorizer Assistance

<p>PRIORITIES FOR AUTHORIZER ASSISTANCE (corresponding to priorities identified in survey)</p>	
<p>The authorizers interviewed echoed many of the priorities for authorizer assistance as identified in the 2019 Survey results. Below are thoughts or comments they provided that relate to priorities identified through the survey.</p>	
Type of Assistance	Description/Authorizer Comments
<p>An online archive of best practice procedures, materials, templates and forms</p>	<p>Authorizers spoke to the need for a strong resource library (accompanied by trainings) to capture and share the institutional knowledge of California’s experienced authorizers and the materials, policies and practices they have developed that would be useful models for other authorizers statewide.</p>
<p>An online community where authorizers can post questions and share information/ideas with peers</p>	<p>Authorizers suggested the following:</p> <p>1) Provide a help desk or hotline on CCAP’s website. This, in addition to mentoring/peer consultation with experienced authorizers (described under “Mentoring” below), would be very helpful especially for new authorizers who need immediate help upon receiving a petition, triggering the 30-day clock and every authorizing task thereafter.</p> <p>(Note: Many queries from authorizers concern issues about which there are multiple legal interpretations and approaches. CCAP “help line” advice could be inconsistent with an authorizer’s district counsel or leadership.)</p>

	<p>2) Offer a private online forum or chat group for California authorizers. One authorizer suggested a private Facebook group, but others noted Facebook access is prohibited for some professionals due to their employment and/or security requirements, so a different venue is needed. Perhaps LinkedIn would work. Whatever venue is chosen, members should receive notifications when there are new messages/posts. Users of the previous CARSNet forum mentioned that they did not receive notifications of new messages/posts, so they were not aware when there were questions asked or postings to respond to. Members would have to make a point of visiting the forum regularly without prompting, which was not practical and is why the forum was little used.)</p>
<p>Webinars and other remote training opportunities</p>	<p>Webinars can be useful for authorizers who already have a base of knowledge – not so much for novice authorizers. They have been very well-received by authorizers in northern California.</p> <p>One authorizer suggested for development under a future grant: Online courses like those offered through colleges and universities would be powerful. This kind of course would have pre-developed curricular content, where the instructor is more of a facilitator, and online learners would have assigned mentors.</p>
<p>Trainings and “bootcamps” for new district staff after they are assigned to charter school oversight</p>	<p>The CARSNet bootcamps (which were provided in collaboration with CCAP) are useful resources. Continuing to offer them regionally is essential.</p>
<p>Regular updates and newsletters with news and developments in the field</p>	<p>Authorizers expressed the need for regular, timely communications and information on authorizing matters, especially legislative/policy updates and analysis and legal notices. Given the raft of pending legislative activity affecting authorizing in California, authorizers need information dissemination and analysis immediately upon legislative passage.</p>
<p>Regular face-to-face meetings with my peers and experts</p>	<p>Authorizers greatly value face-to-face learning opportunities and offered the following recommendations for CCAP (in no particular order):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Provide differentiated forums and trainings for district vs. county authorizers to address their differing requirements, and trainings adapted to the limited capacities of small/rural, under-resourced authorizers. (CARSNet is geared to county offices and not as useful to small district authorizers.)

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2) Workshops using case studies and scenarios would be especially useful – help authorizers work through real-life challenges, and provide resources relevant to those challenges. 3) Address more advanced topics/issues for experienced authorizers – a training every other month would be useful. These could also provide opportunities for experienced authorizer practitioners to collaborate in developing new or updating sample policies, templates and other authorizer support resources. 4) Some authorizers interviewed have found NACSA’s Leaders Program extremely helpful. Perhaps CCAP could adapt some elements of this program to provide advanced opportunities to California authorizers. 5) Provide regional supports to reach more small/rural authorizers. (Even though CARSNet and CCAP provide various regional trainings, it is mostly large authorizers who attend.)
<p>Mentoring with a colleague who partners with me one-on-one</p>	<p>Authorizers identified mentoring/partnerships as a useful service for CCAP to provide or facilitate. The mentoring and resources provided through the CARSNet “regional lead” structure was helpful. CCAP should continue this or facilitate other mentoring, partnering, or phone-a-friend/peer consultation between experienced and less experienced authorizers. CCAP could provide a list of experienced authorizers willing to mentor, partner, and/or be a phone friend.</p>
<p>State-level policy and advocacy on behalf of quality charter school authorizing</p>	<p>Authorizers voiced the need for legislative representation or advocacy on quality authorizing, as well as prompt dissemination of information and explanation/analysis on legislative issues affecting authorizers. A forum for legislative updates and policy interpretation and analysis would be very useful, led by someone who understands the legislative process and interprets it from the authorizer perspective.</p>
<p>Facility allocation under Prop 39</p>	<p>District authorizers expressed the need for a protocol or processes for allocating facilities under Prop 39. In addition to a written resource, this would also be an in-demand topic for a training or forum.</p>

Table 10. Additional Recommendations for Authorizer Assistance

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AUTHORIZER ASSISTANCE

In addition to the above, authorizers interviewed recommended the following types of authorizer assistance that were not on the 2019 Survey list of items.

Recommendations	Description/Authorizer Comments
Governance oversight training	Authorizers need deeper training, tools and guidance in assessing governance capacity and overseeing governance, in light of the needs and to accompany the tools described above in Table 7.
Financial oversight training	<p>Many authorizers expressed a need for financial oversight training and tools (noted above in Table 7) geared to authorizing staff who are financial laypeople. FCMAT’s training and presentations are good but geared to fiscal officers; authorizing staff who are not finance professionals want “Financial Oversight 101” training to learn how to read an audit report, what are red flags, what are the most important tools for an authorizer’s fiscal department to use and how they should fit in overall oversight, etc. The specific charter school fiscal criteria and the Excel fiscal tool that have been developed are more appropriate for use by smaller authorizers.</p> <p>An authorizer also recommended sharing financial oversight information across authorizers when applicable (e.g., between district and county authorizers for a school that both know).</p>
CMO training for small/rural authorizers	An authorizer recommended providing training for small, rural authorizers on how to prepare for large, sophisticated CMOs that come to small communities.
Ongoing training program culminating in authorizer certification by CCAP	Some authorizers would love to see a robust charter authorizing training and certification/endorsement program, perhaps in partnership with other state professional organizations for California district/COE administrators (like ACSA) or CDE. The program could combine online and in-person training and offer a progression of modules.

Lastly, authorizers interviewed are keen to exchange best practices with and learn from their peers in Colorado and Florida through the Tri-State Alliance. They acknowledge, as authorizers in all three states do, some limitations in cross-state sharing due to their different state laws, policies, and political environments. That said, they would like to benefit from an active network of engaged district and county authorizers that does more than just disseminate information; they value structured conversation with colleagues about issues that broadly affect authorizers across states. They all have

busy schedules but, with sufficient notice, will make time to participate in meaningful, well-targeted cross-state learning and sharing. Meeting in person is ideal, but virtual meetings can work well in between.

Further detail for this needs assessment is contained in the two appendices:

- **Appendix 1: Catalog of State-Level Authorizing Resources** - A catalog of existing California state-level model authorizing materials and professional development opportunities, with interviewed authorizers' feedback on strengths and areas for improvement. ([LINK](#))
- **Appendix 2: CCAP Survey Data: 2019 Authorizer Survey** (Summary & Analysis) – A summary and analysis of the responses to the 2019 Authorizer Survey. (ATTACHED)

**Appendix 2: California Charter Authorizing Professionals
Survey Data: 2019 Authorizer Survey
Preliminary Analysis**

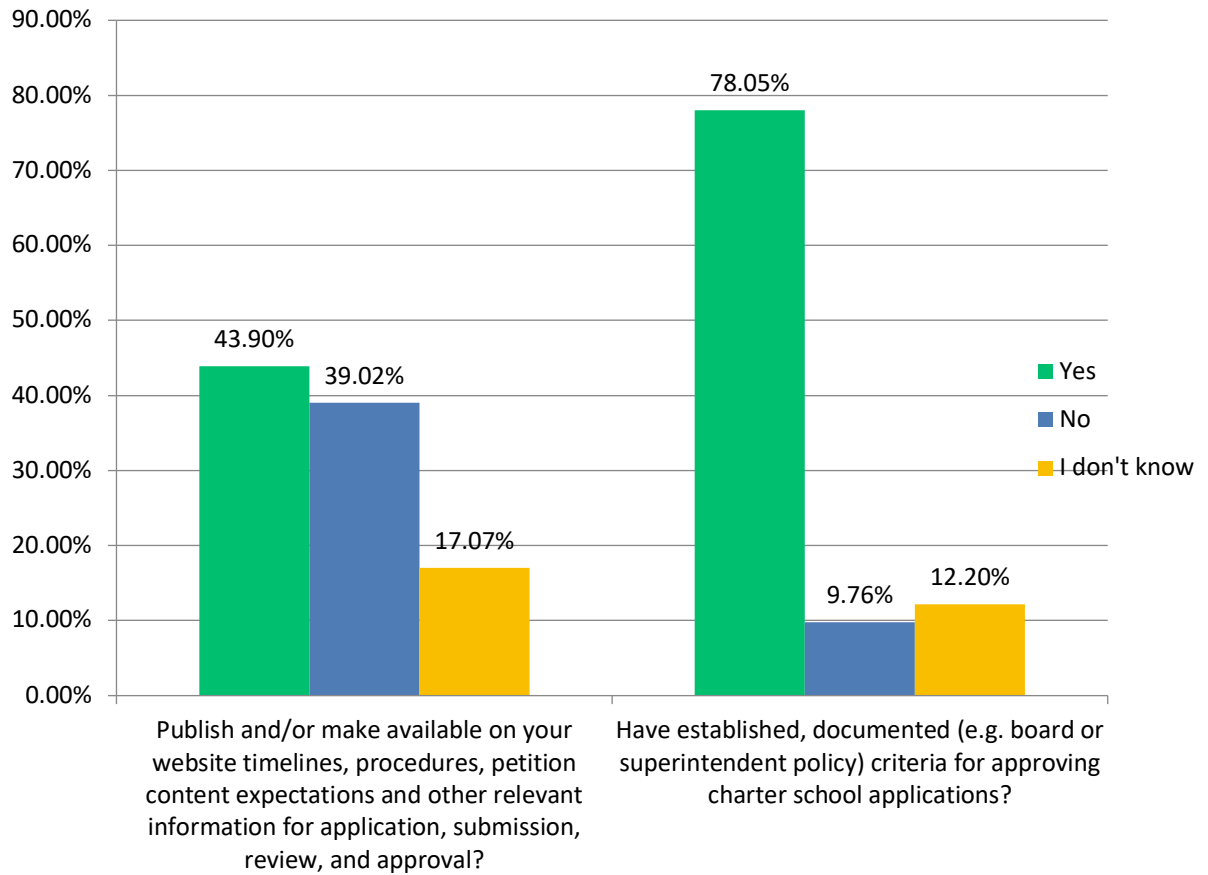
Please rank the top 5 (you may rank all items if you prefer) of the your district's/county office's <u>most urgent assistance needs related to charter authorizing</u>, with 1 being the most urgent.	Ranking (top 5)
1. Charter oversight and monitoring	1
2. Charter evaluation and renewal decisions	2
3. Charter MOUs	3
4. Charter Petition reviews	4
5. Special Education	5
6. Ensuring all students in our community have full access and appropriate services	5
7. Admissions and enrollment	7
8. Activities after charter approval and before school opening (year zero)	8
9. Services for English Learners	9
10. Racial and ethnic balance of students attending charter school(s)	10
11. Charter replication and expansion in our district/county	11
12. Internal coordination within district offices	12
13. Facility allocation under Prop 39	13
14. Improving district-charter relations	14

Please rank the top 5 (you may rank all items if you prefer) of the <u>most helpful types of authorizer assistance</u>, with 1 being the most helpful.	Ranking (top 5)
1. An online archive of best practice procedures, materials, templates and forms	1
2. An online community where authorizers can post questions and share information/ideas with peers	2
3. Webinars and other remote training opportunities	3
4. Training and “bootcamps” for new districts staff after they are assigned to charter school oversight	4
5. Regular updates and newsletters with news and developments in the field	5
6. Evaluations of my district's/county office's authorizing policies and practices	6
7. Opportunities to visit other authorizers and learn about their practices and policies	7
8. Regular face-to-face meetings with my peers and experts	8
9. Communications work to help the public and policymakers understand quality charter school authorizing	9
10. State-level policy and advocacy on behalf of quality charter school authorizing	10
11. Informally connecting me to network of peers	11
12. Mentoring with a colleague who partner with me one-on-one	12

Please rank the top 5 (you may rank all items if you prefer) of the <u>most useful</u> types of model materials for your district's needs, with 1 being the most helpful.	Ranking (top 5)
1. Annual review material/rubric	1
2. Annual review report to charter schools	2
3. Model MOU	3
4. Templates and samples addressing non-compliance issues	4
5. Charter petition template and sample evaluation rubric	5
6. Renewal standards	6
7. Templates for renewal/ nonrenewal review material	7
8. Model board resolution for best practices	8
9. Expansion/ replication rubric	9
10. New School opening checklist	10
11. "Year Zero" material (activities after charter approval and after school opening)	11

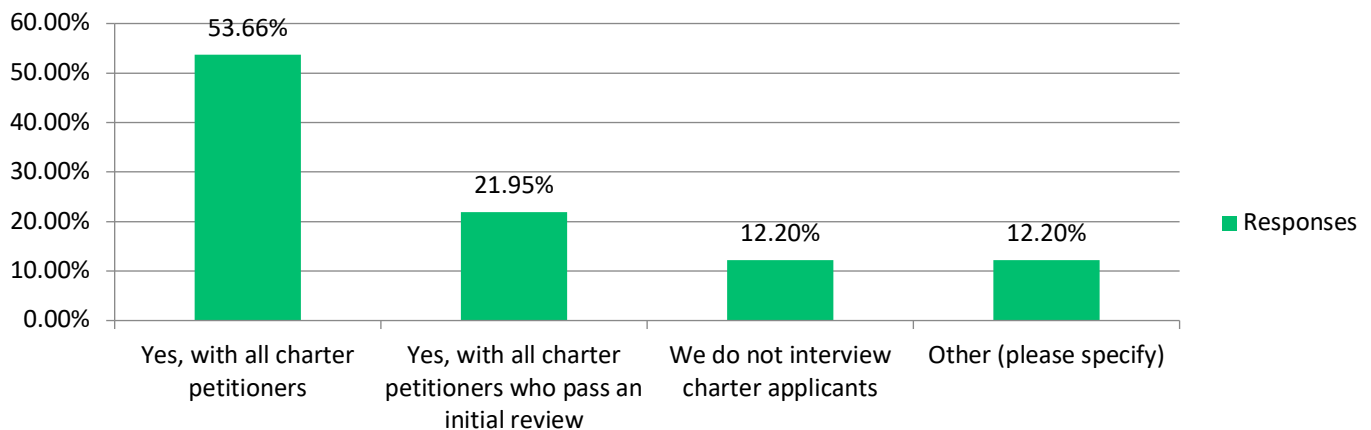
Are there any other types of technical assistance not mentioned above that would be helpful to you?
Expulsion: What happens? Who pays (the charter school or the district) for the student's placement in an alternative program or setting?
Non-renewal and revocation strategies and list of successful attorneys who are successful with these two issues
Need guidance on legal issues especially pending legislation
Create a simplified template or checklist for oversight visitations that is so clear and simple, that any person randomly assigned to carry out the duties can assume them without issue
Legal avenues when being sued by other districts in the county
More assistance in petitioning the state assembly and senate concerning current laws and practices surrounding charter authorizing
Reversing segregation of Charter School students from public school students

In the charter application and approval process, does your authorizing organization:



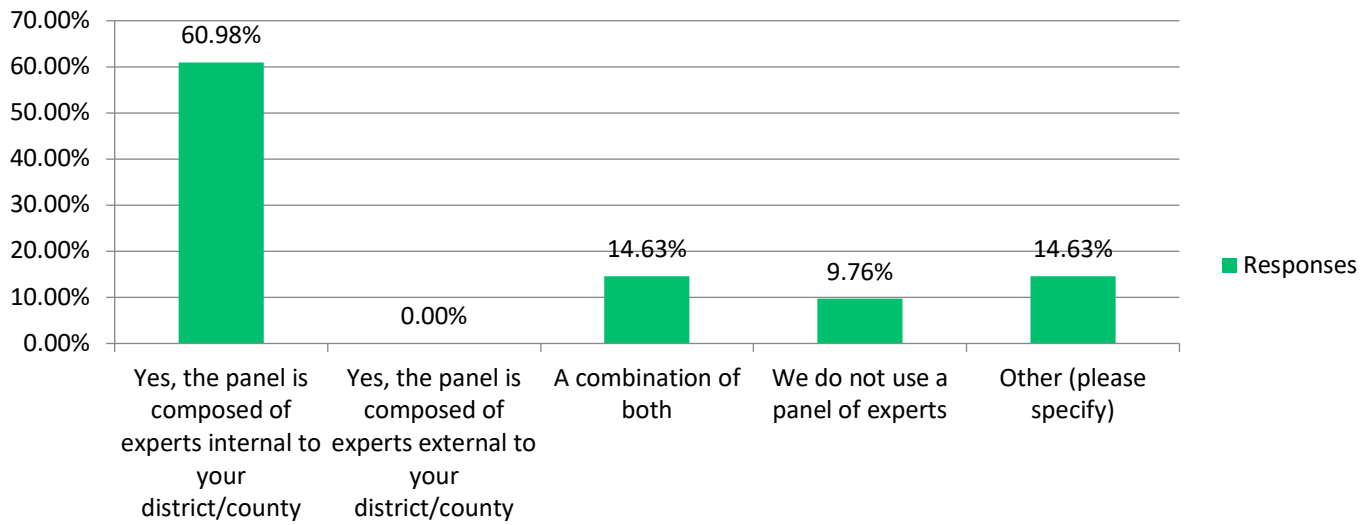
A part of the charter petition process, do you conduct an in-person meeting ("capacity interview") to assess the petitioners' ability to:

Do you conduct an in-person meeting ("capacity interview") as part of the charter petition process?

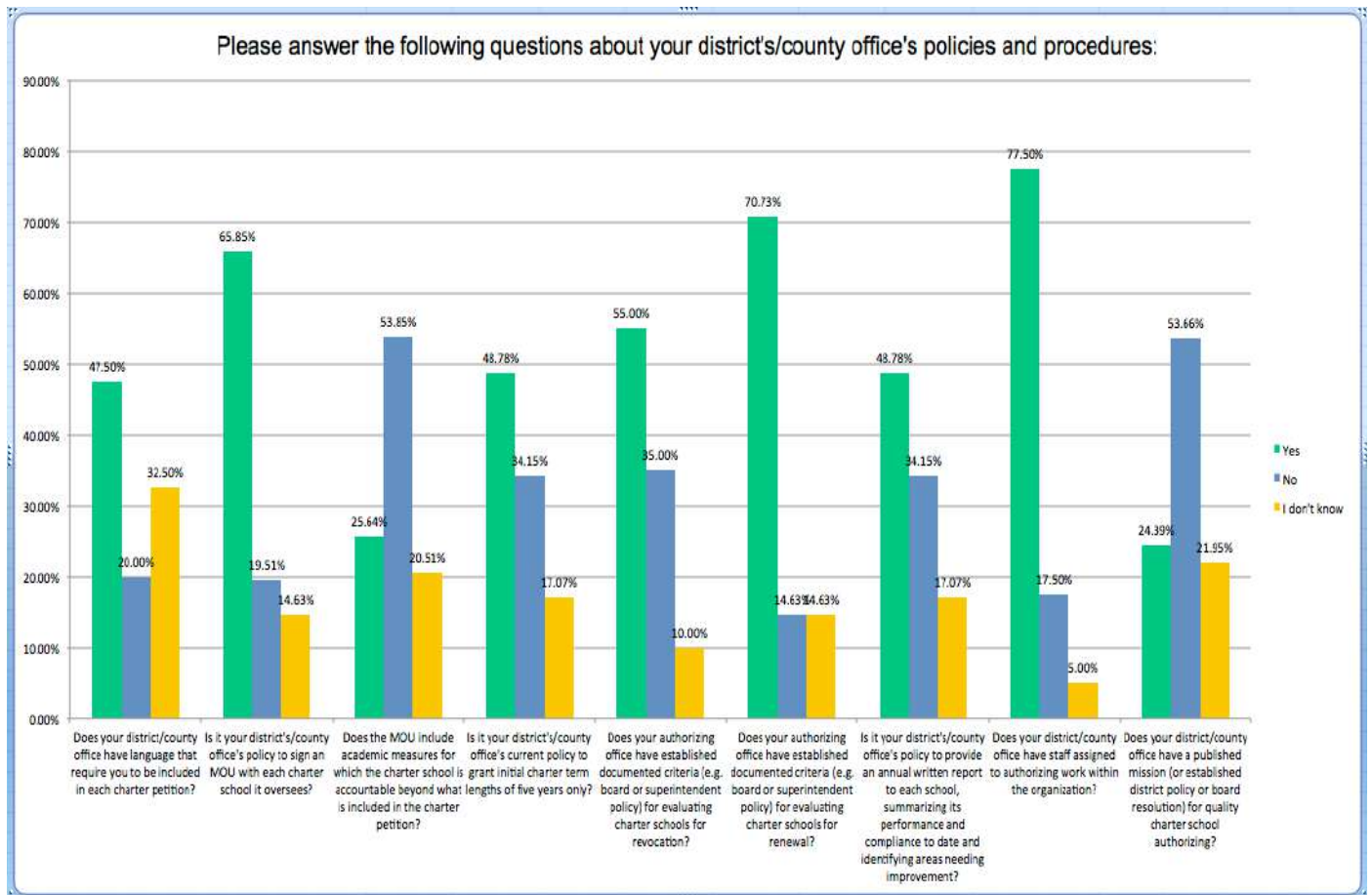


Is a panel of experts used to review new charter petitions? (a) Yes (b) No. If yes, is the panel composed of:

Is a panel of experts used to review new charter petitions?

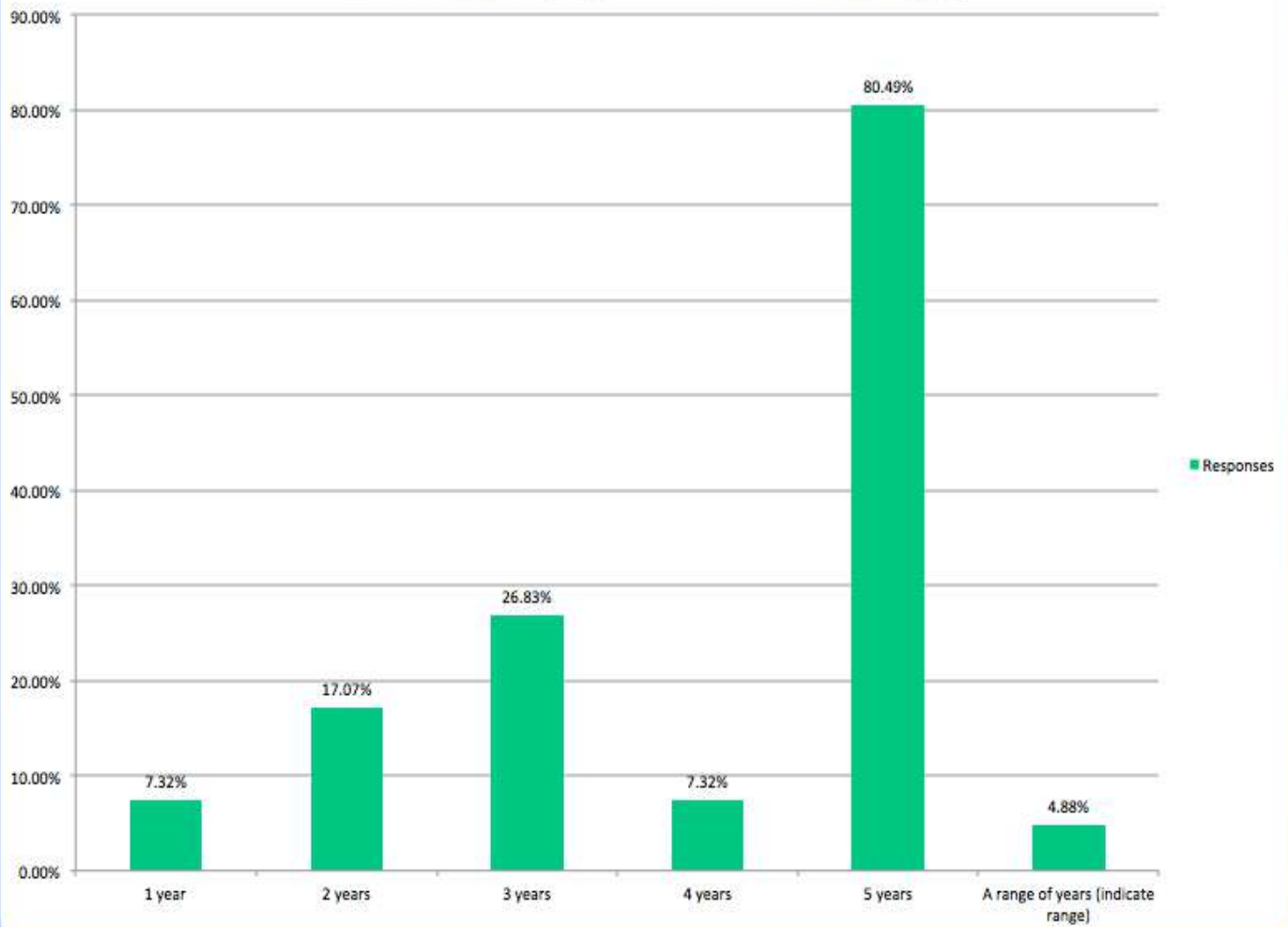


Please answer the following questions about your district's/ county office's policies and procedures:

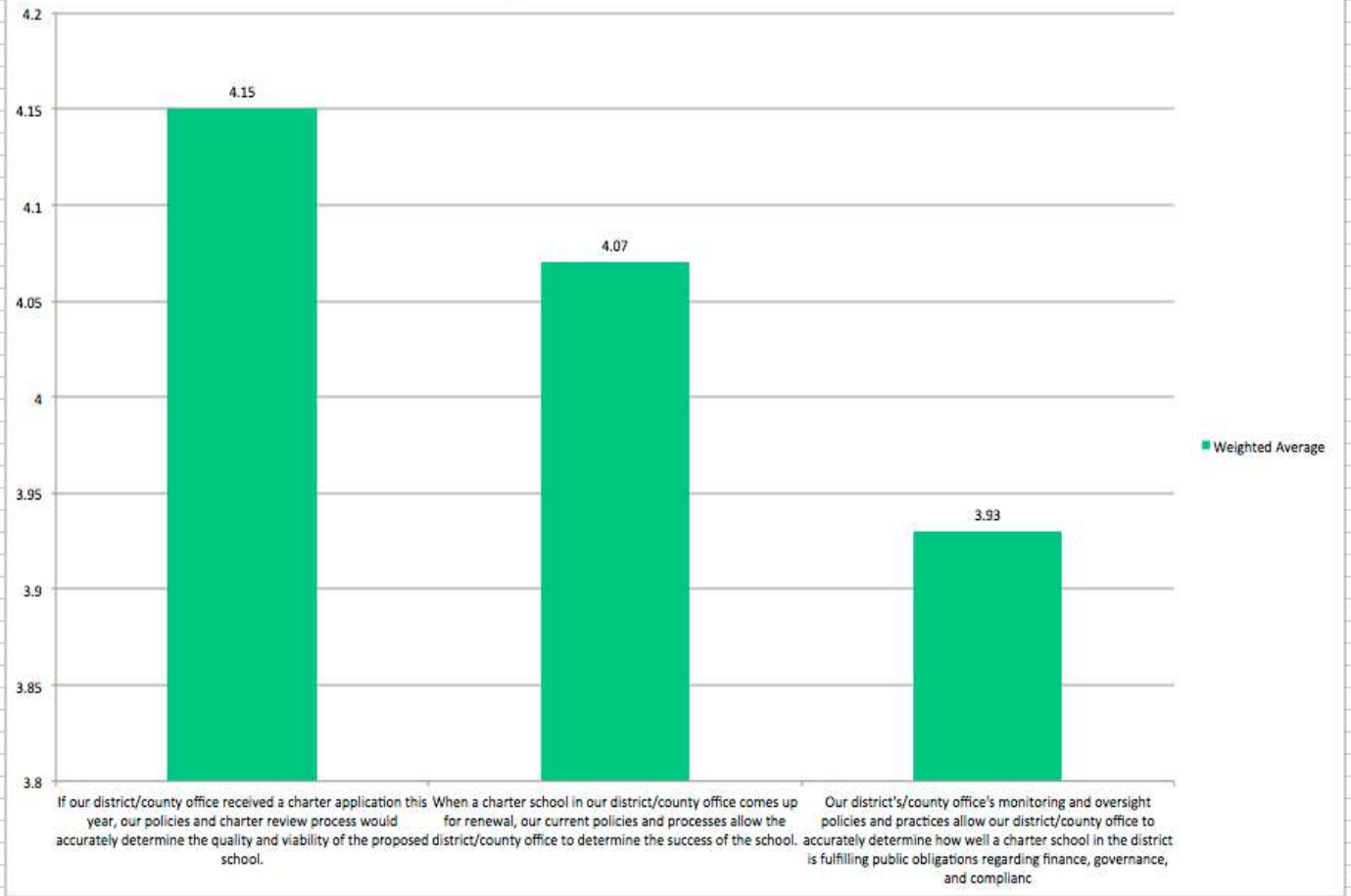


Indicate the term length that your authorization has granted when a charter is initially approved. You can mark as many as apply

Indicate the term lengths that your authorizing organization has granted when a charter is initially approved? Check all that apply.



Using a scale of 1 to 5, indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements, with 1 meaning you absolutely disagree and 5 meaning you are in total agreement with the statement.



Please feel free to provide any additional explanation of your responses or any additional information about your current authorizing practices.

These answers reflect the experience of our school while authorized by the local district and the COE, as well as from observations of the experience of other schools under both levels since 2005

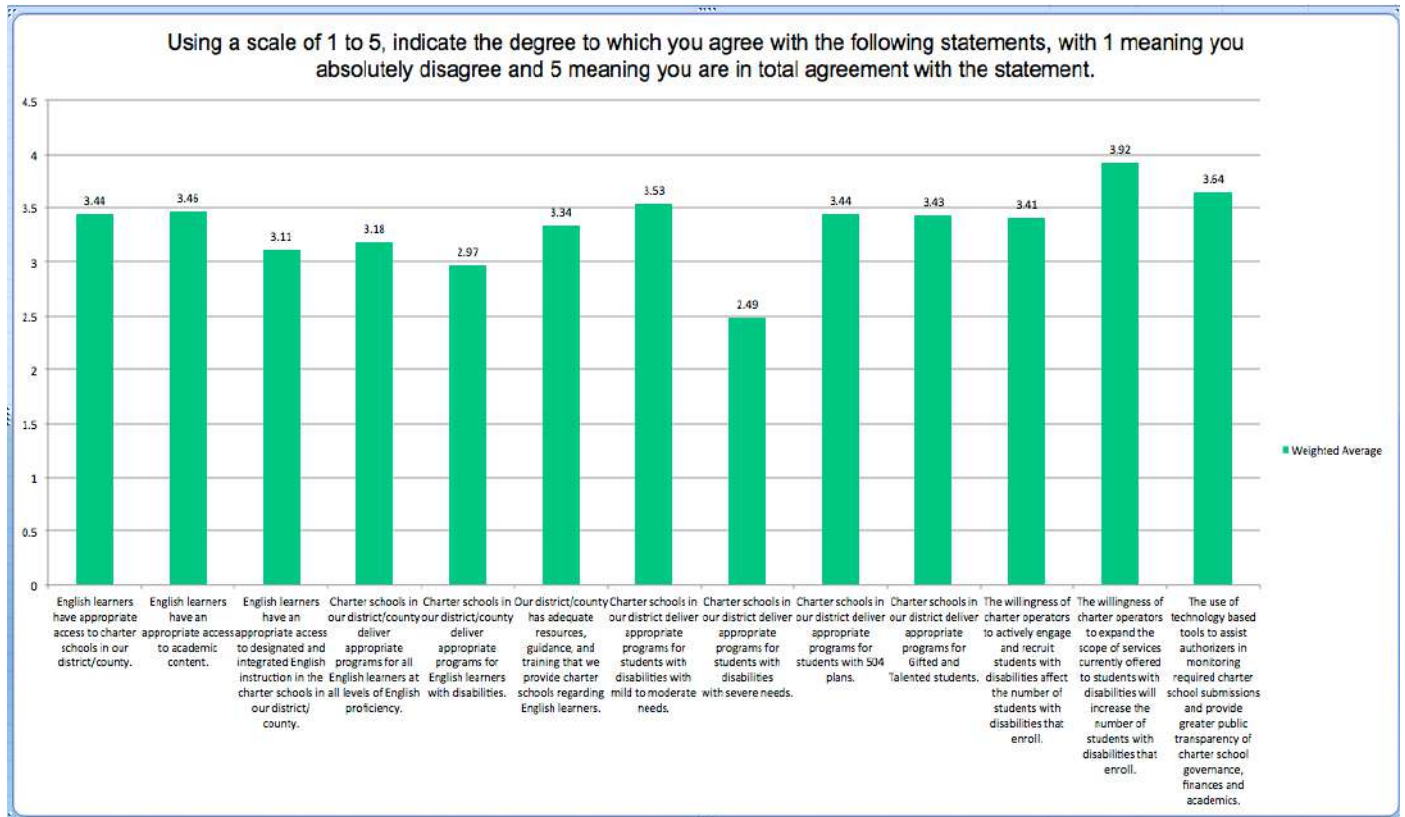
The dependent charter schools don't quite fit into your survey questionnaire.

We have (to) do an LCAP each year, a Charter visit by COE, 5 year petition to the state, budget oversight, credential oversight, all like public schools but more due to being a charter.

How much time and personnel, reasonably, should be dedicated per year for a district to do proper oversight? (I understand hat it depends on many factors including the number of charters in the district as well as their unique structures.) I would like to have simplified yet thorough authorization and oversight practices to streamline processes.

We haven't gone through a reauthorization yet. We have two years to go on our current authorization.

It doesn't matter what policy states. The charter representatives use CCSA funding and political pressure to get approval for segregated practices and programs



Please rank the top 5 items that could improve access, services, and outcomes for students in charter schools in your district/county, including English learners, with 1 being the item that could most improve outcomes.	Ranking (top 5)
1. Clarity in state and federal English learner policy as it applies to charter schools	1
2. Review of English learner academic progress during oversight, renewal or revocation procedures	2
3. Communication and clarity about the rights of English learners during enrollment and admissions	3
4. Training for charter school boards and other stakeholders on the obligations to English learners public schools	4
5. Funding and programming support for English learners	5
6. Tools available for helping authorizers to track and intervene when charter schools fail to fulfill obligations in serving English learners	6
7. More attention to English learners services during the review of charter petitions	7
8. Improved relationships between charter schools and the district/county office	8
9. Willingness to charter operators to actively engage and recruit students with disabilities	9
10. Willingness of charter operators to expand the scope of services currently offered to students with disabilities.	10
11. Technology based tools to assist authorizers in monitoring required charter schools submissions and provide greater public transparency of charter school governance, finances, and academic.	11

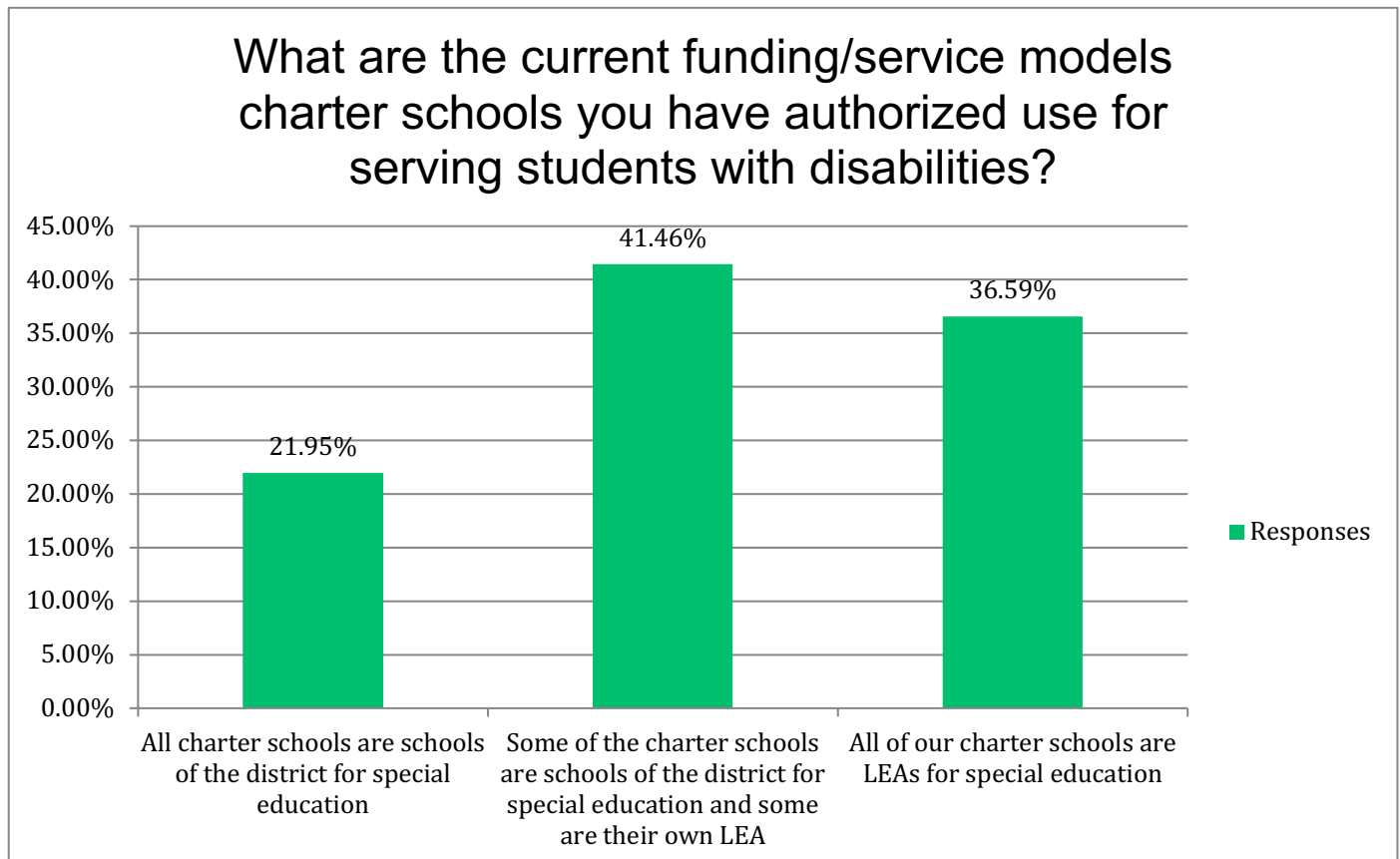
Not in anyone's top five:

1. Willingness of charter operators to actively engage and recruit students with disabilities.
2. Willingness of charter operators to expand the scope of services currently offered to students with disabilities.
3. Technology based tools to assist authorizers in monitoring required charter school submissions and provide greater public transparency of charter school governance, finances, and academics.

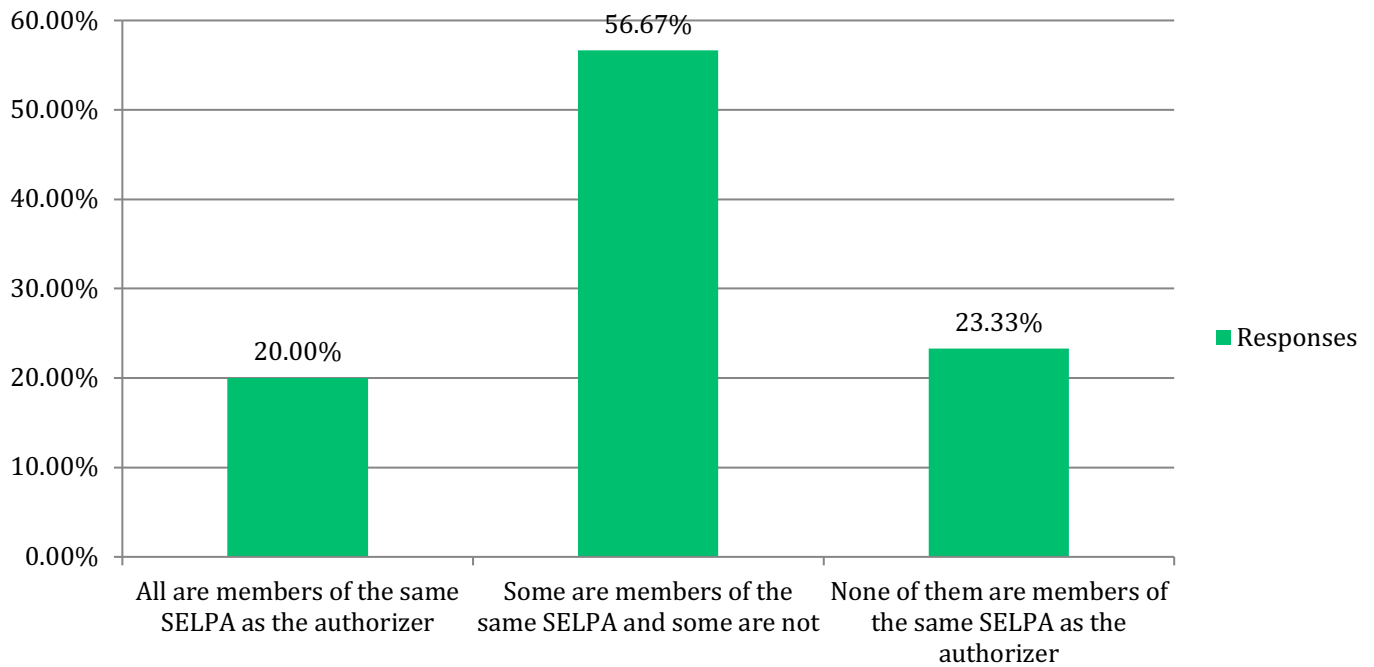
What policies and structures, if any, at the district, county, or state level create barriers to providing services to English learners in charter schools in your district/county?
Funding could always be improved
Lack of professional development
Lack of accountability of admission practices
Charter school actively dissuade SWD from enrolling, and if they do they do not have the services need thus the family returns the LEA
Our county has very low population of English learners. In most districts it's under 5%. Knowing this, my responses could make more sense
Funding
Charters do not have many ELs in Butte. Oversight and progress monitoring looks different with small rural populations
Criteria in petition approval matrix
None, we have very few EL students in the charters
Need more clear policies and structures for on-line, virtual schools
Charter school charters must be revoked when not serving populations that represent an equal percentage of ELs and SED students as the public schools

Briefly describe how differences in access and services for English learners are different for charter schools than traditional public schools in your district/ county. (If there is no major difference, say none)
The complexities of entry to magnet schools/programs within the traditional public schools creates disparities in access for ESL students (all students) –a seeming contradiction to the critiques of charter schools
Lack of awareness
The differences in access and services may differ based upon a particular charter school
Major difference is that parents must meet with their case carrier to develop one on one instruction so they can facilitate language strategies
English learners often come from low socio-economic households and cannot provide regular transportation to charter schools. Since charter have no bussing requirements, they are excluded due to inability to provide transportation
English learners services in homeschool/online programs are a concern
It's about the same in charter and other schools
Most provide personalized learning plans/full inclusion support for ELs to fill gaps
Our district provides daily support and specifically designed instruction for English learners
Some charters are really good at this an others not
I believe that districts are more invested in EL programs. Most charters begin with a vision that includes ELs incidentally. I would like to visit a charter that is founded upon serving ELs
We authorized virtual schools
Charter schools pull more advantaged students from public schools and therefore don't adequately serve the most needy populations as is their charge
Charter schools in our area do not enroll English Learners

There were 9 “none” responses and one “not sure” response.



For charter schools that you authorize that are their own LEA:



Are there any other challenges that you experience in your role not mentioned above? If so, please explain.

In my role as Executive Director of a direct-funded independent community charter public school, I see as a challenge related to the mission of CCAP the growing polarization and "zero-sum" contextualization of the relationship between district and COE authorizers, and the charter school staff. The recent political/legislative actions related to charter school law has made this a bigger challenge. As a school authorized now by the SBE, I have seen how a positive partnership of shared mission with our CDE oversight staff has helped us improve our school, with positive impacts for our students, their families, and our staff. I encourage the CCAP to apply a similar strategy as this survey to gain qualitative and quantitative input for a comparative analysis of district/COE authorization practices with that of the SBE/CDE.

Separately, I invite the CCAP to expand its communications with the many state charter network organizations (CCSA, CSDC, LAAC, TCICS, CPICS) to create more opportunities for charter school leaders to have "non-high-stakes" dialogue with staff responsible for authorization at districts and COE. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this survey.

Lack of direction as to how to best engage and support C.S.

I would suggest State review its policy and impact of charter schools selecting other SELPAs.

The challenges with expulsions was commented on earlier in this survey.

One challenge is bringing ELD parents into the school to support, volunteer, or be on committees.

Because we offer SPED services for our Charter Students we have a much greater enrollment of students who are identified with disabilities

It is difficult to oversee the admission policies. The independent charter school that we authorize has a reputation of counseling EL and special education families away from enrolling.

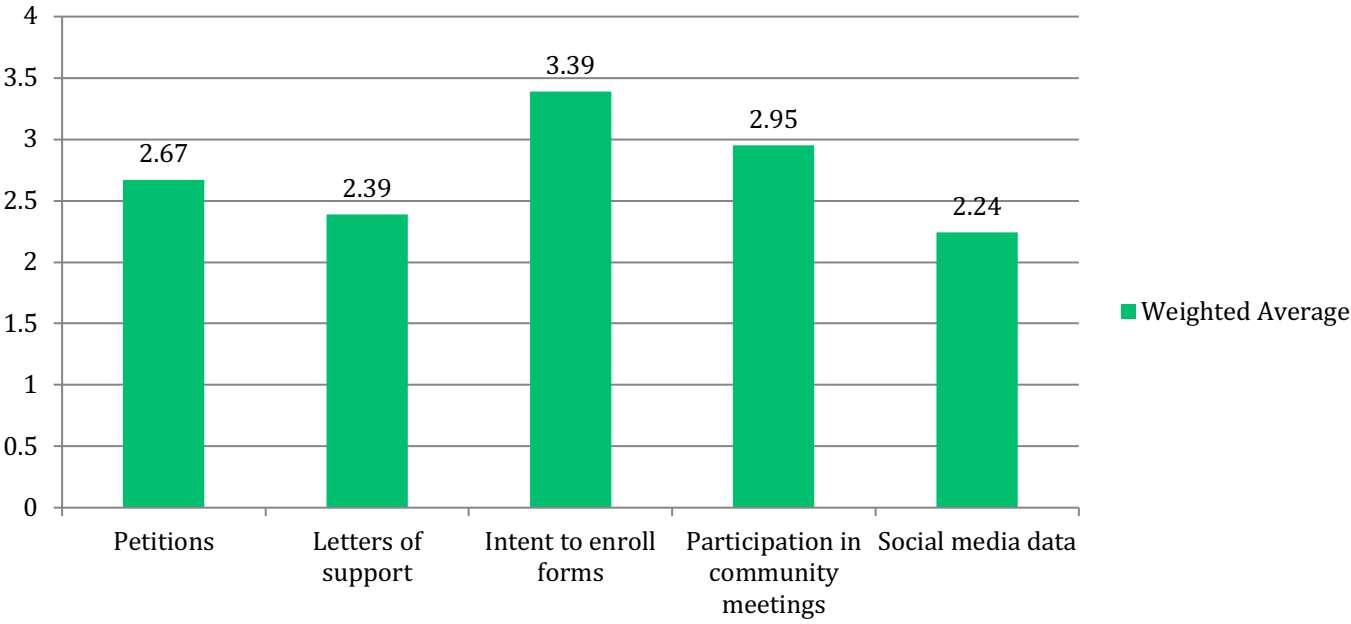
More difficult to check compliance when in a different SELPA
The state wide attack on charter schools by CTA and others will cause loss of enrollment, division between us and our neighbor districts and charters will be renewed based on political and political contributions more than on outcomes for children.
No, but all butte Charters went to El Dorado. Wasn't sure how to indicate this on previous question.
1. I am new. 2. Laws are changing. 3. I love that charters offer choice for parents and students. I love that charters make district schools better through competition. HOWEVER, I want to see that laws ensure equality of access. In other words, no "cherry-picking" students or "counseling" students to go back to their home schools if there are student or parent challenges.
Just the legal issues
Adequate resources to properly oversee the charters we have. There also needs to be more clear guidelines on types of school districts charter entities target.
Charter schools saying one thing...We take all students...parents telling me another..."we were not welcome due to...."
It is clear that the Charter School founders and administrator do not care about segregation in our community. The entire structure is a civil rights matter. There is segregation between Socioeconomic levels, between ethnicities, and between English and non-English students. Charter schools are divisive and use public funds for private interests at the cost of public education.

Please enter the number for each question below:

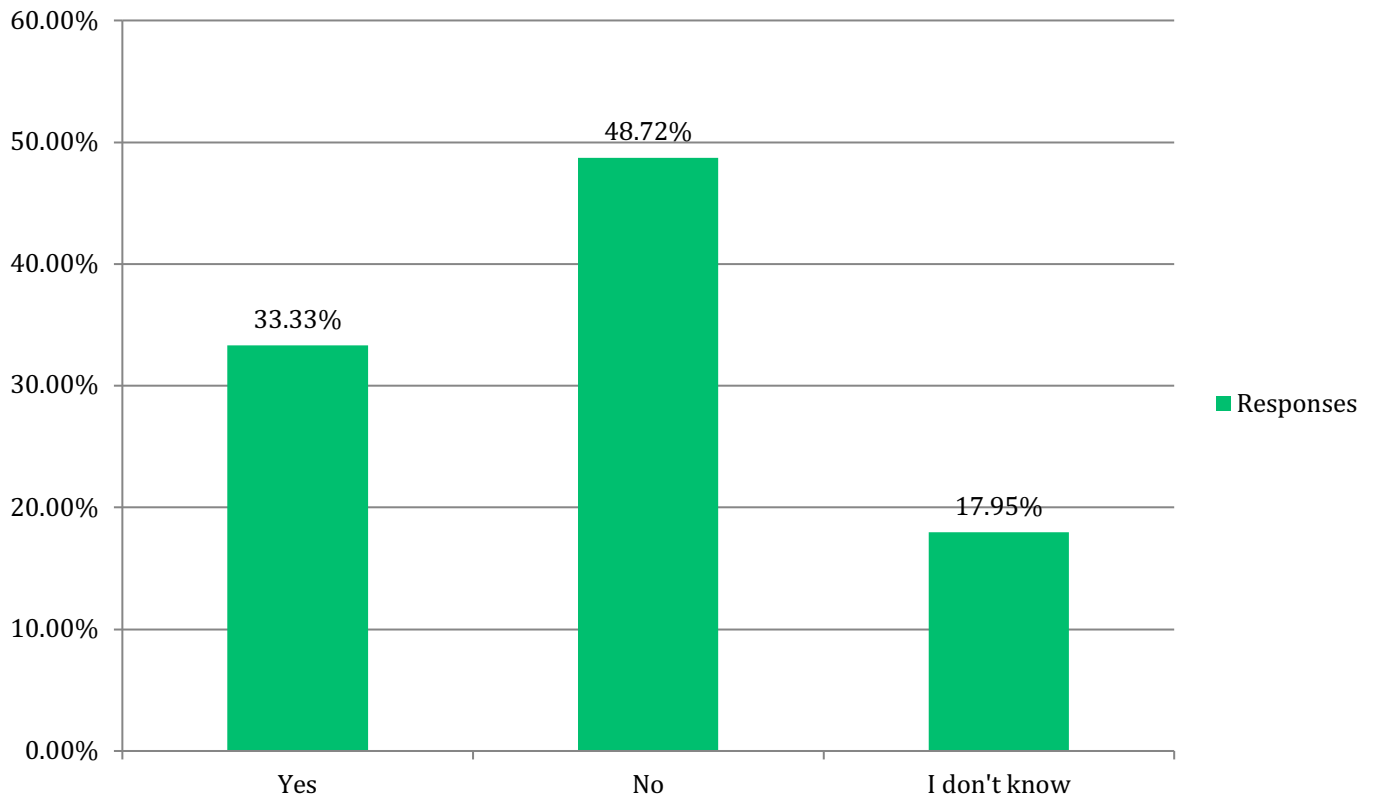
How many charter applications have you received in the last 5 years?	100.00%	38
How many charter applications have you approved in the last 5 years?	100.00%	38
How many charter applications have you denied in the last 5 years?	100.00%	38
How many charter schools have opened in the last 5 years?	97.37%	37
How many charter schools have expanded or replicated in the last 5 years?	100.00%	38
How many charter schools have you closed in the last 5 years?	97.37%	37
How many charter schools closed on their own in the last 5 years?	97.37%	37
	Answered	38
	Skipped	26

Please rate the utility of the following sources of data when estimating projected enrollment of a new or expanding charter school, with 1 being not helpful or predictive and five being very helpful and accurate	Rate
1. Intent to enroll forms	1
2. Participation in community meetings	2
3. Petitions	3
4. Letters of support	4
5. Social media data	5

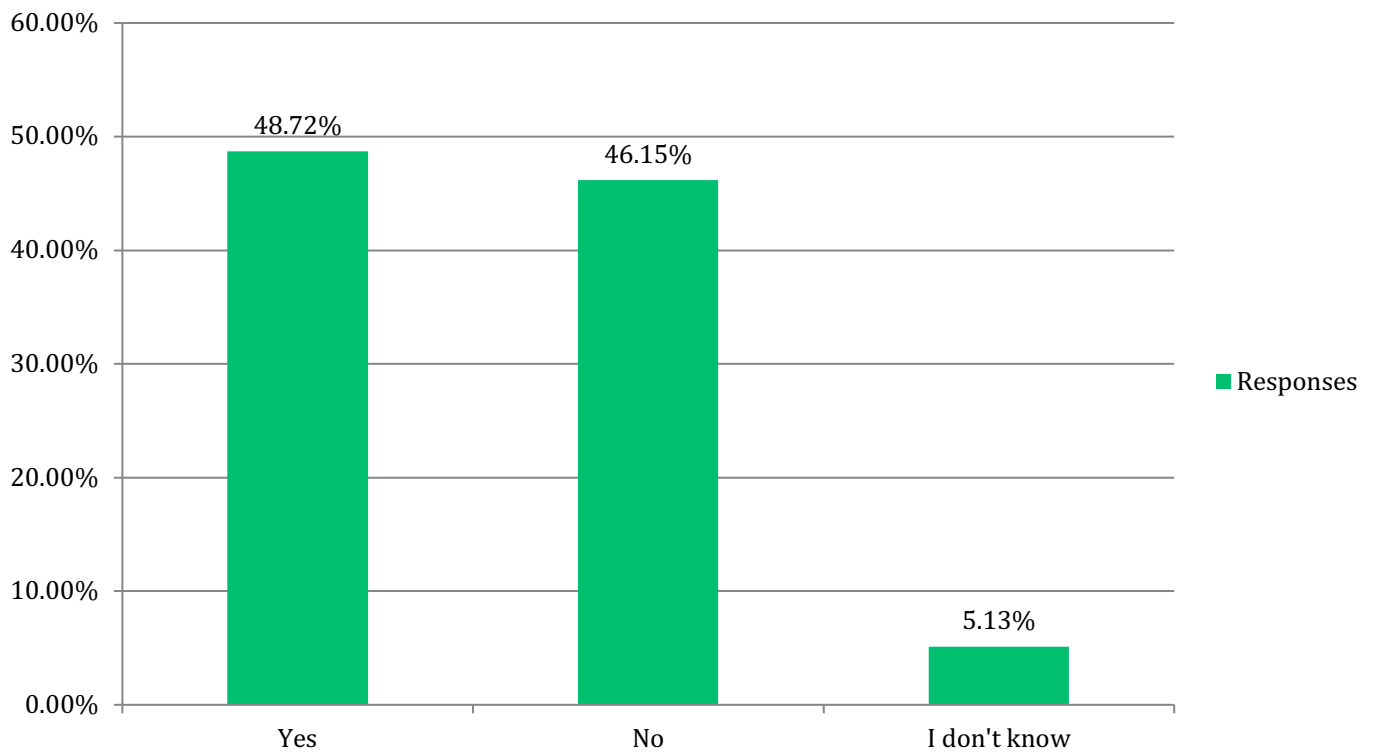
Please rate the utility of the following sources of data when estimating projected enrollment of a new or expanding charter school, with 1 being not helpful or predictive and five being very helpful and accurate.



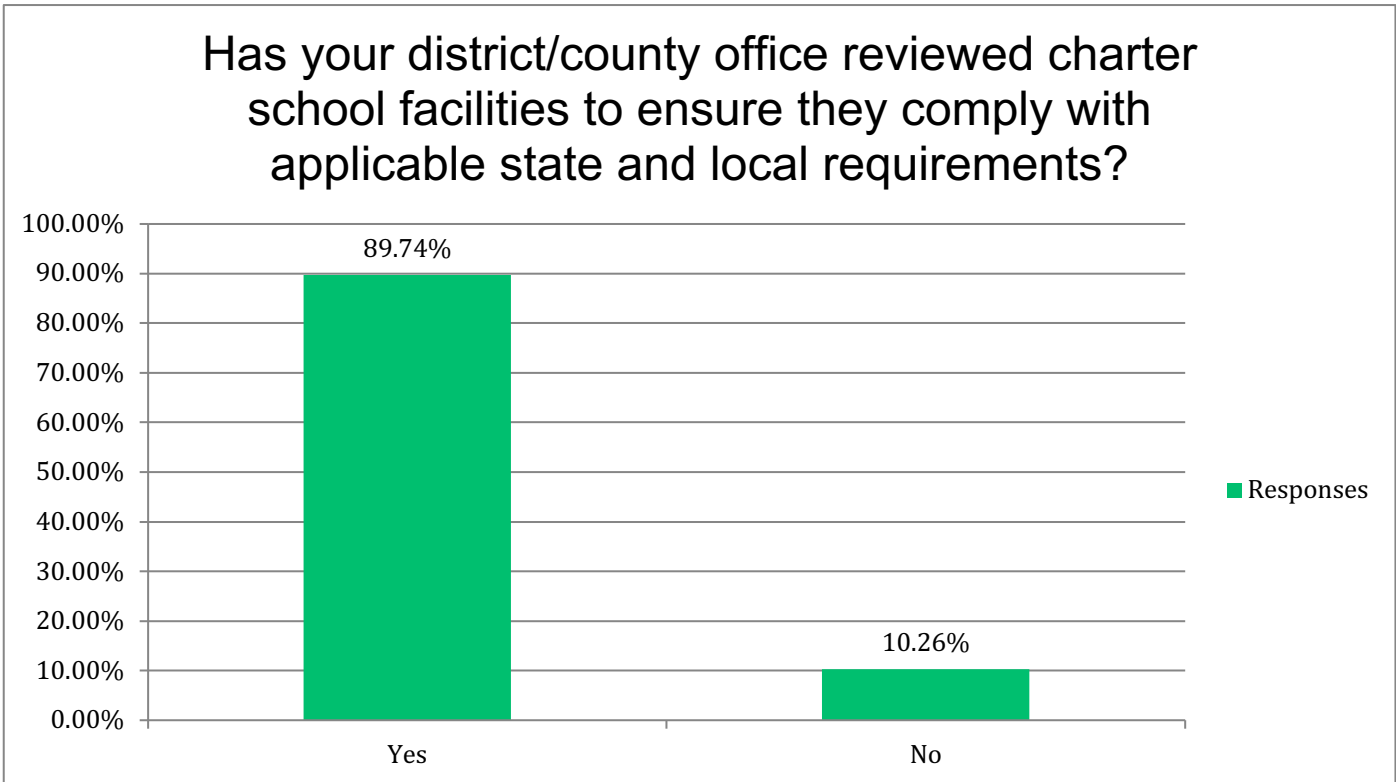
Do you have an internal process when a charter school wants to expand or replicate?



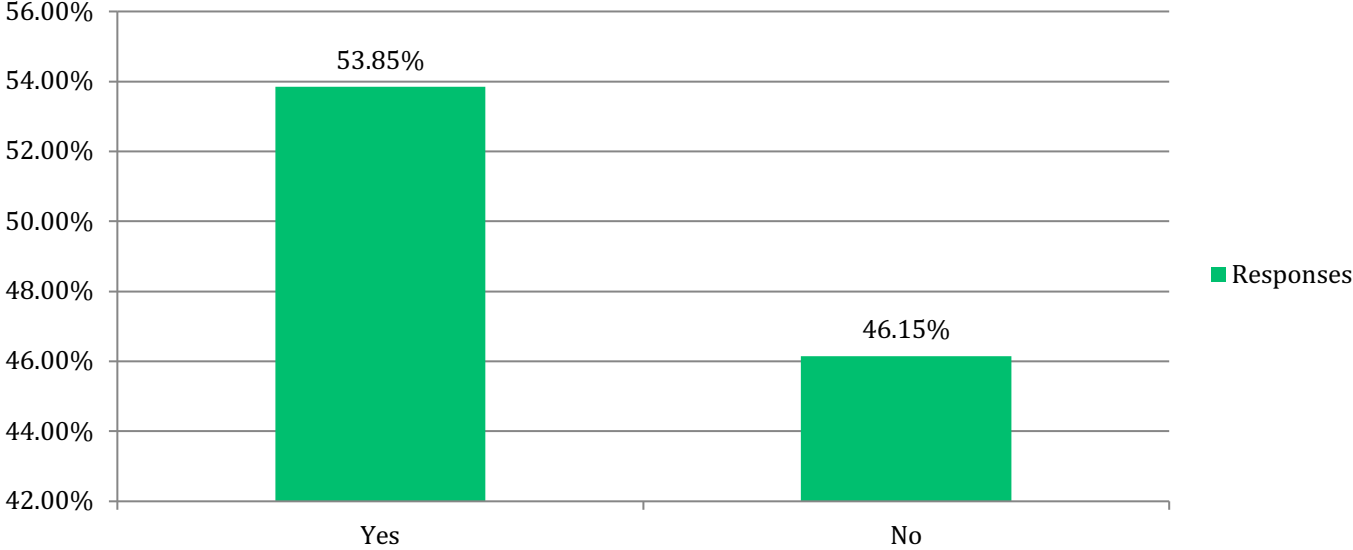
Have you had one or more charter schools expand or replicate in your district?



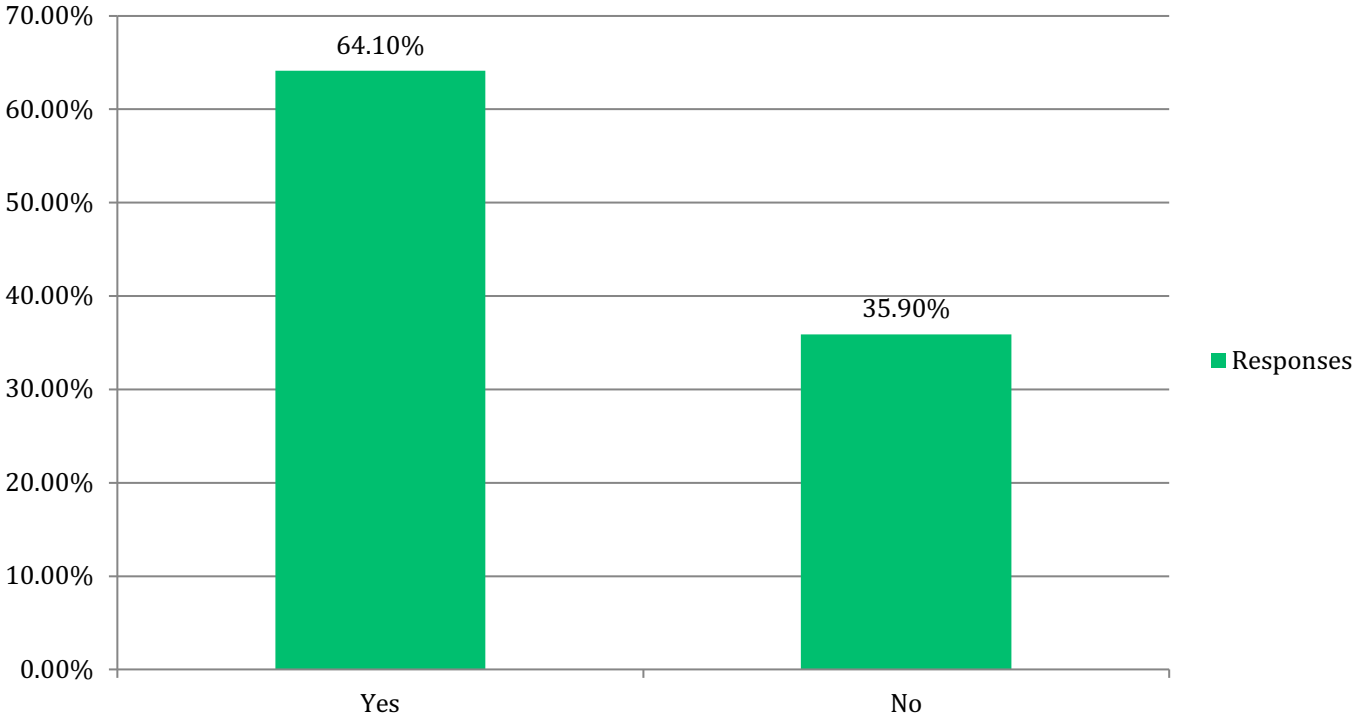
When conducting due diligence on a charter school operator with a proposed expansion or replication of an existing charter school(s), how much do you value the following information on a scale from 1-5, with 1 being no value and 5 being highly valuable?	Ranking (top 5)
1. Academic performance of existing schools	1
2. Clarity and soundness of governance scheme	2
3. Ability of board to oversee the school operator	3
4. Experience of the operator with charter school in the state	4
5. Demographics of exiting schools	5
6. Information from others who have served as an authorizer for a petition submitted to you	6
7. Results of previous expansions	7
8. Experience of the operator with charter schools in other states	8



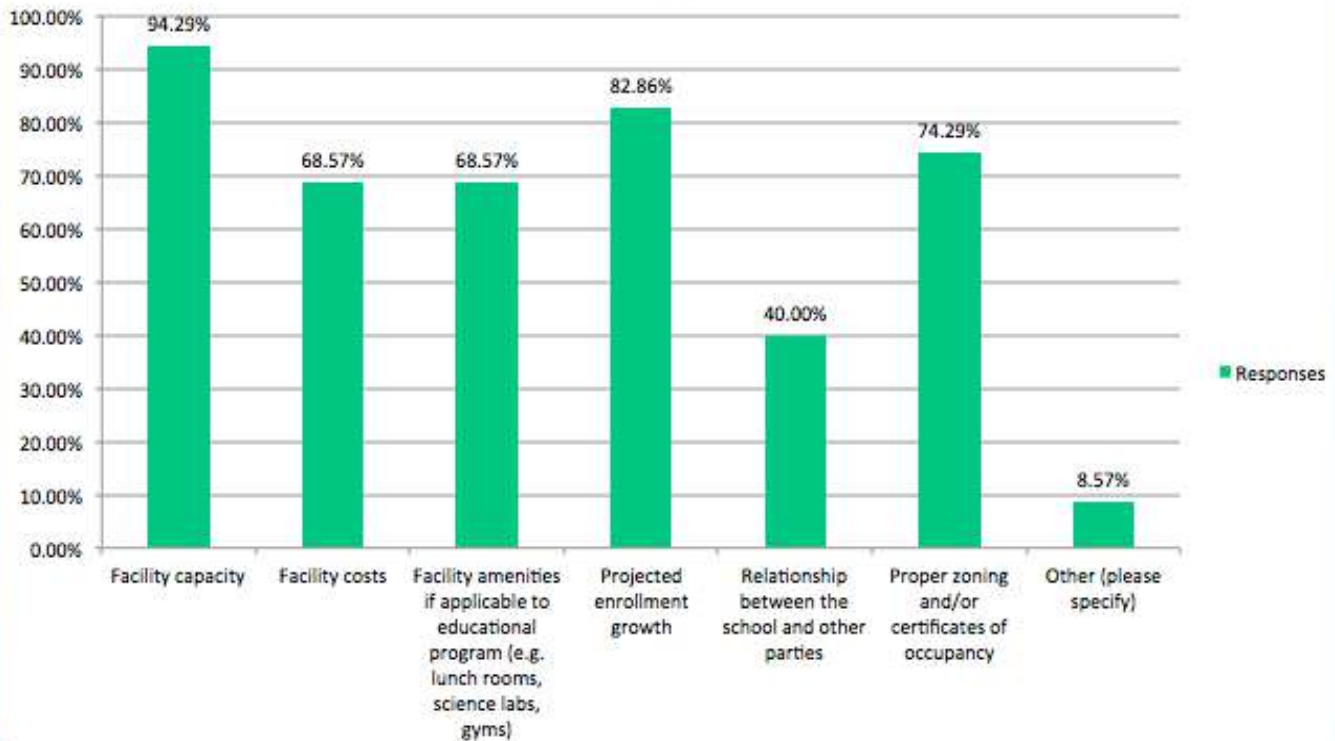
Does your district approve major changes to charter school facilities?



Does your district use the FIT (Facility Inspection Tool) document to help inspect facilities?



When evaluating existing or proposed facility changes, which issues does your district/county office consider? Check all that apply.



Do you have anything else you would like to share that may assist us to better serve your charter authorizing needs?

Note - the answers for this response reflect for my observations of the local district authorization practices (which our school is NOT under at this time). Some questions have been skipped when an accurate response can not be provided

Questions concerning board governance would be helpful in eliciting how to adequately provide oversight in this area and hold charter boards accountable for the academic and financial performance of their schools

Need guidance on when an authorizer discovers areas of need for a charter. How does an authorizer report struggles?

Please present us with research and a detailed plan to challenging Charter law as being a Civil Rights violation