

## Extending Charter Impact: A Series

# FAQs for School and Network Leaders on Extending Charter Impact

School/network leaders don't often have time to step out of the day-to-day to think longer term about their work. Especially now – with the scramble to adjust to distance learning, the uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the anticipation of potential revenue cuts – many leaders are pressing pause on their plans for growth. At the same time, even for expansion that is three or five years down the line, charter school/network leaders will benefit from proactive and intentional planning that starts now. Starting early will help them serve additional students while avoiding common pitfalls.

### Questions to ask when thinking about expanding your school/network to serve more young people

How is your school/network performing against its goals? How is it performing compared to other schools that serve your community?

Does your school's/network's policy environment currently enable growth?

What are the needs or gaps in the community you are serving or want to serve?

What is the demand for a school/network like yours from families?

What is your school model? What are the core competencies that enable that model?

What is our school's/network's capacity to support additional growth?

### Why this matters

Any discussion of expansion or replication should be grounded in an understanding of current performance of the school/network. The board of the school/network (in consultation with its authorizer) needs to decide whether current performance is strong enough to merit conversation about expansion or replication.

Any charter school/network seeking the authority to expand beyond its current student body must be authorized to increase enrollment or open new schools. Each authorizer has different requirements about when growth is possible. In some cases, authorizers may have specific performance requirements for charter school growth, or they may not be willing to entertain charter school growth; in others, growth may be constrained by state law.

Understanding what opportunities exist in the landscape – be it expanding the campus, opening a new campus down the street from an existing campus, or considering growth within a new region – will help school/network leaders determine whether their model can thrive and/or what modifications might be necessary. Talking to stakeholders is critical.

A school/network may have a compelling vision and reason to add new campuses but may be stymied by local policies that preclude expansion, an oversaturation of schools in a particular neighborhood, or an oversaturation of a particular model (like STEAM or single-gender programming).

Getting clear on the school's/network's value proposition – be it unique features of its instructional model, innovative professional development practices, or authentic engagement of the community – helps leaders define the nonnegotiables that should guide any expansion.

Schools/networks have many competing priorities. The board and leadership team should consider the trade-offs and risks associated with spending their capacity on expansion versus other school/network priorities.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION** [bit.ly/ExtendingCharterImpact](https://bit.ly/ExtendingCharterImpact)

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