



Discovering Your Charter School's Unique Data Story: A Planning Workbook for School Leaders

Overview: The exercises in this workbook are intended to help Maryland's charter school leaders identify their school's potential unique story in order to 1) **start gathering the right data** to tell that story, and 2) **analyze existing data** with an eye towards uncovering trends that help to distinguish them from other schools. While this workbook was developed explicitly as part of the Maryland Alliance's Charter Renewal series, school leadership teams can also use it outside of the charter renewal process to help identify how data can tell a compelling story about their school to other stakeholders, such as families, prospective staff, donors, and Board members.

Note that a 20-minute long webinar complements this workbook and can be found [here](#). The webinar provides a more detailed overview of charter school storytelling along with some examples, and we recommend you start there before diving into the workbook. The webinar is the first in a series of three; the next two webinars get into the details of how to analyze and present your data using the Maryland Report Card.

How to Use: We recommend that a school's leadership team (at minimum, the Executive Director/CEO, Principal, and Chief Academic Officer or equivalent) take about an hour to walk through this document together and fill out as much information as possible. The staff member responsible for data management and analysis can also be present; that person can provide useful insight into which data is currently available, and any considerations for gathering proposed new data. To create your own editable copy of this Google doc workbook, go to File → Make a Copy. You can also download it as a Word document by going to File → Download.

This workbook is broken out into four sections. Section 1 helps to articulate the information your authorizer will expect to see as part of granting a renewal. Section 2 supports you in identifying the unique aspects of your school. Section 3 highlights where there are gaps between what the authorizer will ask and what you will want to tell them, so that you can start to work on a strategy for filling those gaps. Section 4 is for reflection and next steps.

What You'll Need: Aside from an hour of uninterrupted time (which can be very challenging to find in a school!), please gather:

- 1) your charter application,
- 2) your charter agreement with the authorizer listing your most current goals,
- 3) if applicable, the renewal rubric from your authorizer,
- 4) your school's most recent [Maryland Report Card](#),
- 5) your most recent annual report, if you created one, and
- 6) any relevant materials from your Board if it changed or is planning to change your school's goals in any way.

Section 1. Understanding Your Authorizer’s Expectations & Timeline <20 mins>

First, let’s work to ensure the leadership team understands what the authorizer will expect to see as part of the renewal process, and that you have a shared understanding about how likely you are to achieve those goals, how much you can move the needle on them between now and the renewal decision, and where the data on them lives within your organization.

In short, this section asks: What did you promise to do? And where do you stand on those promises?

1. In what year is your charter up for renewal? _____
2. How many years of data will your authorizer expect to see as part of the renewal decision? _____

Fill out the table on the next page as you answer questions 3-5.

3. What are your charter goals according to your charter agreement with the authorizer? How are they calculated or measured? Fill in the first 3 columns of the table on the next page with this information.

Not sure? Use the box below to note down what you will do to find out - whom will you ask? What documents will you review? When?

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4. How are you doing on these goals currently (or, how did you do on them over the last few years)? How likely are you to achieve these goals as part of the renewal process? On which metrics can you realistically “move the needle” prior to renewal? Fill in the last 4 columns of the table with this information.

Not sure? Use the box below to note down what you will do to find out.

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5. Are there other accountability targets you have outside of your charter goals? If so, list them in the table as additional rows, and answer the same questions.

Not sure? Use the box below to note down what you will do to find out.

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Table 1. Summary of Goals & Projected Likelihood of Meeting Them

Feel free to delete the example row, and add more rows as needed.

Goal or Metric	Target	Calculation Methodology	Current Value	Projected Value at Renewal	Probability of Value Changing Before Renewal?	Likely to Meet Goal?
<i>Example: Average re-enrollment over last three years</i>	90%	<i># eligible enrolled students on October 1 / # eligible enrolled students on October 1 last year. Exclude students who are graduating or who have moved out of the county in denominator. Average re-enrollment over last three years.</i>	<i>2019: 90% 2020: 95% 2021: 87% 2022: ???</i>	<i>2022: 87% Average of 3 years: 89.6%</i>	<i>Average. 2 of the 3 years already locked in, but can still impact re-enrollment for next year. Need at least 87% to meet standard, which feels achievable given our history.</i>	Yes

Review the table above. If you left many projections blank and are not sure how likely you are to meet goals, your next step after this meeting will be to nail down where to find that information.

Section 2. Identifying Your Unique Data Story <15 mins>

Now, we'll look at the unique elements of your school that may not be fully captured by the goals the authorizer is looking for.

This section asks: *What's unique about our school? How well does the existing accountability framework capture those unique aspects?*

6. List the 2-3 things that your school does better than other schools. (Quick, instinctual responses are fine - no need for data, yet.)

1. 2. 3.

7. What are the 2-3 top reasons why families choose your school? (Quick, instinctual responses are fine - no need for data, yet.)

1. 2. 3.

8. Compared to other schools, what are the unique aspects of your:

a) Programming?	
b) Student population?	
c) Teachers & staff?	
d) Overall place in the community?	

9. Now return to Table 1 of goals you are expected to meet (tip: keep it side-by-side with this page). Highlight in **red** which of your responses to questions 6-8 cannot be measured by the existing goals at all. Highlight in **yellow** responses to questions 6-8 that can only partially be captured by the existing goals.

Section 3. Using Data to Tell Your Unique Story <25 mins>

Finally, let's create a plan for using data to fully tell your unique story.

This section asks: *How will we convey what's unique about our school?*

10. For each response in **red** or in **yellow** on the previous page - a unique aspect of your school that isn't fully captured by existing goals - determine the best way to convey that unique aspect. Use the table below to organize your responses. Enter each aspect into the first column; then, articulate which data can demonstrate your success in that area.

Table 2. Conveying the Unique Elements of Our School

Feel free to delete the example row, and add more rows as needed.

Unique Element	Data needed to convey success	Does this data already exist, or do we need to start gathering it?	Timeline for gathering data or performing custom analysis
<i>Example: our mission is to serve African American girls, and African American girls are 96% of our student population</i>	<i>All academic achievement and school climate metrics, when compared to other schools, should only be compared to the African American girl sub-group within those schools when possible</i>	<i>Yes for our school, in the SIS; need to use public data sources to analyze comparison data (check out EdOps's second webinar on how to do this!)</i>	<i>Anytime before renewal</i>

Section 4. Wrap-Up and Next Steps <5 mins>

Glance over the work you've already done and quickly answer the questions below to ensure you end the meeting with actionable next steps. You can also use this page to develop an agenda for your next meeting on telling your unique data story (yes, we buried the lead - it will take more than an hour, all told, to discover and convey your story with appropriate data, but it's time well spent!).

This section asks: ***What should we do now?***

1. Review Section 1. Which information do we need to find out ASAP? Who will take the lead on finding it out? What do they need from this group right now to be successful?

2. Review Section 2. Are there other people who would have insight into what makes your school unique? Think broadly - what would your students (current *and* graduated), families, Board members, and community partners say? Will you consult them to get their take? When and how?

3. Review Section 3. What data will we need that we do not currently collect? What is the first step to starting to gather that data, and who in this group is responsible for ensuring that first step is taken? When will they do it? (Note: there are two more webinars in this series - *Using Longitudinal Assessment Data to Tell Your Story*, and *Using the Maryland Report Card to Tell Your Story*; they can be a good resource.)

4. When will we have our next meeting to talk about our school's unique data story? Who else (if anyone) should attend it?