

Key Charter School Definitions

Charter Operator: An entity responsible for managing and operating at least one charter school.

Charter Management Organization (CMO): A nonprofit organization that manages and operates multiple charter schools.

Credit Enhancement (CE): Grantees in CSP's Credit Enhancement for Charter School Facilities program are organizations that may support charter schools obtain loans, bonds, or facilities leases.

State Education Agency (SEA): Often refers to a state's board of education or other public agency responsible for overseeing public schools.

Local Education Agency (LEA): A government authority authorized to oversee public elementary and secondary schools in a local area – most often a school district or school board. Individual charter schools, charter operators, CMOs, and charter authorizers may function as their own LEAs, or take on similar responsibilities. For example, CMOs generally manage the facilities of individual schools and charter authorizers may oversee compliance with federal laws.

Charter school authorizer: An authorized public chartering agency responsible for reviewing and approving or rejecting charter applications and monitoring charter school performance (generally considering performance related to both academic and fiscal/organizational metrics as well as compliance with relevant laws). State law determines the types and number of organizations permitted to act as charter school authorizers. For example, one state law may allow public school districts, state educational agencies (SEAs), or independent organizations such as statewide nongovernmental organizations or universities to function as charter authorizers.