

Leadership Summit

October 10, 2025

The Ritz-Carlton, Denver

forward→ 2025



PRESENTED BY



COLORADO LEAGUE of
CHARTER SCHOOLS

Thank You to Our Room Sponsor



CHANGING THE SPECIAL EDUCATION LANDSCAPE

Readiness Factors for Charter Special
Education Administration Units



Tina Vidovich, Director of Exceptional
Student Services, Minga Education
Group

Kaci Coats, Executive Director,
Collaborative for Exceptional Education



Our Beliefs & Commitments



We believe that strong relationships between charter schools, special education AUs, & authorizers leads to increased quality services for students with disabilities.

After a combined 56 years working in education, we also believe that innovation and autonomy can provide a more responsive, individualized environment in which students with disabilities can flourish.



Session Outcomes

- > Understand the current context & opportunities from SPED AU Legislation**
- > Understand the legal and financial obligations of Administrative Units**
- > Assess organization's readiness factors related to forming an new AU**



WELCOME

**Let's find out who is
in the room with us
today!**

- Special education teachers and leaders
- School leaders
- Finance & Operations roles
- Board members
- Authorizer/District representatives

**Share with a neighbor why you
choose to attend the session.**



Context of Recent Legislation

Key Provisions of the Law- CRS§ 22-30.5-105.3



Creation of Charter School Collaboratives

Charter schools may form a collaborative to share resources and services.

These collaboratives are recognized as public entities.

Administrative Unit Status

To qualify, they must meet the same criteria as school districts or Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), including:

- Capacity to provide special education services.
- Compliance with ECEA & IDEA
- Demonstrated governance and operational structures.

Rulemaking and Oversight

The State Board of Education sets minimum standards for AUs.

CDE has developed rules to guide the application and approval process for charter networks seeking AU status.

May 2025 ECEA Rule Changes

Purpose of the Changes

- Strengthen the application and approval process for forming or reorganizing Administrative Units (AUs). Ensure children with disabilities are served by AUs that meet all state and federal requirements.

What's New?

- Revised criteria for AU formation to emphasize capacity and compliance.
- Streamlined approval process for reorganizing existing AUs.
- Focus on ensuring educational services for students with disabilities are uninterrupted and legally compliant.

Why It Matters?

- Promotes accountability and readiness among AUs.
- Aligns with federal IDEA mandates and state-level expectations.
- Protects the rights and educational access of exceptional children across Colorado

Norming on Terms

SPED Administrative Unit

Designated to oversee and deliver special education services and ensure compliance

Local Education Agency

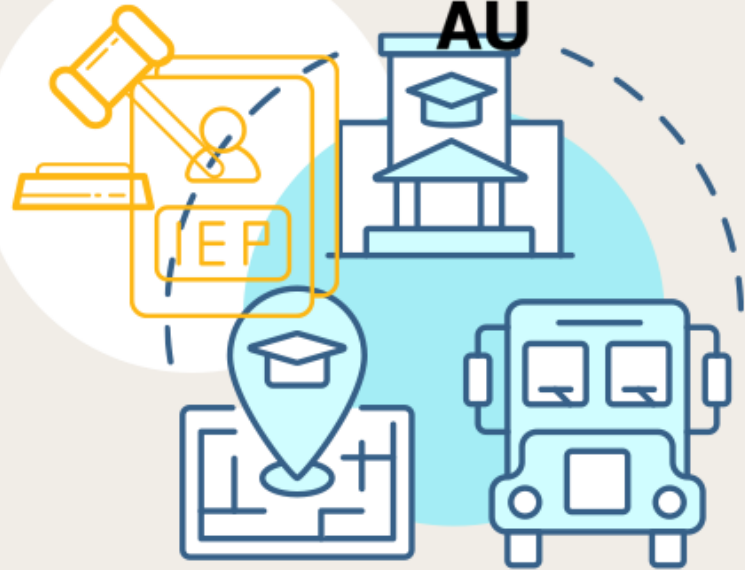
Legally responsible for ensuring students receive a free appropriate public education under IDEA.

Authorizing Unit

District or CSI that approves, monitors, and holds charter schools accountable to their contracts.

Authorizer with SPED

AU



Authorizer



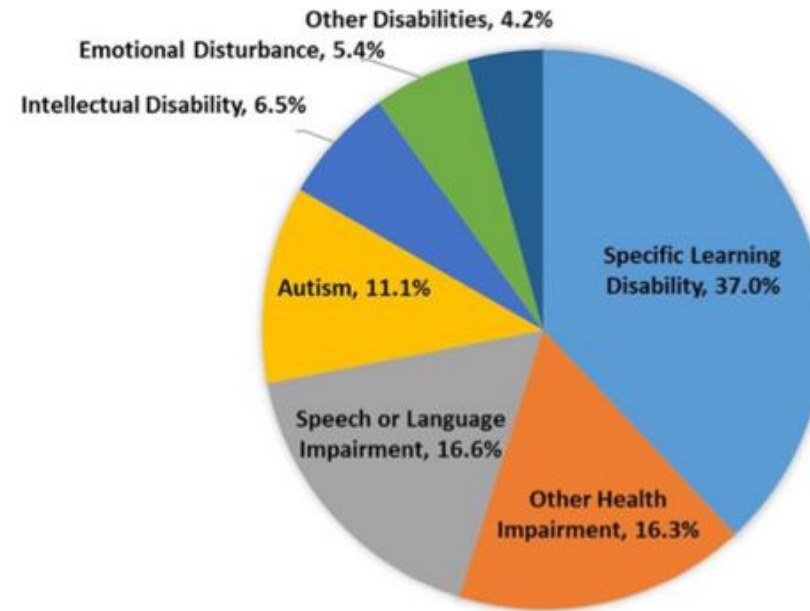
SPED

AU



Special Education Administration Units Are Responsible for the Providing for the **FULL CONTINUUM**

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: CHILD COUNT
BASED ON 50 STATES ONLY IN 2019-20



Least Restrictive ← → Most Restrictive



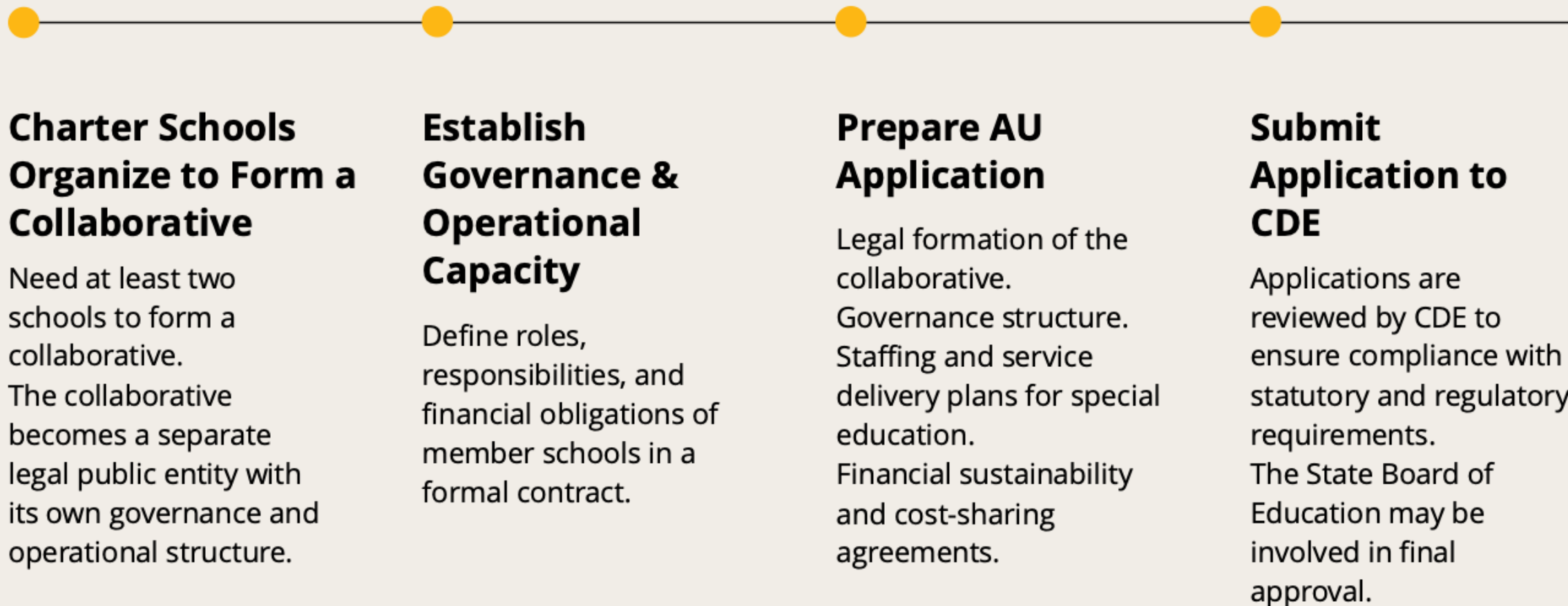
Legal Responsibilities of Administrative Units

- **Compliance with IDEA & ECEA:** AUs must meet all legal standards outlined in federal and state regulations, including Rule 3.01.
- **Geographic & Size Requirements:** AUs must be of sufficient size and geographic makeup to fulfill legal obligations effectively.
- **Charter School Inclusion:** Every charter school must be part of an AU, which may be an alternative AU.
- **Application Timelines:** Legal deadlines for notification (June 1) and application submission (August 1) must be strictly followed.
- **Dispute Resolution:** Mediation is now formally recognized as a method to resolve disputes during the application process.

Financial Responsibilities of Administrative Units

- **Sustainable Funding Model:** AUs must demonstrate financial capacity to meet all federal and state special education requirements.
- **Continuity of Services:** Reorganized or new AUs must ensure uninterrupted special education services for all students during transitions.
- **Budget Planning:** Applications must include detailed financial plans showing how services will be maintained or improved.
- **Resource Allocation:** AUs must allocate sufficient resources to support staffing, training, and compliance monitoring.
- **Third-Party Review:** Financial viability is assessed through a third-party report submitted with the application.

Application Timeline





QUESTIONS



Opportunities This New Legislation Creates

Operational Control

Financial Independence

Increase in Quality Control

Opportunity to Innovate

This autonomy creates space for innovation, allowing schools to align resources, staffing, and instructional practices to ensure higher-quality, more equitable services for students with disabilities.





Tip of the Spear

Charter schools are the tip of the spear—leading a movement toward greater autonomy, accountability, and innovation in serving students with disabilities. By building high-quality charter administrative units, we can demonstrate what's possible: systems that are nimble, student-centered, and effective.



Discussion

Given this information, join a group of people with similar roles and answer the following questions together:

- Share with the group what you have learned so far and what you are now thinking about in relation to charter AUs.
- What excites you about the opportunities the AU legislation provides?
- What questions do you still have?



ACCESS TO TOOLKIT



Readiness Domains

Size & Scale

Geographic Makeup

Staffing & Expertise

Finance & Data Systems

Authorizer Relationship

Instructional Systems

Finance & Operational Structure

Leadership Capacity & Mindset

Stakeholder Engagement





Discussion

After reviewing the readiness indicators

- In which domains does your chart demonstrate that the AU option might work for you? How do you know?
- What domains at your charter need to be further developed? What support might you need?
- Who else from your organization needs to be in this conversation?
- What else needs consideration?



Pilot Group Opportunity



> Organizing Interested Schools

> Professional development & resource toolkit

> Consulting services offered for completing application process

**INTERESTED IN
LEARNING MORE?**





Call to Action

The future of special education in the charter movement starts with us. By stepping forward to design and lead high-quality charter Administrative Units, we can prove that autonomy and excellence go hand in hand.

Let's be the tip of the spear—showing what's possible when innovation, equity, and accountability unite to serve every student well.





THANK YOU!

For more information, contact....

Tina Vidovich

tvidovich@mingaeducationgroup.org

Kaci Coats

coatsk@exceptionalcollaborative.org





Help us to Improve.

Your feedback is appreciated. Please use the QR code at right to tell us how we did.



COLORADO LEAGUE *of*
CHARTER SCHOOLS

www.coloradoleague.org

