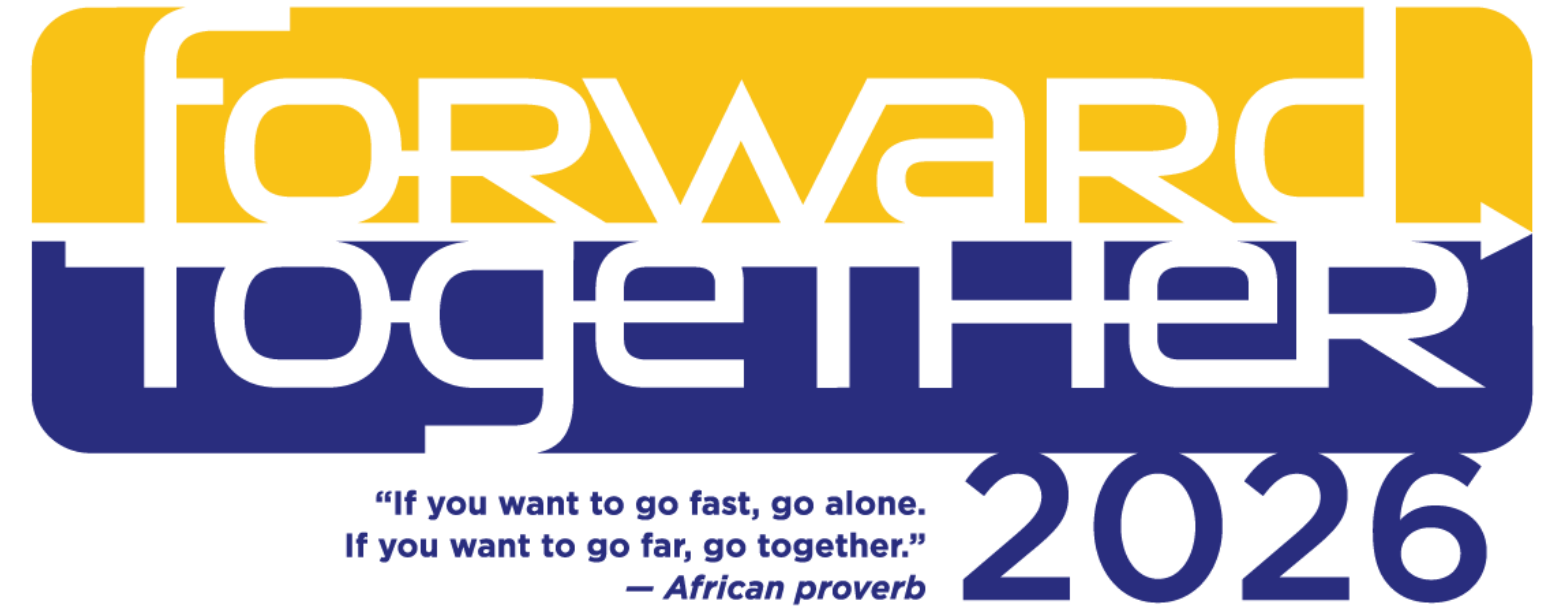




# Colorado Charter Schools Annual Conference

February 25-27, 2026  
Denver Marriott Tech Center



"If you want to go fast, go alone.  
If you want to go far, go together."  
— African proverb



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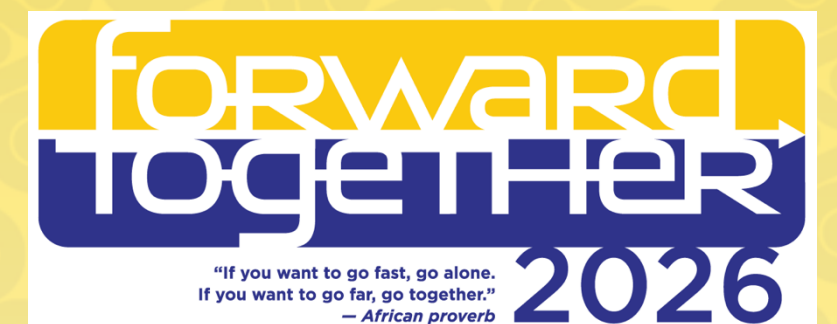


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# (82) Supporting School Boards in Their Authorizing Role

**Mackenzie Khan, Executive Director**  
**CACSA**

Longs Peak  
February 27, 2026 | 8:30-9:30AM  
Authorizers



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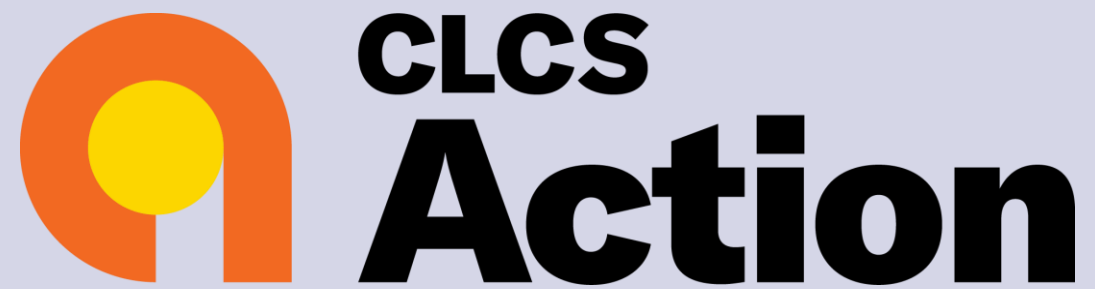




We make it our priority to advocate for high-quality public charter schools across Colorado.



Be a part of the action.



# Supporting School Boards in Their Authorizing Role

*What Authorizers Need to Know*



Presented by

**Dr. Mackenzie Khan**

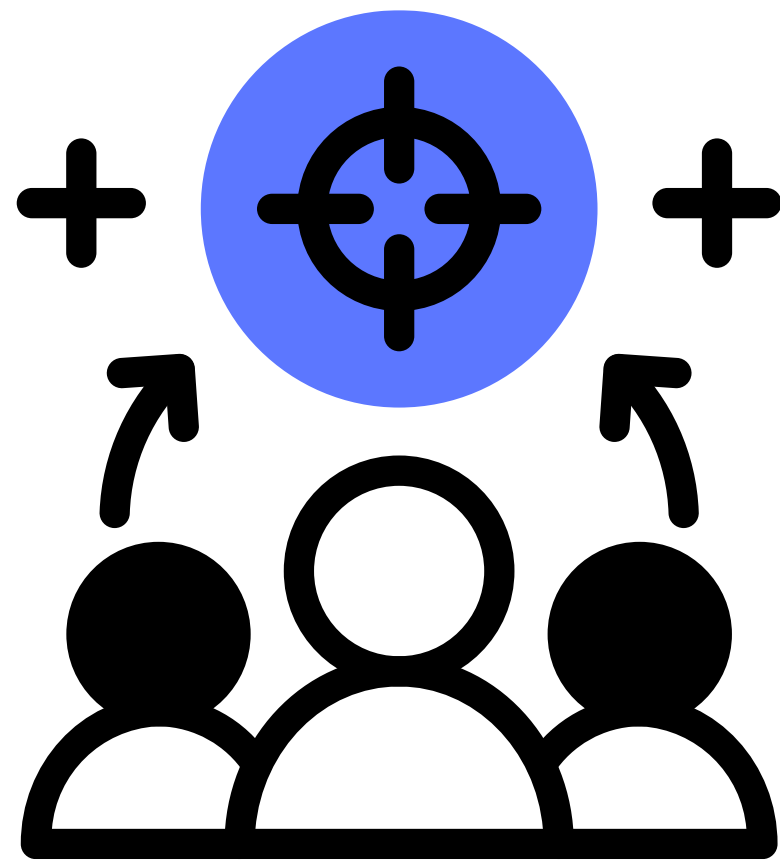
[www.coauthorizers.org](http://www.coauthorizers.org)



**cacsa**

Colorado Association of  
Charter School Authorizers

# Session Purpose



School boards serve as the legal authorizers for charter schools in most Colorado districts, yet few receive targeted preparation for this role. This session introduces practical strategies that authorizing staff and district leaders can use to support boards in understanding their responsibilities, making sound decisions, and governing effectively across the charter school lifecycle.

# CACSA About Us



## Who We Are

CACSA is Colorado's statewide nonprofit supporting high-quality charter school authorizing. We help authorizers strengthen their systems, adopt best practices, and align oversight with Colorado's policies and culture of local control. Our members include authorizing professionals, Superintendents, and school board members from school districts in Colorado as well as the Colorado Charter School Institute.

## What We Do



Authorizer  
Training & PD



Model Tools &  
Resources



Statewide  
Authorizer  
Network



Technical  
Assistance



**“Our school district is now in an excellent position thanks to the guidance, service, and support of CACSA.”**

*-Boulder Valley School District*

## What CACSA Offers School Districts

Tools - Training - Networks - Support

**“I highly recommend CACSA to any district or organization seeking a knowledgeable, principled, and professional partner in charter school authorizing. They are an exceptional resource in a complex and high-stakes space.”**

*-Mesa County Valley School District 51*

## Authorizer Support Services



### Application & Approval

Expert external reviewers for charter applications, capacity interviews, and quality evaluations that support clear, evidence-based board decisions.



### Monitoring & Oversight

Site visit tools, annual performance reviews, and actionable data analysis to support schools throughout the charter term.



### Contracting & Performance Frameworks

Clear, compliant contracts and performance metrics that define academic, financial, and operational expectations from the start.



### Renewal, Intervention & Closure

Structured processes for renewal decisions, intervention planning, and orderly, student-centered closure when necessary.

## How to Engage with CACSA



**Become a CACSA Member**



**Request district-specific support**



**Join monthly meetings**



**Invite CACSA to train your board**



**Access statewide tools + templates**



**Scan to connect with CACSA or request district support.**

## Contact

**Mackenzie Khan, Ed.D.**

Executive Director

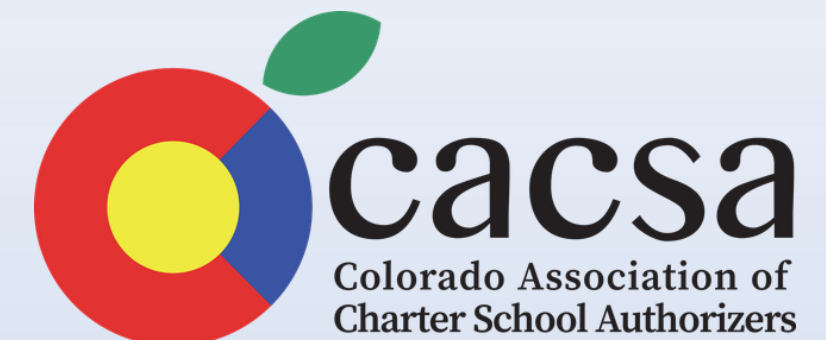
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Project Coordinator

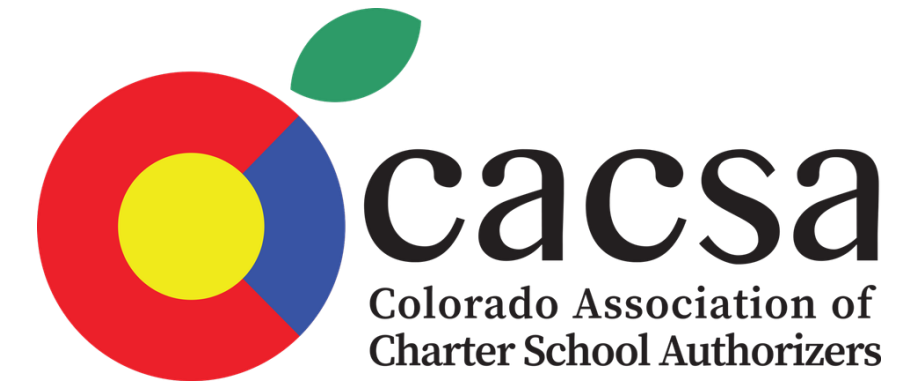
vanessa.glenn@coauthorizers.org

[coauthorizers.org](https://coauthorizers.org)



# Discussion:

## Reflecting on Board Authorizing in Your District



1. How clearly defined are board vs staff roles in charter authorizing in your district?
2. What aspects of authorizing do board members seem least confident about?
3. Where do boards struggle most in lifecycle decisions (applications, renewal, oversight)?
4. How consistent are charter decisions across time and board membership changes?
5. What training or orientation do new board members currently receive about authorizing?

# Why Board Capacity in Authorizing Matters



**School board decisions determine whether charter schools open, continue, or close. These are high-stakes governance decisions affecting students, communities, and public resources.**

Strong board authorizing ensures:

- Charter schools meet academic, financial, and organizational standards
- Decisions withstand appeals and legal scrutiny
- Students and taxpayers are protected through accountability
- Innovation and choice are supported responsibly
- District–charter relationships remain stable and transparent

Boards ultimately carry the legal authority for approval, contracting, renewal, and closure decisions. Staff conduct analysis and oversight, but boards determine outcomes.



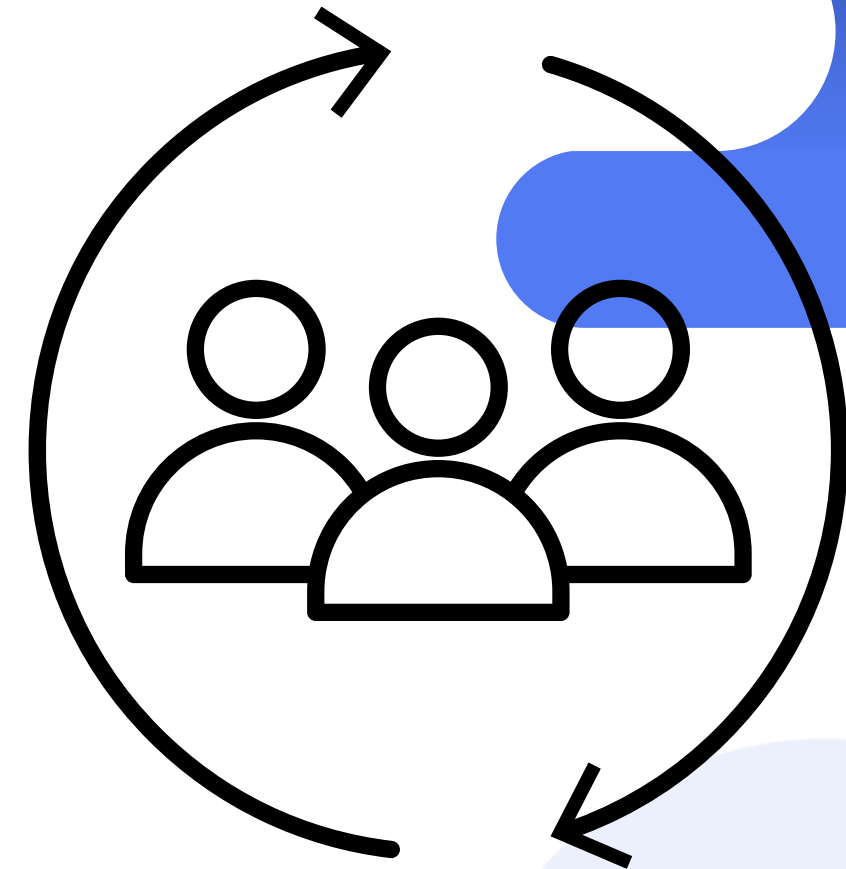
# The Challenge:

## Boards Often Lack Authorizing Preparation

CACSA's statewide work with districts shows a consistent pattern:

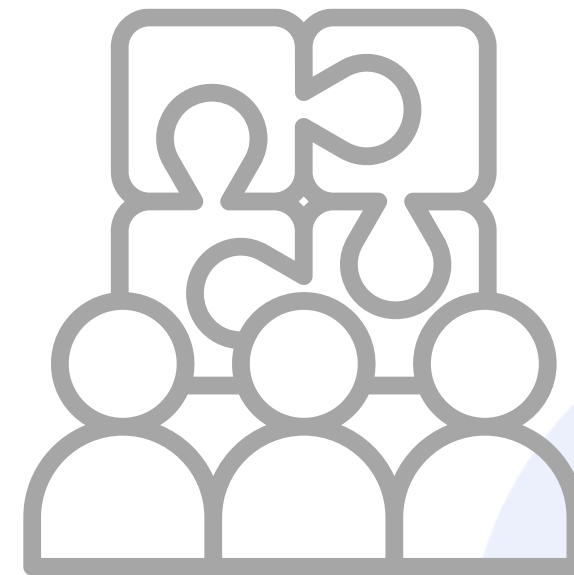
- Board members often receive little training on charter law or authorizing standards
- Many members are new to public education governance or charter policy
- Authorizing decisions require specialized knowledge distinct from general school governance
- Turnover leads to inconsistent understanding across boards

The CACSA governing board pilot was designed specifically to address this gap: **to strengthen clarity of board roles, improve decision-making, and build consistency statewide.**



# Common Governance Challenges Observed Across Districts

- Unclear distinction between governance and management
- Inconsistent understanding of renewal standards
- Political or anecdotal decision-making
- Overreach into operational oversight
- Unclear contract expectations
- Misunderstanding of autonomy



# Core Principle:

## Authorizing Is a Board Governance Function



**Charter authorizing is not simply a programmatic or operational task. It is a governance responsibility exercised through board authority.**

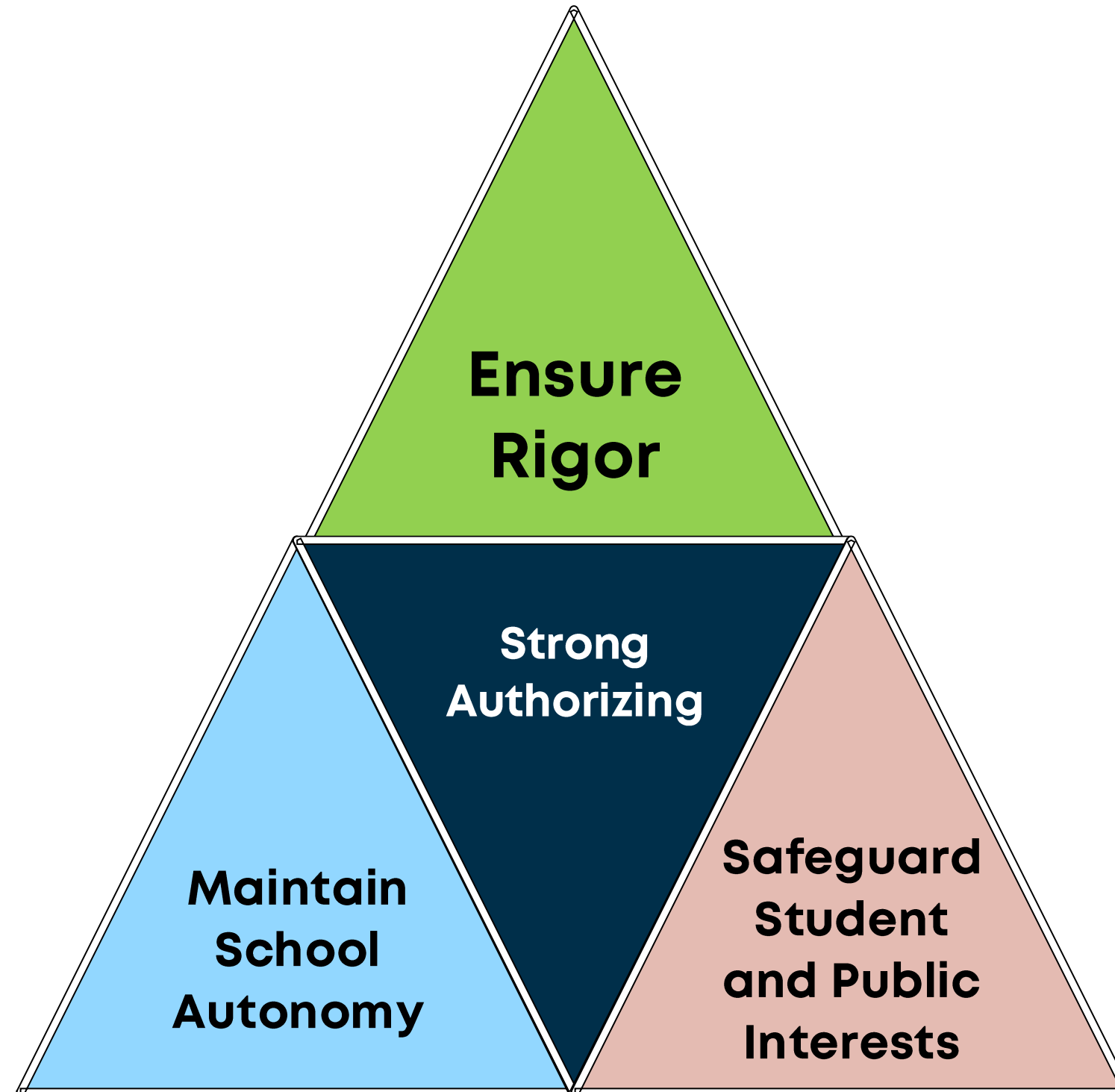
### DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

1. Develop and approve charter policies
2. Convene meetings for charter applicants
3. Vote on charter proposals
4. Approve charter contracts
5. Receive and review annual reports
6. Follow renewal process
7. Vote on some required interventions
8. Vote on renewals
9. Vote on renewed contracts
10. Vote on revocations
11. Vote to defend against any appeals

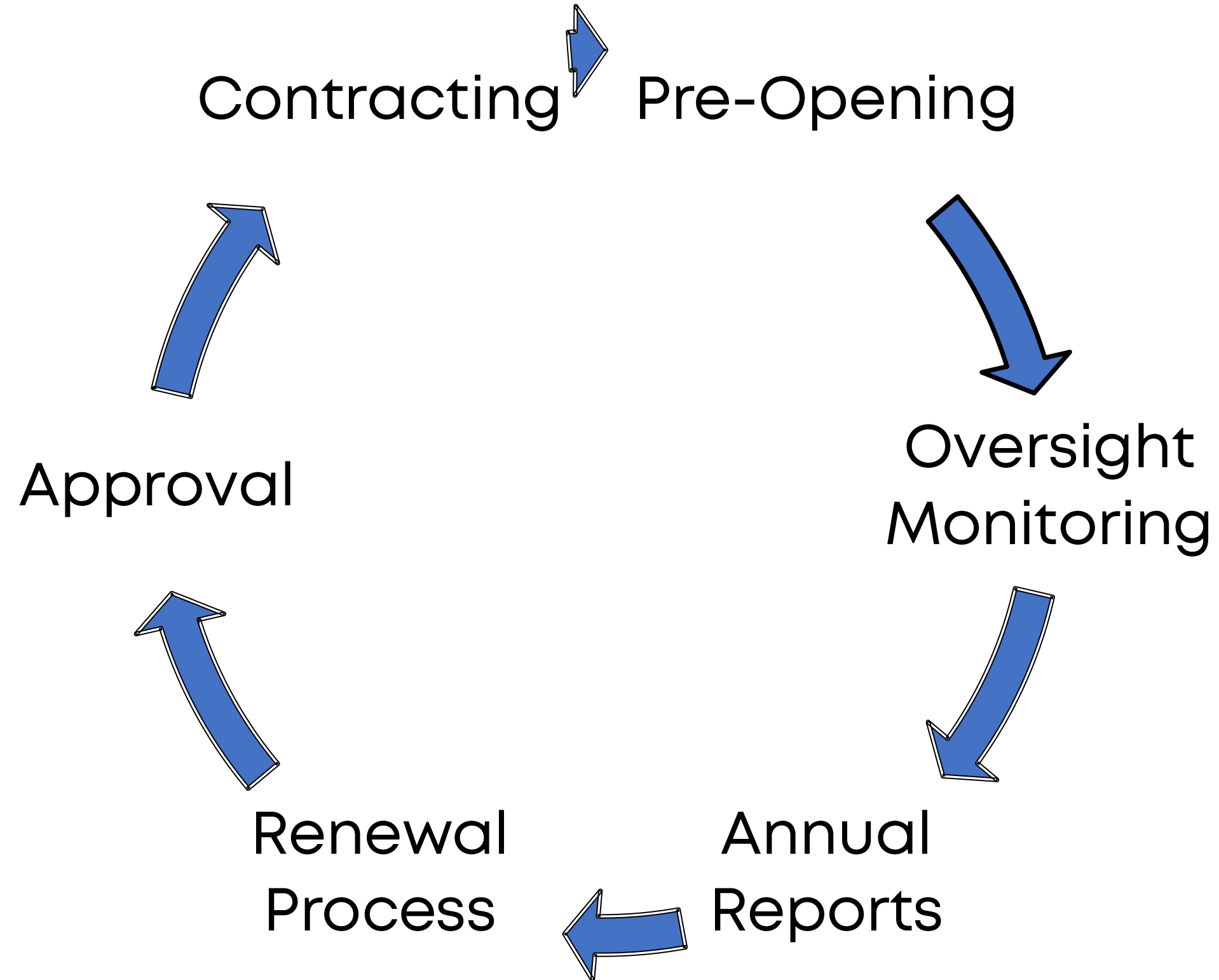
### DISTRICT STAFF

1. Develop proposals for charter policies
2. Develop and implement application review
3. Negotiate charter contracts
4. Oversee school opening
5. Oversight and monitoring
6. Provide services as per charter contract and other agreements
7. Create annual report on each school
8. Develop and implement renewal process
9. Take necessary actions supported by contract and law (may require Board vote)
10. Recommend non-renewal or revocation to Board when necessary
11. Oversee school closure and follow-up activity

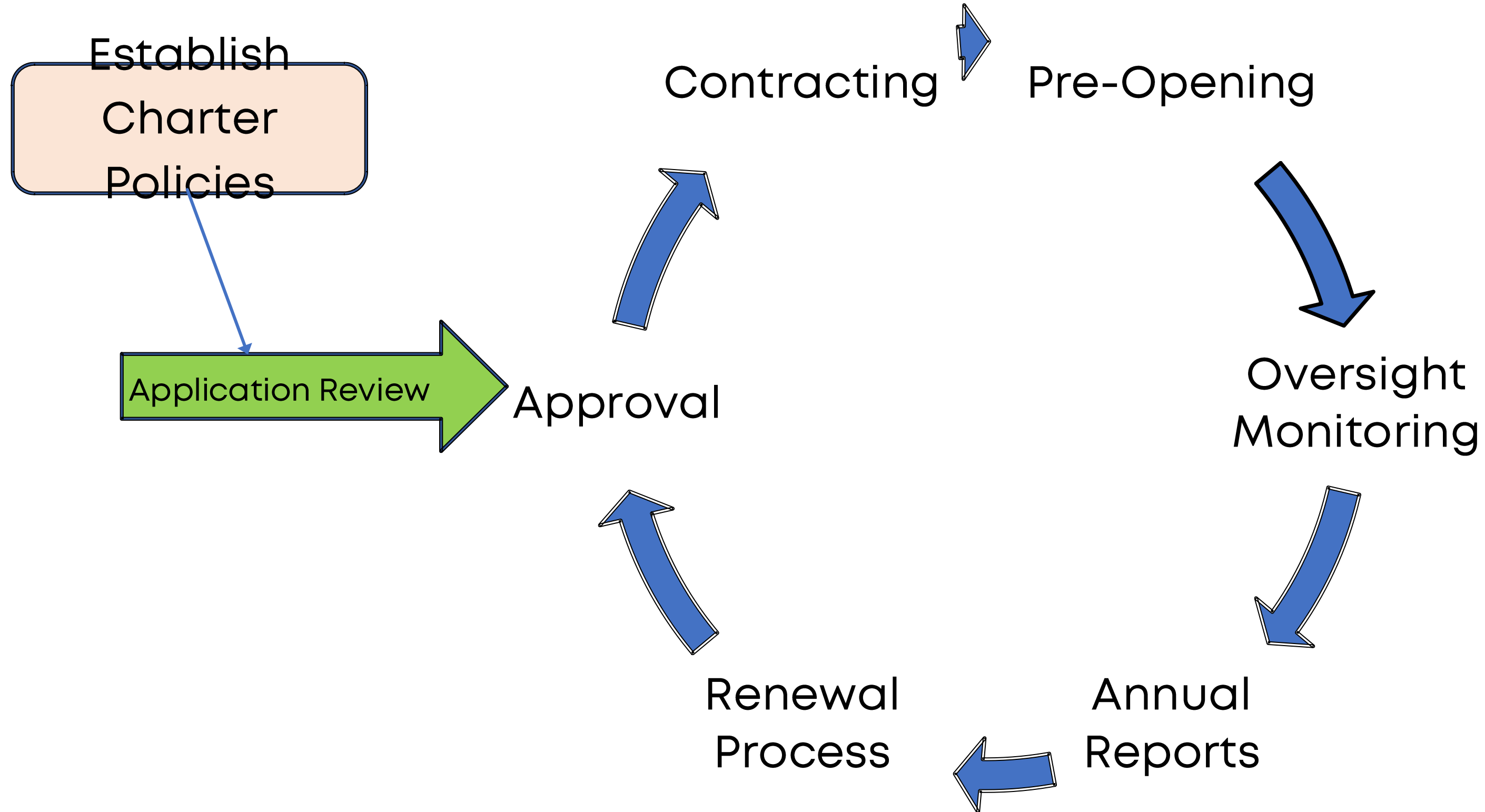
# Three Principles of Quality Authorizing



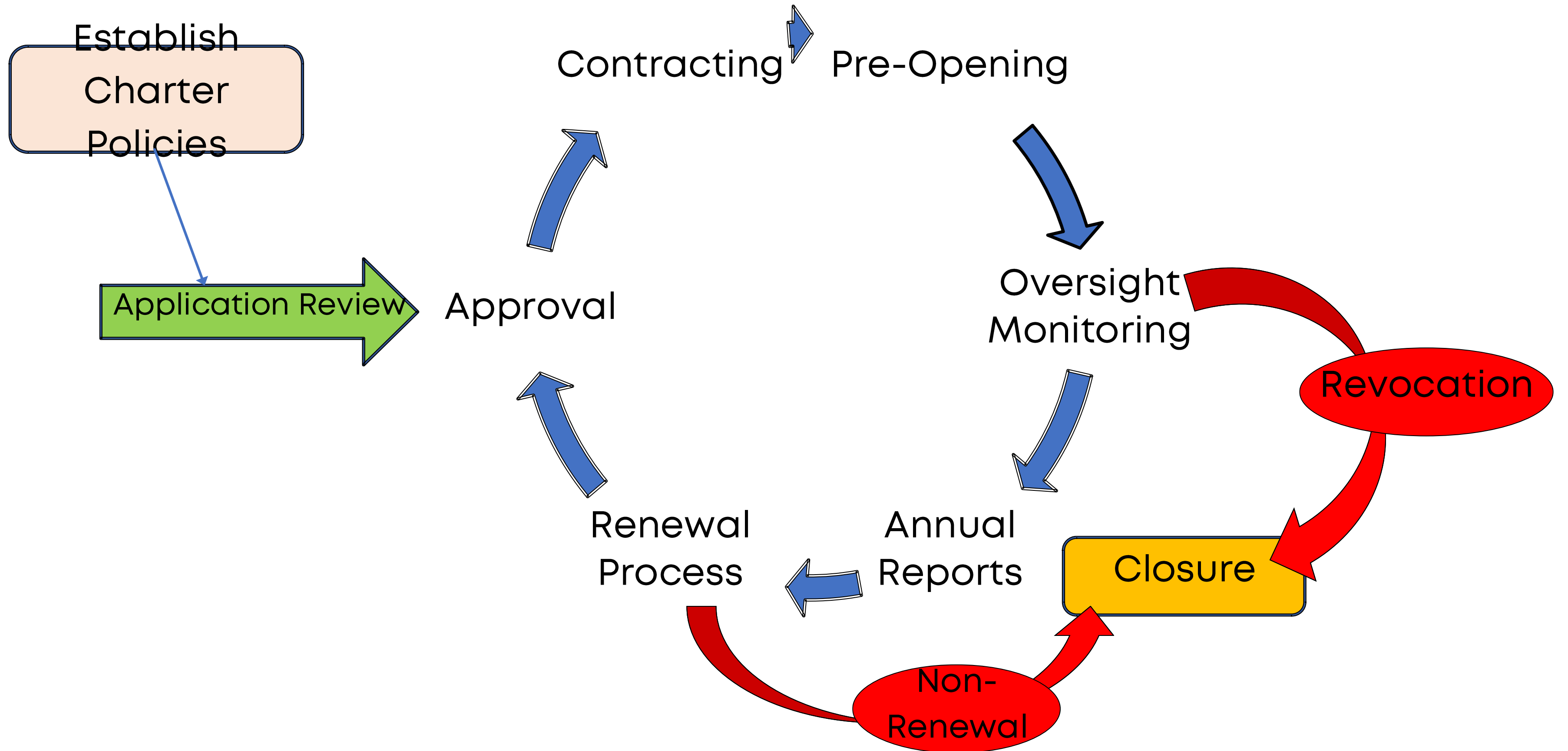
# Charter School Lifecycle



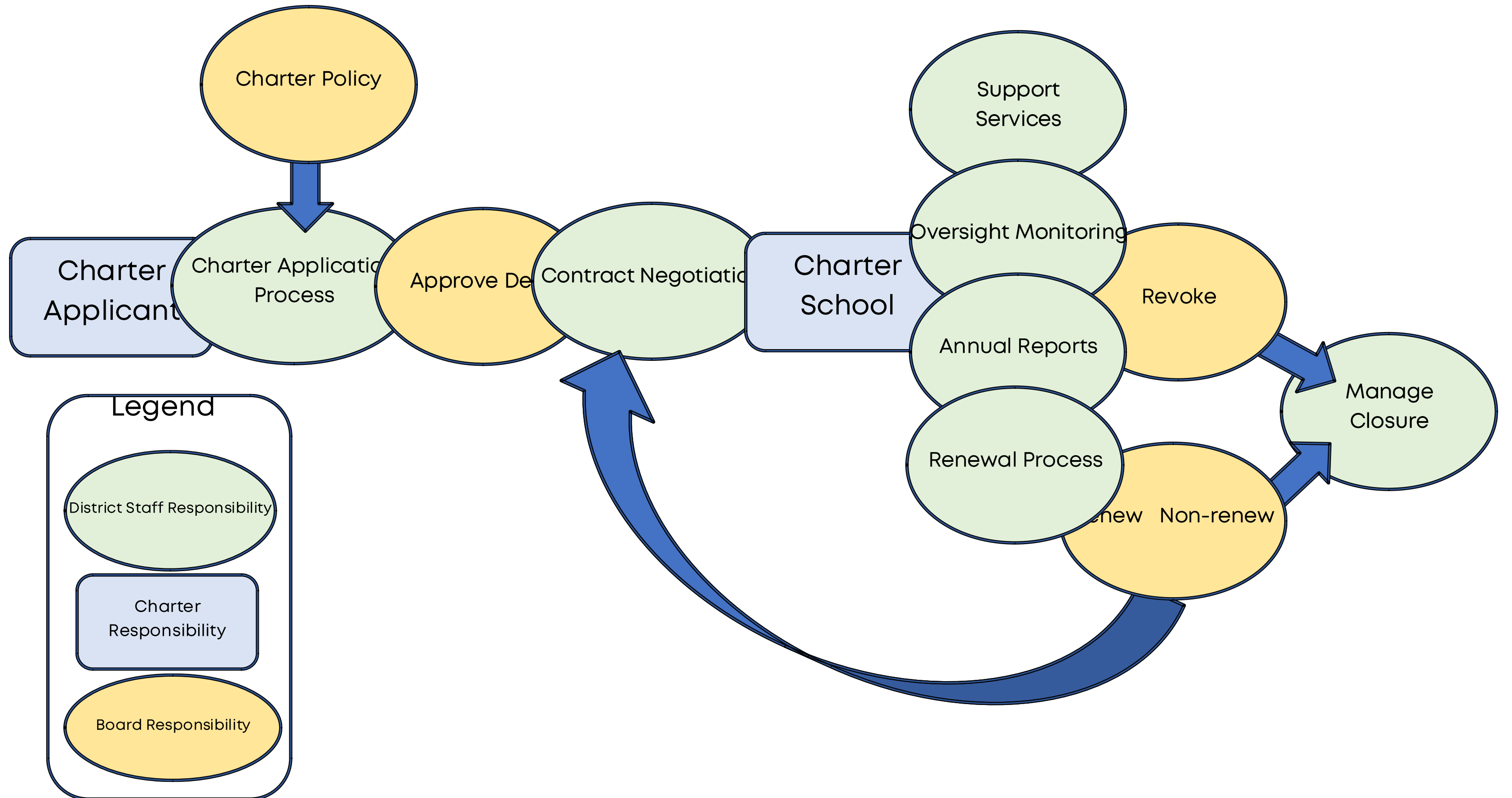
# Charter School Lifecycle



# Charter School Lifecycle



# Charter School Authorizing Responsibilities



# CACSA's Board Training Initiative: What It Addresses



The CACSA Board Training Initiative focuses on strengthening board capacity across key authorizing functions:

- New school applications
- Renewal and revocation decisions
- Performance contracting
- Ongoing oversight
- Policy alignment

**The initiative responds to a statewide need for structured, role-specific training tailored to Colorado authorizing law and practice.**

## Training Covers:

- Decision frameworks
- Governance roles
- Use of evidence
- Deliberation practices
- Policy alignment

# Governing Board Training Pilot

## Goals and Objectives

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Develop and test a structured governance board training program on authorizing best practices aligned with Colorado statutes and national standards.

**Strengthen application evaluation capacity**

**Improve renewal and contracting decisions**

**Increase statewide consistency**

### Training Design

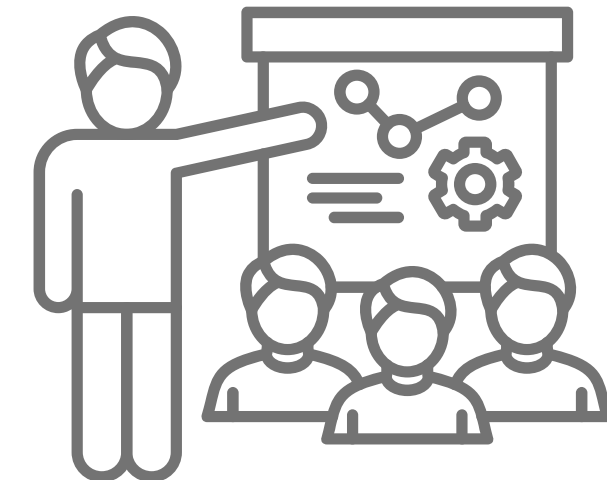
- In-Person
- Colorado statutory grounding
- Governance scenarios
- Case studies
- Board-focused tools
- Decision-making emphasis

# Governing Board Training Pilot February through July 2026

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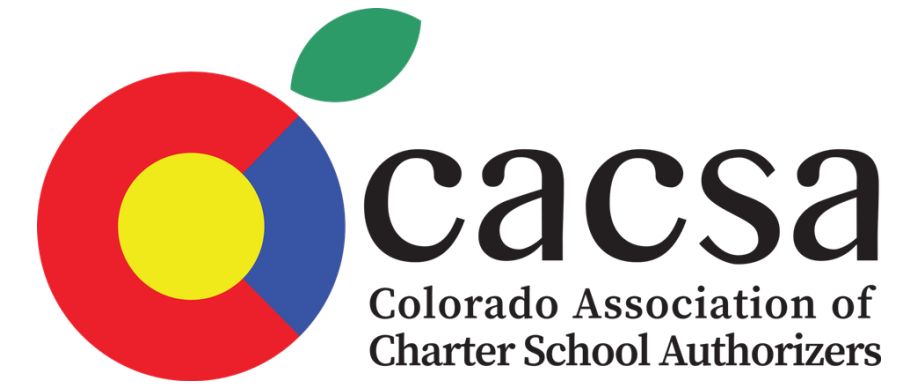


- Testing New School Applications Training
- Real-time alignment with 2026 applications
- Includes general orientation component
- February 2026 – Finalize districts and framework
- April–May 2026 – Deliver pilot trainings
- June–July 2026 – Reflect and revise
- Fall 2026 – Statewide rollout



# Closing Reflection:

## Moving Toward Stronger Board Authorizing



1. Based on today's discussion, which area of board authorizing in your district would benefit most from deeper focus or clarification?
2. What would need to change or be strengthened for your board to make charter decisions with greater confidence and consistency?
3. Which part of the charter lifecycle would be most valuable for your board to explore in more depth together?
4. How might your district ensure that future board members develop a shared understanding of authorizing expectations and practices?
5. What would help your board and staff stay aligned over time in how charter decisions are approached and made?

# Thank You



# cacsa

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Charter School Authorizers



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**Website**

[www.coauthorizers.org](http://www.coauthorizers.org)

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together**



**Colorado League of  
Charter Schools**



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