THE PROMISE OF CITYWIDE CHARTER STRATEGIES

APRIL 2011

WRITTEN BY:
John Kania, FSG
Jeff Kutash, FSG
Julie Obbard, FSG
Robert Albright, FSG

COMMISSIONED BY:
Peter C. Groff, President & CEO,
National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

FSG

National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

About the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools is the leading national nonprofit organization committed to advancing the charter school movement. Our goal is to increase the number of high-quality charter schools available to all families, particularly in disadvantaged communities that lack access to quality public schools. NAPCS provides assistance to state charter school associations and resource centers, develops and advocates for improved public policies and serves as the united voice for this large and diverse movement. For more information on NAPCS, visit www.publiccharters.org.

About FSG

FSG is a nonprofit consulting firm specializing in research, strategy and evaluation. FSG works across all sectors in every region of the globe—partnering with foundations, corporations, nonprofits and governments—to develop more effective solutions to the world's most challenging issues. FSG helps organizations, individually and collectively, achieve social impact by discovering better ways to solve social problems. FSG's John Kania, Jeff Kutash, Julie Obbard and Robert Albright conducted the research, analysis, and writing for this report in partnership with NAPCS. For more information on FSG, visit www.fsg.org or contact FSG consultant Robert Albright at Robert.Albright@fsg.org.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction **4**

II. Project Approach **6**

III. Problem and Emerging Solution **7**
- Problem Statement 7
- Emerging Solution 7

IV. The Need for Citywide Charter Strategies **9**
- Charter School and Charter Sector Needs 9
- Assessing a City's Environment for Developing a Citywide Charter Strategy 10

V. Understanding Current Levels of Coordination **13**

VI. Identifying and Implementing a Citywide Charter Strategy **15**
- Conduct a Situation Assessment 16
- Identify Goals and Supporting Activities 18
- Define Organizing Structure 20

VII. Key Considerations for Charter Stakeholders **22**

VIII. Future Vision **23**

APPENDICES **25**
- APPENDIX A: List of Interviews 25
- APPENDIX B: Comparing and Contrasting Existing City-Based CSOs 26
- APPENDIX C: Success Factors and Challenges of Existing City-Based CSOs 29
- APPENDIX D: Oakland Situation Assessment 30
- APPENDIX E: New York City Situation Assessment 34
- APPENDIX F: Denver Situation Assessment 38
- APPENDIX G: Potential Activities for a Citywide Charter Strategy 41
- APPENDIX H: Case Study on STRIVE 42

I. INTRODUCTION

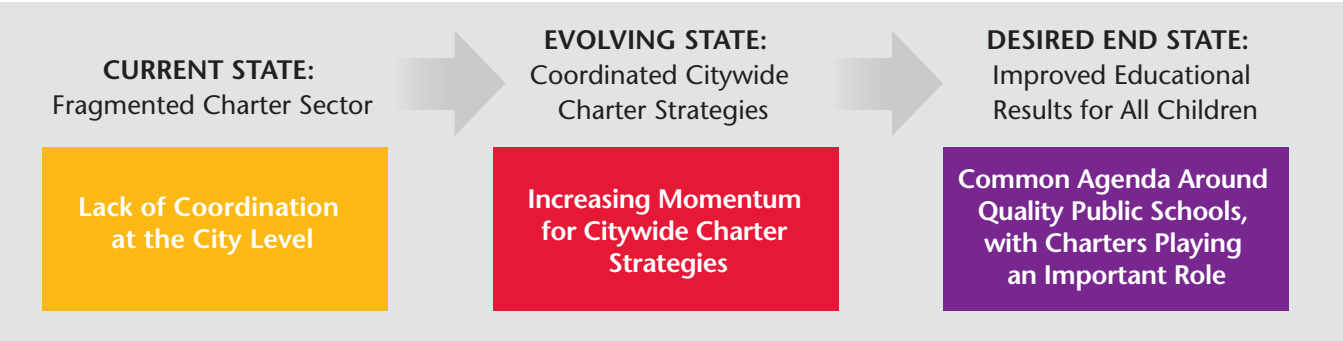
The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS) sought to examine the potential for citywide charter strategies as a key leverage point for increasing charter school quality, and ultimately contributing to an overall improvement in educational outcomes in a city. The Alliance partnered with FSG, a leading nonprofit consulting and research firm, to study existing city support and develop recommendations for how to increase support for public charter schools in cities across the nation. A citywide charter strategy is an intentional effort by charter stakeholders (e.g., operators, authorizers, charter support organizations and funders) to address high-impact charter needs in a city by improving charter sector coordination, collectively investing in capacity building for charters and/or fostering increased district-charter collaboration and alignment, with the ultimate goal of creating a high-performing system of public schools of choice for all students.

In most cities, the public education system is highly fragmented. District offices can lack coordination between program offices, charter schools typically operate in silos, and district-charter coordination around a common education reform agenda is rare. This fragmentation often results in wasted resources, duplication of efforts and missed opportunities to improve quality.

As the national dialogue around education reform is beginning to acknowledge, large scale change in our nation's public schools demands a much deeper level of coordination and alignment between stakeholders at the city level. The recent District-Charter Collaboration Compact work initiated by the BIll and Melinda Gates Foundation, along with district-wide education reform efforts in cities like New York and New Orleans, provide important examples of growing interest among funders, policymakers and local education leaders to align reform efforts locally.

While district-charter coordination is a critical piece of the reform equation, this report focuses more broadly on how the charter sector can accelerate reform through a more coordinated citywide strategy among operators, authorizers, charter support organizations (CSOs) and other charter stakeholders. Developing and implementing such a citywide charter strategy requires a more collective approach, in which a broad set of local charter stakeholders identify a common agenda, align mutually reinforcing activities and commit to the continuous communication and supporting infrastructure needed to sustain the effort.

Taking a more collective approach in a city's charter sector allows charter schools to retain their autonomy while creating better alignment of services, a unified voice for advocacy and additional support for high-leverage local needs such as human capital and facilities—all working toward the end goal of high quality public schools for all children. This approach also serves as a foundational step to integrate charters as a key element of the district's effort to improve educational results across an entire school system, as shown by the image below:



To investigate the evolving state of citywide charter strategies, this report explores the following topics in greater detail:

- **The Need and Potential for Citywide Charter Strategies:** An assessment of high-leverage school needs and sector-wide needs that a citywide charter strategy can address, as well as a preliminary assessment of how conducive the conditions are in a variety of cities across the country for developing a more coordinated citywide charter strategy.
- **An Assessment of Current Levels of Coordination of Local Charter Resources:** Best practices and lessons learned from existing city-based efforts in New York, Newark, New Orleans and Washington, D.C.
- **How to Catalyze a Citywide Charter Strategy:** Key considerations for who might champion the effort locally, and how to create and sustain a citywide charter strategy by conducting a situation assessment, identifying common goals and activities and ensuring organizational support.

We believe the findings in this report will have particular relevance to local authorizers and mature operators (whether independent charter schools or charter management organizations) who could potentially champion a citywide charter strategy, state CSOs with a strong interest in a specific city, and local and national funders who may support citywide charter strategies. Existing city-based CSOs can also benefit from this report's findings on success factors and challenges in implementing a more coordinated citywide charter strategy.

II. PROJECT APPROACH

With input from NAPCS, FSG conducted primary and secondary research to identify the strengths and benefits of current citywide efforts, and to assess the options and implications for developing coordinated citywide strategies in other cities. The key research questions guiding this project include:

The Need and Potential for Citywide Strategies

- What are the charter school needs and sector-wide needs that a citywide charter strategy should address?
- What are the key dimensions for assessing how conducive a city's environment is for developing a citywide charter strategy?

An Assessment of Current Levels of Coordination of Local Charter Resources

- What are the current levels of coordination of charter resources in various U.S. cities? What can be learned from these approaches to aligning charter resources?
- What is the history behind existing city-based CSOs in New York, Newark, New Orleans and Washington, D.C.? What contextual factors specific to these cities influenced the creation of these models (e.g., political landscape, charter enrollment, availability and access to providers)? What are the key similarities and differences of these models? What are the challenges and success factors that emerge from a comparison of these models?

How to Catalyze a Citywide Charter Strategy

- What are the key steps to effectively launch and implement a citywide strategy? Who are the likely candidates to catalyze a citywide charter strategy?
- What type of infrastructure, if any, would be needed to better coordinate a city's charter movement and create alignment among key stakeholders? How can local charter stakeholders create a citywide charter strategy that meets the needs of reform players and is financially sustainable?

The information in this report is based primarily on interviews with a range of charter stakeholders in U.S. cities, including charter operators, CSOs, authorizers and funders. Interviews were conducted with key contributors to existing citywide charter strategies, as well as with charter stakeholders in cities that have significant charter activity, but where coordination at a city level is not yet occurring. FSG also conducted secondary research on four existing city-based CSOs: the New York City Charter School Center, Newark Charter School Fund, NewSchools Venture Fund's DC Schools Fund and New Schools for New Orleans.

See Appendix A for the complete list of interviews. Appendix B and C provide more detail on existing city-based CSOs.

III. PROBLEM AND EMERGING SOLUTION

Problem Statement

Charter schools are growing rapidly, particularly in urban areas. Of the almost 5,000 charter schools now operating in the United States, more than half are concentrated in cities. In 17 cities, charters serve over 10 percent of the public school student population. In nine U.S. cities, charter schools serve more than 20,000 students, and in seven cities, charter enrollment grew by more than 10 percent between 2008-2009 and 2009-2010.[1] While many charter schools are offering quality options for children, the growth and uneven performance of the charter movement further underscores the need to ensure that all schools meet quality standards.

While the number of charter schools in the United States is growing, the local barriers to opening and operating high quality charter schools continue to be significant. Given the autonomous nature of charters, there is often a lack of coordination that results in inefficient use of resources, duplication of efforts and missed opportunities to improve charter quality. When districts, local authorizers, operators, mayor's offices and charter service providers focus on isolated impact and do not effectively coordinate services, align efforts or efficiently spend resources, they miss out on the opportunity to more efficiently and effectively deliver strong student results.

A range of stakeholders are involved in supporting charter schools, which presents challenges and opportunities for greater coordination at the local level. For example, state CSOs play an important role in supporting charters, but their efforts often focus primarily on providing information, advocacy and services from a state-wide perspective rather than targeting charters in one specific city. In addition, Charter Management Organizations (CMO) and funders support the schools in their own portfolios, and education service providers (e.g., business back-office providers, education law firms, or human capital organizations) deliver a variety of services to a subset of district and charter schools. Charter stakeholders in many cities need greater local coordination given the range of actors who may not be working in aligned ways—for example, authorizers at the local level set conditions and provide accountability for charters; operational services (e.g., food services, transportation, facility management) are often contracted and delivered locally; and human capital markets also tend to be driven more locally.

These unique local dynamics, along with shrinking education budgets and an increased focus on charter school accountability and quality, underscore the need for local charter operators, authorizers, CSOs, funders and other charter supporters to consider the potential for developing additional coordination and infrastructure support to the charter movement at a local level.

Emerging Solution

To reduce fragmentation and move beyond isolated impact, a more collective approach is needed within a city-specific charter context through citywide charter strategies. Developing successful citywide charter strategies requires rigorous, fact-based analysis and strong facilitation to identify gaps and needs, develop common goals, clarify supporting activities, put in place ongoing learning and communication loops, and ensure that the correct infrastructure and capacity is built to sustain a citywide effort in the long term.

Citywide charter strategies can offer benefits to individual charter schools and create citywide movements that help all charter schools be more effective and efficient, and deliver a higher quality education. As highlighted in this report's opening section, a citywide charter strategy is defined as an intentional effort by charter stakeholders (e.g., operators, authorizers, charter support organizations and funders) to improve charter sector coordination, increase quality and accountability, address high impact needs across a city's entire charter market, invest in capacity building for charters and/or foster increased district-charter collaboration and alignment.

1 National Alliance for Public Charter Schools' Public Charter School Dashboard

To ensure high quality schools, a citywide charter strategy can address the following objectives:

- **Increase collaboration and best practice sharing** among charter operators and service providers, leading to improved efficiency, data-driven decision-making and increased cost effectiveness. Beyond reducing fragmentation of resources, this increased alignment and collaboration among local charter stakeholders is also a foundational step to position the charter sector as a valued partner with the district in providing quality schools for all children.
- **Ensure the provision of resource intensive-support** in meeting human capital, new school incubation and other high priority capacity needs. In prioritizing this capacity-building support, citywide charter strategies should address charter needs in ways that complement rather than compete with existing efforts from organizations such as state CSOs and district support services.
- **Promote greater district/charter collaboration** to increase the number of high quality schools for all children. For example, the cities recently named in the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's District-Charter Collaboration Compact highlight the potential for charter stakeholders to develop common goals and win-win efforts with school districts.

Funders, CSOs, charter operators and charter service providers are already coordinating citywide charter resources in several cities (e.g., New York, New Orleans, Newark, Washington, D.C.) and other cities like Oakland and Nashville are beginning to do so as well. These efforts have emerged to fill gaps in the local charter landscape around key needs such as human capital and new school development. Section V provides more specific detail on the existing levels of coordination in these cities.

"It is the combination of highly effective teaching with highly capable school leadership that will change outcomes for children in our schools."

— *A New Approach to Principal Preparation, 2010 Report*, Rainwater Leadership Alliance

"Our biggest issue is the lack of resources, and trying to do so much on a shoestring budget."

— Charter leader

IV. THE NEED FOR CITYWIDE CHARTER STRATEGIES

Citywide charter strategies can address individual charter school needs and local charter sector needs. The following provides perspectives at each of these levels:

Charter School and Charter Sector Needs

Running a charter school is a complex endeavor that requires administrators to respond to a myriad of instructional and operational needs such as teacher professional development, hiring, fundraising, budgeting and facilities management. Many of these needs, particularly those around human capital, represent common challenges that school districts face as well.

Charter schools often struggle to do more with less, given lower per pupil funding and the responsibility to pay for all school-based operating costs due primarily to facilities acquisition and management.[2] While charter schools would benefit from additional support in a wide range of areas, individual school needs that were frequently identified by interviewees include human capital, facilities, funding, new school development and special education. All of these issues require a tremendous amount of time, energy and expertise, and have a significant impact on charter schools' abilities to serve all students well.

While not an exhaustive list of needs, interviewees most commonly referenced the following needs that a citywide charter strategy could address:

- **Human Capital:** Research shows that highly effective teachers and leaders have the greatest impact on school quality and student achievement.[3] Nevertheless, the demand for talent often far exceeds the supply. Research suggests that 25 to 50 percent of teachers leave the teaching profession within five years,[4] and excellent teachers are scarce, particularly in high-poverty schools.[5] High quality schools are often constrained by their ability to attract and retain effective school leaders who can create a strong culture of learning. Beyond effective teachers and leaders, charters also need strong leadership from a board of directors. As charter school governance expert Brian Carpenter explains, "Dysfunctional charter school boards result in schools with insufficient enrollments, financial problems and poor academic achievement. These problems snowball until they are so bad the charter school is revoked or not renewed."[6] Recruiting and developing competent board members is an often overlooked, yet fundamental human capital need within the charter sector.

- **Facilities:** Access to space is a tremendous barrier to opening, growing and sustaining charter schools. Unlike district-run schools, charter schools in most cities must identify and pay for their own facilities, consuming hundreds of thousands, if not millions of dollars, and requiring significant board and administrative time. The facilities burden could be greatly reduced if school districts, local governments and state legislatures enact policies and practices that help charter schools access funding and affordable space.

- **Funding:** Nationwide, public charter schools receive, on average, $2,247 less per pupil than traditional public schools in the same school district. Local funding accounts for the largest disparity, because many states' laws do not allow for allocation of local funding to charter schools. The local funding gap is $1,884 for each charter school pupil, or roughly 84 percent of the total $2,247 disparity.[7] One expert interviewee suggested that much of this disparity lies in the fact that charters do not receive facilities or funding for facilities, which represents a significant state and local policy hurdle.

2 *Charter School Funding: Inequality Persists*, Ball State University, 2010: http://www.bsu.edu/teachers/ocsr/funding/

3 *The Market for Teacher Quality*, Hanushek, E. A., Kain, J. F., O'Brien, D. M., & Rivkin, S. G., 2005, Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. www.nctq.org/nctq/research/1112806467874.pdf

4 "Getting a Handle on Teacher Attrition," *The Washington Post*, August 12, 2010

5 *If Wishes were Horses: The Reality Behind Teacher Quality Findings*, Walsh, K., 2007, Washington, D.C.: National Council on Teacher Quality. www.nctq.org/p/publications/docs/wishes_horses_20080316034426.pdf

6 *Charter School Board University: An Introduction to Effective Charter School Governance*, Carpenter, Brian L., PhD, 2007

7 *Charter School Funding: Inequality Persists*, Ball State University, 2010: http://www.bsu.edu/teachers/ocsr/funding/

- **New School Development:** Planning for and opening a new charter school requires dedicated time, a high capacity team and expert guidance to help teams navigate the authorizing and start-up process effectively. However, developers often lack the time, resources, expertise and support infrastructure to ensure a successful start, which can undermine operational effectiveness and academic outcomes.

- **Special Education:** Due to high costs, uneven quality provided by districts and bureaucratic policies and procedures, special education can often be a significant challenge for charter schools to address. In addition, interviewees suggested that charter operators often lack understanding of the rules and regulations for special education.

Beyond school-specific needs, interviewees also identified several high priority needs at the sector-wide level that a citywide charter strategy could address, including accountability and quality, alignment and coordination, and advocacy and community engagement.

- **Accountability and Quality:** Rigorous use of data at the charter and district level is a key driver of school quality, yet designing and implementing shared performance management systems requires infrastructure support that few schools or school systems have in place. Another challenge with accountability is the tension that authorizers and CSOs may feel with broadly supporting the charter sector while still holding all schools accountable for results, which may require making difficult distinctions between which schools are succeeding and which schools are failing.

- **Alignment and Coordination:** As mentioned previously, the charter sector in most cities is highly fragmented. Coordination between charter schools is infrequent, and local education-focused organizations often pursue overlapping activities and compete for the same resources. Lack of district-charter alignment is also common. Collaboration is not always present between charter and district leaders, who sometimes struggle to see themselves as allies working toward a common goal—a great education for all children. Lack of coordination between district and charter schools can result in missed opportunities to share best practices or develop shared approaches to school enrollment or common measures of effective teaching.

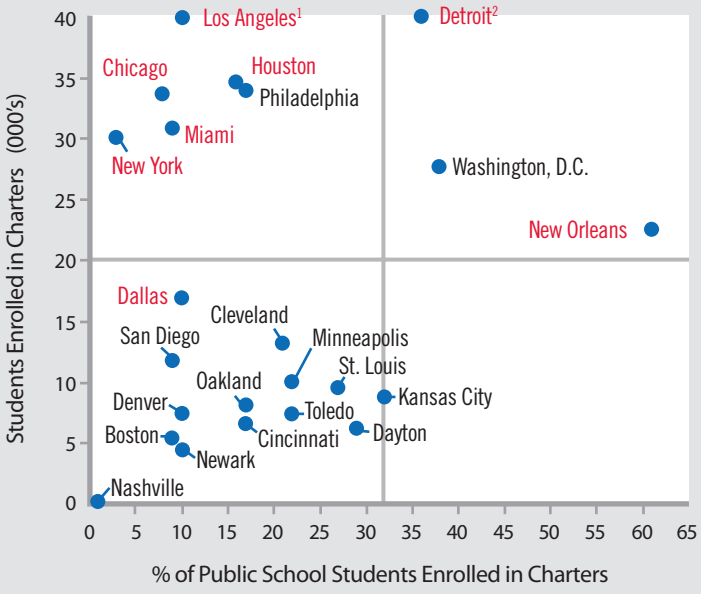
- **Advocacy and Community Engagement:** Building awareness of and support for charter schools among the media, legislators, local public officials and parents also surfaced as an important need. Currently, the ability to proactively coordinate messages and develop a common voice is often limited due to a fragmented local charter sector. While state CSOs effectively address state policy needs, local champions who can advocate for school choice and quality are often a missing link. A particular challenge with advocacy is identifying a broad base of political champions given recurring changes in district and city leadership. In addition, there is a need to ensure that local advocacy efforts are well coordinated with state advocacy messages.

Assessing a City's Environment for Developing a Citywide Charter Strategy

Charter enrollment, market share, and growth are important factors to assess whether there is a conducive environment for a more coordinated citywide charter strategy in a specific city.

As the graph below shows, Washington, D.C., Detroit and New Orleans have more than 20,000 students enrolled in charters and more than 30 percent of public school students enrolled in charters. Cities with more than 10 percent growth in charter enrollment from 2008-2009 to 2009-2010 include New York City (41 percent), Miami (29 percent), Detroit (17 percent), Chicago (16 percent), Dallas (16 percent), Los Angeles (16 percent), Houston (16 percent) and New Orleans (12 percent).

Comparing Cities' Charter Enrollment, 2009-2010



Source: FSG analysis of the Alliance's Public Charter School Dashboard. Cities highlighted in red have more than 10 percent growth in charter enrollment from 2008-2009 to 2009-2010. The total number of students served by charters in Los Angeles (image footnote #1) and Detroit (image footnote #2) is not to scale. The total number of students served by charters in Los Angeles is 68,469. The total number of students served by charters in Detroit is 50,139.

While having a large or concentrated charter enrollment is one important dimension, other factors that contribute to a more supportive environment for a citywide charter strategy include the state policy environment, local political support, strong authorizing, district support, high-performing charters and infrastructure support. The list below provides more detail on each of these key elements for assessing the environment for development of a citywide charter strategy:

Key Indicators that Support the Development of a Citywide Charter Strategy

STATE POLICY ENVIRONMENT

- Supportive state policies around charter funding, charter growth and charter laws

LOCAL POLITICAL SUPPORT

- City leaders (e.g., mayor, city commissioners) are proponents of charters

STRONG AUTHORIZING

- Authorizer (e.g., district, state, university, other entity) is focused on ensuring charter quality

DISTRICT SUPPORT

- Charter commitment from superintendent, school board and district's charter office

HIGH-PERFORMING CHARTERS

- Existence of one or more high-performing charters with the ability to scale and carry the voice of quality for the charter sector

INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT

- State CSO leads advocacy efforts
- Strong service provider network (e.g., back office)
- Local funder support of charters
- Deep pool of quality talent (e.g., leaders, teachers)

Source: FSG research and analysis

Of these six dimensions, interviewees noted that the state policy environment, local political support and strong authorizing are the most critical for improving charter funding, facilities and school quality. As can be seen in the preliminary analysis below, cities with a large or growing charter sector have environments that are more or less conducive for the development of a coordinated citywide charter strategy:

Assessing the Support Environment in Cities with High Charter Market Share and/or Enrollment

STRONGER SUPPORTING ENVIRONMENT for a Coordinated Citywide Charter Strategy	MODERATE SUPPORTING ENVIRONMENT for a Coordinated Citywide Charter Strategy	WEAKER SUPPORTING ENVIRONMENT for a Coordinated Citywide Charter Strategy
• Boston • Chicago • Denver • Los Angeles • Nashville • New York* • New Orleans* • Newark* • Oakland • Washington, D.C.*	• Dallas • Detroit • Houston • Kansas City • Miami • Minneapolis • San Diego	• Cincinnati • Cleveland • Dayton • Philadelphia • St. Louis • Toledo
These cities scored medium or high on the key elements that create a supportive environment for citywide strategies. Many of these cities also have large and/or growing charter sectors.	*These cities had mixed ratings on the key elements that create a supportive environment for citywide strategies, with a wide range of high, medium and low scores.*	*These cities scored low on multiple elements that create a supportive environment for citywide strategies, including state policy environment, local political support and strong authorizing.*

Source: Based on initial FSG research and analysis. Final version would require additional vetting with local stakeholders.

Notes: Cities with high charter enrollment and/or high charter market share were included in FSG's preliminary analysis. Drawing from secondary research and interviewer comments, FSG then assessed cities on the key elements that create a more conducive citywide charter strategy: state policy environment, local political support, strong authorizing, district support, high-performing charters and infrastructure support. FSG factored in a weighted score for cities with more than 20,000 students enrolled in charters. Those cities with an asterisk (*) have city-based CSOs already in existence.

In Los Angeles, for example, there are a large and growing number of high performing charters, mayoral support and a new, reform-minded district superintendent. Los Angeles was one of nine cities to participate in the Gates Foundation's District-Charter Collaboration Compact, in which Los Angeles Unified School District and the charter community agreed to collaborate in new ways, such as providing charters access to low-interest loans, ensuring charter schools serve more special needs students and English learners, and creating common measurements of success. The state policy environment is also strong in California, as evidenced by a statewide facilities fund and a charter cap that allows room for growth. California is also the first state in the country to pass a "parent trigger law" that provides parents a voice in forcing the closure of failing schools, and provides charter operators an opportunity for takeover. As a result, Los Angeles demonstrates a stronger supporting environment for a more coordinated citywide charter strategy.

Conversely, Philadelphia currently has fewer ingredients in place to develop a citywide charter strategy. Preliminary research suggests that leadership turnover in the district is high, partisan politics undermine reform efforts and charter schools are not always held to the highest standards of accountability for performance. While both Teach for America and The New Teacher Project have a local presence in Philadelphia, one study found that high quality teachers and leaders remain a relatively scarce resource. In addition, financial capital is in short supply. Per pupil funding is lower than most cities, and there is a lack of local or national philanthropic funding flowing into the city for education reform initiatives.[8]

A weaker supporting environment does not preclude a city from pursuing a citywide charter strategy. It will, however, likely make sustaining a sophisticated effort more difficult. A weaker supporting environment will impact what goals are prioritized and will elevate the importance of having a strong leader that can navigate and overcome significant roadblocks to developing a citywide charter strategy.

In the appendices, we include situation assessments on Oakland, New York City and Denver (see Appendices D, E and F) that provide greater detail on how three cities that have a stronger supporting environment were rated across the key indicators of citywide charter support.

8 *America's Best (and Worst) Cities for School Reform*, The Thomas B. Fordham Institute, August 2010

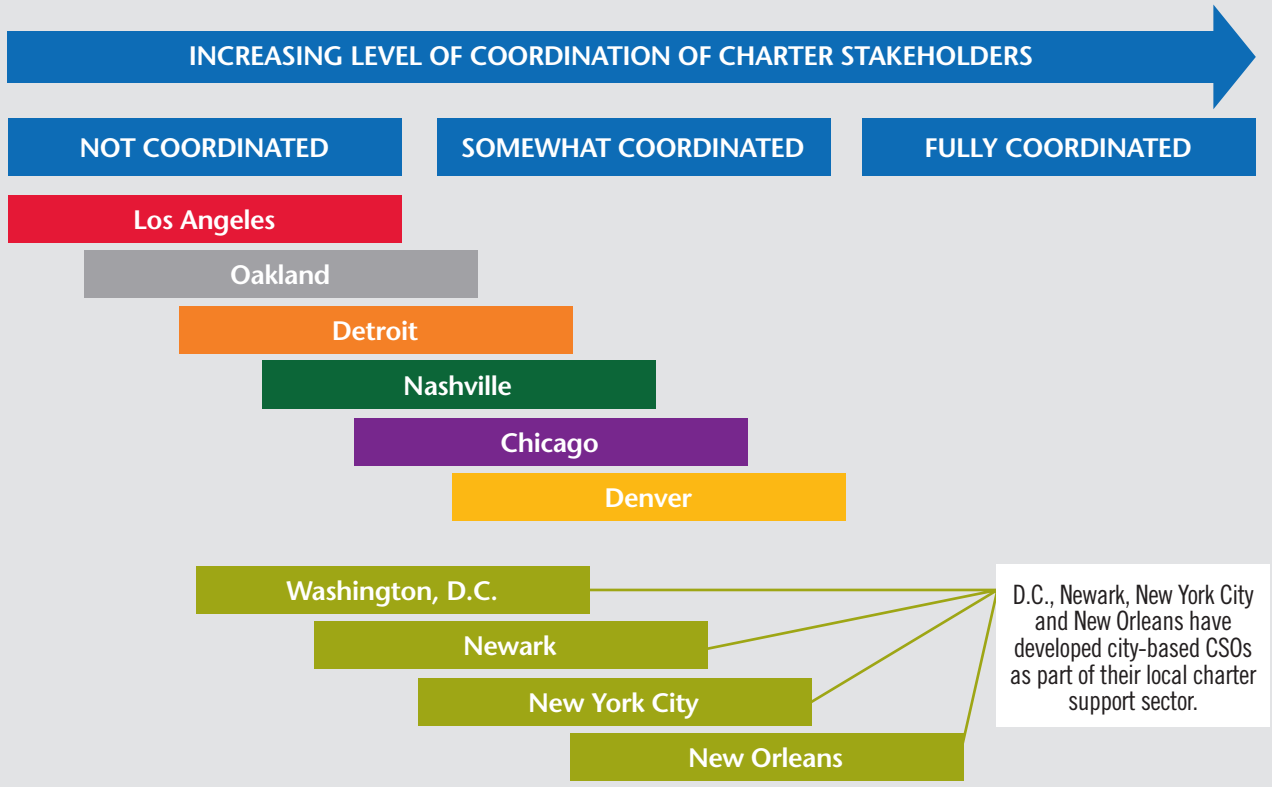
V. UNDERSTANDING CURRENT LEVELS OF COORDINATION

In most cities, the charter sector is fragmented and charter stakeholders often work in silos with separate, uncoordinated strategies, leading to lack of clarity or alignment on how to efficiently allocate resources and ensure uniformly high quality schools. The preliminary mapping below of cities along the spectrum of not coordinated, somewhat coordinated and fully coordinated shows the extent to which a representative set of cities' charter stakeholders are or are not aligned.

Charters in a specific city do not have to operate the same way to become "fully coordinated," but full coordination does require that charters reach agreement on a common agenda for what ultimate success looks like for students. Given the autonomous nature of charters and the continually changing local political context, it will be challenging for charters to reach a steady state of fully coordinated activity. However, a common voice can be established on issues such as facilities, funding and special education where there is wide agreement among charters (including independents and CMOs) on cross-cutting issues of importance.

Despite the challenges with charter sector alignment, charter stakeholders in several cities are beginning to coordinate charter resources at the city level through two primary organizing structures: using existing local organizations to informally convene stakeholders and share best practices, or creating city-based CSOs to provide greater levels of capacity building and local advocacy support.

Illustrative Map of Charter Stakeholder Coordination



Source: Based on initial FSG research and analysis. Final version would require additional vetting with local stakeholders.

The image below provides more detail on these two current approaches to providing organizational support to a city's charter sector:

Current Approaches to Providing Organizational Support to a City's Charter Sector

ORGANIZING STRUCTURE	PRIMARY ROLE(S)	KEY ACTIVITIES	EXAMPLES
Use Existing Local Organizations	• Informal convener	• Existing charter service provider offers venue for local charters to coalesce around topics of shared interest (e.g., convening around special education practices)	• CEI-PEA in New York
	• Locally staffed facilitator	• State CSO dedicates staff resources to a specific city to facilitate best practice sharing and coordinate services among local charters	• CCSA's Oakland Collaborative
Create a City-based CSO	• Technical assistance provider and local advocate	• Separate local entity providing technical assistance on issues such as new school development and talent recruitment • Offers local advocacy support around issues of quality and equity in charter movement	• New Schools for New Orleans • New York City Charter Center • Tennessee Charter School Incubator (Nashville/Memphis)
	• Grantmaker	• Separate entity serves Technical Assistance and local advocacy role, while also providing more high-leverage grants to charter operators and service providers through aggregation of national/local philanthropy	• Newark Charter School Fund • DC Schools Fund

Source: FSG research and analysis

The first type of existing organizing structure is less resource-intensive and focuses on addressing topics of shared interest among charters. Specific examples include:

- **CEI-PEA** in New York City has provided a "safe" venue for charter operators to meet regularly and share best practices around teacher quality. CEI-PEA plays the role of informal convener without having to dedicate substantial additional resources beyond the cost of communicating and organizing a venue for the charter leaders' meeting.
- **California Charter Schools Association (CCSA)**, California's statewide CSO, has hired a dedicated staff person to manage the Oakland Collaborative, which offers regular opportunities for best practice sharing and coordination between operators and service providers.

The second approach to supporting a city's charter sector focuses on creating city-based CSOs. Currently operating in New York, New Orleans, Memphis/Nashville, Newark and Washington, D.C, city-based CSOs not only coordinate charter resources but also provide greater levels of capacity-building support for high quality charters. In particular, these organizations provide technical assistance, local advocacy and high-leverage grants to fund new school development and to support human capital and performance management organizations.

The current group of city-based CSOs have required substantial levels of local and national philanthropic funding (typically $20M+ over three to five years), and therefore may not be feasible in smaller markets that do not have sufficient philanthropic resources available. Nevertheless, these efforts provide important lessons learned on how to mobilize national and local resources to support high quality charter schools.

Appendix B provides greater detail on four of these existing city-based CSOs, including a comparison of goals, strategic priorities, activities, size and governance. Appendix C provides specific examples of success factors and challenges with existing city-based CSOs.

VI. IDENTIFYING AND IMPLEMENTING A CITYWIDE CHARTER STRATEGY

A citywide charter strategy requires bringing multiple stakeholders together to co-develop a shared vision, common goals and aligned strategies. As FSG has found in other contexts, moving beyond isolated impact requires a well-facilitated, potentially time-intensive process with multiple stakeholders.

A citywide charter strategy requires a well-respected, energetic and highly networked individual or organizational champion to step forward and catalyze the effort. Interviewees noted that without strong leadership and sufficient planning, a citywide charter strategy cannot be created and ultimately would not succeed.

Effective champions will be credible, foster a spirit of engagement, have a deep understanding of the local reform landscape, have good relationships with charter and district leaders within the community and have the ability to mobilize others around a common vision. Organizations/individuals that could play such a role might include:

- **Local Funder:** A local education funder (e.g., a family foundation or community foundation with understanding of city-specific context) could serve as a catalytic philanthropist that brings multiple organizations together to form a common agenda.
- **Strong CMO:** A high performing CMO with a strong presence in the city could initiate a citywide movement. The CMO should be trusted and well respected by independent charters, other CMOs, community leaders and the district.
- **Local Education Organization:** A local education nonprofit or charter-focused nonprofit, such as a leadership development or charter support organization, could step up to lead the initial conversation with charter stakeholders. In some instances, this local education organization could form a council of charter leaders to jointly identify strategic priorities and potential partners.
- **State CSO with a Local Presence:** A state CSO with a local presence and/or a dedicated staff member focused on charter schools in a specific city could also convene stakeholders.
- **District or City Leadership:** District charter offices that have strong relationships with other charter stakeholders could help catalyze a movement at the city level. If the district office is not actively engaged, a supportive mayor can also play an active role in encouraging local stakeholders to coalesce around the discussion of collective impact for the local charter sector. For example, Newark's Mayor Cory Booker played an important role in encouraging funders to explore the idea of the Newark Charter School Fund.
- **Respected Charter School Leader.** A seasoned charter school leader with credibility in the local community could also play an important role as a catalyst. For example, Dr. Anthony Recasner played a central role in launching New Orleans' charter movement given his role as the first charter school operator in the city.

After a strong champion catalyzes local conversations, the following steps will enable the successful creation and implementation of a citywide charter strategy.

- **Conduct a Situation Assessment**
  - Meet with key charter stakeholders to determine the collective will to implement a citywide charter strategy.
  - Create a steering committee with a cross-section of charter sector leaders (e.g., individual charter operators, CMOs, state CSO representative, charter service providers and funders) to assess charter needs in a specific city.
- **Identify Goals and Supporting Activities**
  - Based on this needs assessment, co-create a common vision and guiding principles around quality options for children. Use this vision to guide the creation of goals that would need to be in place for a citywide strategy to be successful.
  - Collectively identify a set of aligned, complementary activities to support the goals.
- **Define the Organizing Structure**
  - Develop trust among key partners by facilitating ongoing conversations to ensure progress is being made across agreed-upon goals.
  - Establish infrastructure support to serve as project manager, data manager and facilitator to bring key players together on a regular basis.

The following section provides more detail on these action steps for developing a citywide charter strategy.

Conduct a Situation Assessment

Once a champion has stepped forward, that individual or organization should launch a more detailed planning and implementation process. This planning process benefits from the guidance of key sector leaders who can engage the charter community to gather input on the unique needs, assets, and challenges in a city. Conducting a situation assessment—informed by comments from multiple stakeholders—is critical to ensure that a citywide strategy is grounded in local realities and needs. The needs assessment process also serves to provide an opportunity for charter stakeholders to provide input into the future direction of the strategy and helps build buy-in.

Addressing too many priorities at once can dilute focus and spread resources too thin, which inevitably undermines an initiative's ultimate impact. Therefore, understanding the highest priority needs for a citywide movement to address is a critical step. The champion and steering committee should solicit feedback from a broad range of charter leaders and other stakeholders to ensure that the picture is as complete and representative as possible. A combination of surveys, focus groups, town hall meetings and one-on-one interviews with charter operators, CSOs, authorizers, district leaders, state agencies and other organizations interfacing with charter schools are all useful ways to gather representative data about high priority needs. A small amount of seed funding (less than $25,000) would help cover the costs of organizing, hosting and facilitating these discussions and focus groups.

Questions for a city's charter sector champion and/or steering committee to explore could include:

- What roadblocks, if removed, could make the biggest difference in increasing operating efficiencies, supporting and sustaining teachers and leaders and improving outcomes for students?
- What supports are missing or are not delivered effectively?
- What would you most hope to gain from increased coordination, both for your school/organization and for the charter sector in your city?
- What is the current approach or system for charter sector accountability? How are student outcomes currently being tracked? To what extent does the city or state allow for student level analysis of student achievement or value-added assessments?
- What role do authorizer(s) play in terms of providing support and ensuring accountability? Given the authorizers' role, what differentiated roles do other charter supporters play?
- What are the greatest needs facing charters? Which needs are traditionally covered by the district? Which needs do charters not have the capacity to take on individually?

Oakland, for example, might identify facilities as a high priority need given that three-fourths of Oakland charters are in privately leased or owned facilities with associated rent or mortgage payments. With enough buildings to accommodate 51,000 students but with 41,000 students currently attending district facilities, the district has excess capacity.[9] Therefore, there is an opportunity for the charter sector to engage the district in conversations around mutually beneficial facilities solutions that open up access to affordable district space while providing the district with a critically needed revenue stream.

While certain needs, such as facilities, will appeal to all charters, others will depend on a school's type (e.g. CMO vs. independent) and stage of development. By design, charter schools are autonomous, which can make it difficult to find common ground. For example, new, independent charter schools will likely derive greater value from school start-up support and board trainings, while more mature independents or CMOs may want to engage around policy issues related to funding and facilities. In most cases, interviewees recommended that it would be best to address a few cross-cutting needs, and then broaden goals and activities to address more segment-specific needs as a citywide movement matures.

"You need to look across a city and identify solutions that are going to address the needs of the entire charter market."

— Funder

9 Lillian Mongeau, "With more seats than students, conversations about school closures begin in OUSD," *Oakland North,* March 4, 2011: http://oaklandnorth.net/2011/03/04/with-more-seats-than-students-conversations-about-school-closures-begin-in-ousd/

> **"Depending on where you're at in the life of charters, your needs are just vastly different. The movement has struggled with differentiating support."**
>
> — Veteran charter principal

It is also important to keep in mind that needs evolve over time as the charter movement matures and changes. For example, the New York City Charter School Center initially focused on building the pipeline of operators when the charter field was more nascent and the pool of charter developers had dried up. As the charter pipeline expanded, the Charter Center realized that it could better use its resources to primarily focus on helping those operators develop and launch high quality schools.

The illustrative ecosystem map for Oakland, California, (see image below) is an example of how to assess the level of charter involvement in a city and begin to identify potential gaps and areas of overlap.

Illustrative Ecosystem Map of Existing Charter Support Stakeholders in Oakland

Organization / Priority Needs	HUMAN CAPITAL	FACILITIES	SPECIAL EDUCATION	FUNDING	NEW SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT	COORDINATION/ ALIGNMENT	ADVOCACY	ACCOUNTABILITY/ QUALITY
CCSA		✔		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Oakland Collaborative	✔	✔	✔	✔		✔	✔	
CSDC		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔		✔
EdTec		✔	✔	✔	✔			
East Bay Charter Connect	✔					✔		
GO Public Schools				✔		✔	✔	
OCO					✔		✔	
NLNS	✔							
Teach for America	✔							
Oakland Teaching Fellows (TNTP)	✔							
Rogers Family Foundation				✔			✔	

Source: Based on initial FSG research and analysis. Final version would require additional vetting with local stakeholders.

Preliminary Rating of the Support Environment in Oakland

KEY INDICATORS OF CITYWIDE CHARTER SUPPORT	RATING	EXPLANATION
State Policy Environment	Medium	State charter law provides room for growth; the governor is supportive of charters; and there is a clear process within the state law for renewal.
Local Political Support	Low	Mayor, school board and teachers union view charter schools through competitive rather than cooperative lens.
Strong Authorizing	High	OUSD's Office of Charter Schools recently underwent an overhaul of the authorizing process, resulting in much greater rigor and transparency and the voluntary closure of a number of lower performing charter schools.
District Support	Low	Relations between OUSD and the charter community are strained, and charters are often perceived as a "resource drain" rather than as a part of the reform strategy in Oakland.
High Performing Charters	High	Successful CMOs have a presence in Oakland (e.g., Aspire).
Infrastructure Support	Medium	There is an engaged local funder, strong advocacy and human capital organizations, and emerging interest in greater coordination. However, many local charter service organizations are not closely aligned.

Source: Based on initial FSG research and analysis. Final version would require additional vetting with local stakeholders.

As seen with the ecosystem map on the previous page, numerous organizations in Oakland are addressing human capital needs for charters. This mapping exercise can therefore guide conversations about how these organizations' human capital activities are reinforcing each other and not duplicating effort. In addition, the situation assessment needs to include some basic data gathering on enrollment trends, achievement scores and other indicators of quality. The goal of the situation assessment is to identify potential gaps and roadblocks to overcome and what policies need to be put in place to do so.

When conducting the situation assessment, it is also important to explore the degree to which local conditions will support—or hinder—a citywide strategy. As described earlier in Section IV, the factors to consider when accessing how supportive a local environment is for more coordination of charter resources include: state policy environment, local political support and district support, as well as the presence of high performing charters to set the bar for what a high quality school looks like. Infrastructure support, such as a strong service provider network, a local funding base and a robust talent pool, also contribute to a supportive environment. While it is not essential that all of these elements are in place, the presence or absence of certain conditions may influence which goals and activities are pursued.

An assessment of the conditions that would support or hinder a citywide charter strategy in Oakland reveals a number of strengths and challenges. The chart above provides more detail on the extent to which Oakland's charter support environment meets the preliminary assessment of "high," "medium," or "low," across multiple dimensions of charter support.

To illustrate the desired output from a situation assessment, Appendices D, E and F provide greater detail on Oakland's, New York's, and Denver's charter landscapes. Champions who catalyze conversations in their own cities can use this illustrative stakeholder-mapping tool and apply it to their local contexts.

Identify Goals and Supporting Activities

Once the situation assessment has been completed, a common vision and goals for a citywide charter strategy can begin to take shape. It is essential that the common vision and goals are co-created with broad input from the charter community to ensure broad buy-in from charter stakeholders.

The common vision should be grounded in a focus on delivering strong results to students by ensuring uniformly high quality charter schools, with more specific goals to articulate how to reach that vision. The three illustrative goals (shown in the following exhibit) offer potential options for impact for citywide charter strategies:

Potential Goals of a Citywide Charter Strategy

	1 IMPROVE CHARTER SECTOR COORDINATION	2 INVEST IN CAPACITY BUILDING FOR CHARTERS	3 IMPROVE DISTRICT-CHARTER ALIGNMENT
Key Objectives	• Increase collaboration and best practice sharing among operators and service providers, leading to improved efficiency.	• Provide resource-intensive support to address high-priority needs such as human capital.	• Work collaboratively with district to increase the overall quality of schools and drive system-wide reform.
Success Factors	• Identify issues that are common across a broad range of stakeholders and will have a significant impact on quality and growth of the movement. • Develop mechanisms for regular communication, such as monthly meetings and email updates.	• Develop a clear and transparent process for determining which charters are eligible to receive capacity-building support. • Identify partners with deep knowledge and expertise working with charter schools.	• Cultivate buy-in from senior district leaders who view charters as part of reform agenda • Identify win-wins between district and charter schools (e.g., shared facilities). • Shift mindset and messaging from "us vs. them" to "we want all our kids to succeed." • Ensure ongoing communication between charter and district leaders.

Source: FSG research and analysis

These potential goals represent a range of options and are not mutually exclusive. In fact, a champion should carefully consider the local environment and work in tandem with the chosen steering committee to identify additional goals that are unique to their local city's context.

The group that is setting and prioritizing goals for a citywide charter strategy should also identify key activities that reinforce these goals. For example, if a city's mayor and school board are charter opponents, building an advocacy network to mobilize support for charters might surface as a key activity for a citywide charter strategy. Alternatively, charter stakeholders in a city like Nashville, with strong mayoral support and a very collaborative relationship with the district, have identified human capital as a top priority. As a Nashville, Tennessee, charter reformer stated in our interviews, "if we want to help catalyze a movement and build high performing schools, we need a bench of talent that doesn't exist in Tennessee right now."

In contrast, Oakland has a fairly robust human capital pipeline given the presence of Teach for America, New Leaders for New Schools and The New Teacher Project, but does not have the same level of district-charter collaboration or mayoral support that exists in Nashville. Therefore, a citywide strategy in Oakland would likely prioritize key activities such as local advocacy, community engagement and fostering a mutually beneficial partnership with the district.

Improving district-charter alignment might include key activities such as ensuring charter schools are equipped to serve—and held accountable for serving—equitable numbers of special needs students. It might also focus on developing a coordinated school choice and enrollment process to ensure that Oakland families are fully informed about all of their school options—including traditional district schools and charter schools.

Based on the selected activities of a citywide charter strategy, it is important to identify and agree on metrics for tracking progress across these activities. With extra bandwidth and increased alignment, key activities could be assessed as part of a broader shared measurement system, which requires collecting data and measuring results consistently on a short list of indicators at the community level to keep everyone focused and aligned on common goals.

The exhibit below provides a high-level illustration with a subset of activities and metrics that align with potential goals.

Illustrative Activities and Metrics for a Citywide Charter Strategy

POTENTIAL GOALS	SELECTED ACTIVITIES	SAMPLE METRICS
1 IMPROVE CHARTER SECTOR COORDINATION	• Hold bi-monthly charter principal meetings to share practices and challenges around teacher effectiveness. • Hold quarterly meetings with district and charter leaders to explore opportunities for jointly addressing facilities needs. • Develop a fundraising consortium to help charter schools jointly identify and apply for grants and other funding.	• Increased grant dollars raised • Increased cost savings from special education consortium • Increased number of charters in district buildings • Decreased facilities costs
2 INVEST IN CAPACITY BUILDING FOR CHARTERS	• Bring human capital providers (e.g., NLNS, TFA) to a city to expand pipeline of high quality teachers and leaders. • Partner with a performance management organization (e.g., Achievement Network) to train and support charter schools on the use of data-driven instruction. • Incubate new schools by providing office space, start-up grants and individual technical assistance.	• Increased number of quality teachers recruited to and retained by charter schools • Increased number of quality charter applications awarded • Increased percentage of charters using data to inform instructional practice
3 IMPROVE DISTRICT-CHARTER ALIGNMENT	• Hold quarterly meetings with district and charter leaders to explore opportunities for jointly addressing facilities needs. • Hold joint parent nights, and school choice information sessions with the district. • Work with district leadership to develop a facilities master plan and transparent process for assigning buildings. • Form a joint task force to ensure that charter and district schools are equipped to serve, and are held accountable for serving, equitable numbers of special needs students.	• Increased percentage of special needs students served by charters • Increased adoption of common school performance metrics among district and charter schools • Increased awareness among area families about school choice options

Source: FSG research and analysis

Appendix G provides more detail on the range of activities that a citywide charter strategy could potentially address.

Define Organizing Structure

Continuous communication and supporting infrastructure are also important components of developing a successful citywide charter strategy. Without ongoing communication, a citywide charter strategy may fall apart or fail to adapt to changing needs and conditions. Topics of regular discussions among charter stakeholders could include outlining a clear process for the selection of partners in order to reach identified goals or helping to clarify key infrastructure needs in order to support the effort going forward.

To complement and support continuous communication, a certain level of staffing and resources is necessary to launch and sustain a citywide charter strategy. Research suggests that assuming greater collaboration will occur without a supporting infrastructure is one of the key reasons why a collective citywide effort may fail.

Depending on how local stakeholders prioritize goals and activities, varying levels of support infrastructure will be required, as shown by these three organizing options:

Option 1: Existing Entity with Low-resource Requirements (e.g., leverage the efforts of an existing charter support provider or local education organization)

If an existing entity plays a coordinating role, with the primary goal of increasing charter sector coordination, resource requirements would be fairly minimal. One dedicated staff member would likely be sufficient to play a coordinating and convening role, which would keep costs low. The CCSA is currently pursuing this organizing model with the Oakland Collaborative, in which one dedicated staff member is serving as a point person for increasing coordination and alignment between charter stakeholders.

- Budget: $100K-$500K per year
- Staffing: 1-2 FTEs
- Role: Coordinator/facilitator

Option 2: New Entity with Moderate-resource Requirements (e.g., establish a backbone supporting organization with dedicated staff acting as project manager, facilitator and data manager)

This entity would have a dedicated staff which can plan, manage and support a citywide charter strategy through ongoing facilitation, technology and communications support, data collection and reporting and handling administration/logistics for meetings between charter stakeholders. This backbone support entity would not necessarily provide resource-intensive capacity-building support through grants, so resource requirements can be kept relatively low.

- Budget: $500K+ per year
- Staffing: 3+ FTEs
- Role: Project manager, facilitator, and data manager

Option 3: New Entity with High-resource Requirements (e.g., create a city-based CSO like New Schools for New Orleans or the New York City Charter School Center)

Creating a new organization with a broader set of goals around capacity-building, grantmaking, advocacy and increasing charter sector and charter-district coordination would be a much more resource-intensive option. Staffing and funding levels would vary based on the scope of each activity.

- Budget: $4M+ per year
- Staffing: 3+ FTEs
- Role: Funder, incubator, technical assistance provider, coordinator, advocate

These three options represent a continuum on a spectrum of organizing options. There are many other variations within this spectrum to consider. While substantial philanthropic dollars may provide more leverage and influence, it is not necessarily a prerequisite to the successful development or management of a citywide charter strategy. According to interviews, national and local funders that have invested in existing city-based CSOs see the potential to pull together a citywide strategy without millions of dollars in funding, particularly in smaller cities, as long as the backbone supporting organization on the ground can effectively bring together multiple stakeholders to make it happen. Fee-for-service models at the city level could lessen the need for philanthropic support over time, but resources-strapped charter schools might not be able to embrace this approach.

VII. KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHARTER STAKEHOLDERS

Based on the implementation steps outlined in the previous section, the following are important for various charter stakeholders in considering the development and implementation of citywide charter strategies:

- **Local Authorizers:** Given their mandate to ensure quality, local authorizers can provide guidance on accountability standards that a citywide charter strategy should prioritize. If the authorizer is the district, this also represents a promising avenue to increase coordination and alignment between charters and the district. Authorizers should also decide whether or not they will provide services to charters beyond their accountability role. If authorizers do decide to play a more active role in providing support to charters, these efforts should complement rather than compete with services being provided by other organizations such as state CSOs or other nonprofit providers.

- **Operators:** New charter operators will likely stay focused on launching and supporting their own schools, and will therefore be most interested in ensuring that a focus of the citywide charter strategy is on supporting specific school needs such as teacher professional development and new school incubation. In contrast, mature operators from independent charters or from CMOs may be more aware of the cross-cutting sector needs that a citywide charter strategy can address (e.g., local advocacy). These seasoned leaders can play a critical role in providing feedback or championing the effort to convene fellow charter leaders as a citywide charter strategy is beginning to take shape.

- **State CSOs:** As the statewide champion of the charter movement, state CSOs will continue to play a vital role in ensuring a strong collective voice at the state level. In addition, state CSOs should work in partnership with local organizations in cities to avoid duplication of effort. In cities where other organizations beyond state CSOs are serving as the lead player in a citywide charter strategy, state CSOs can play a key role in ensuring that local efforts align to state-level efforts, particularly around charter quality.

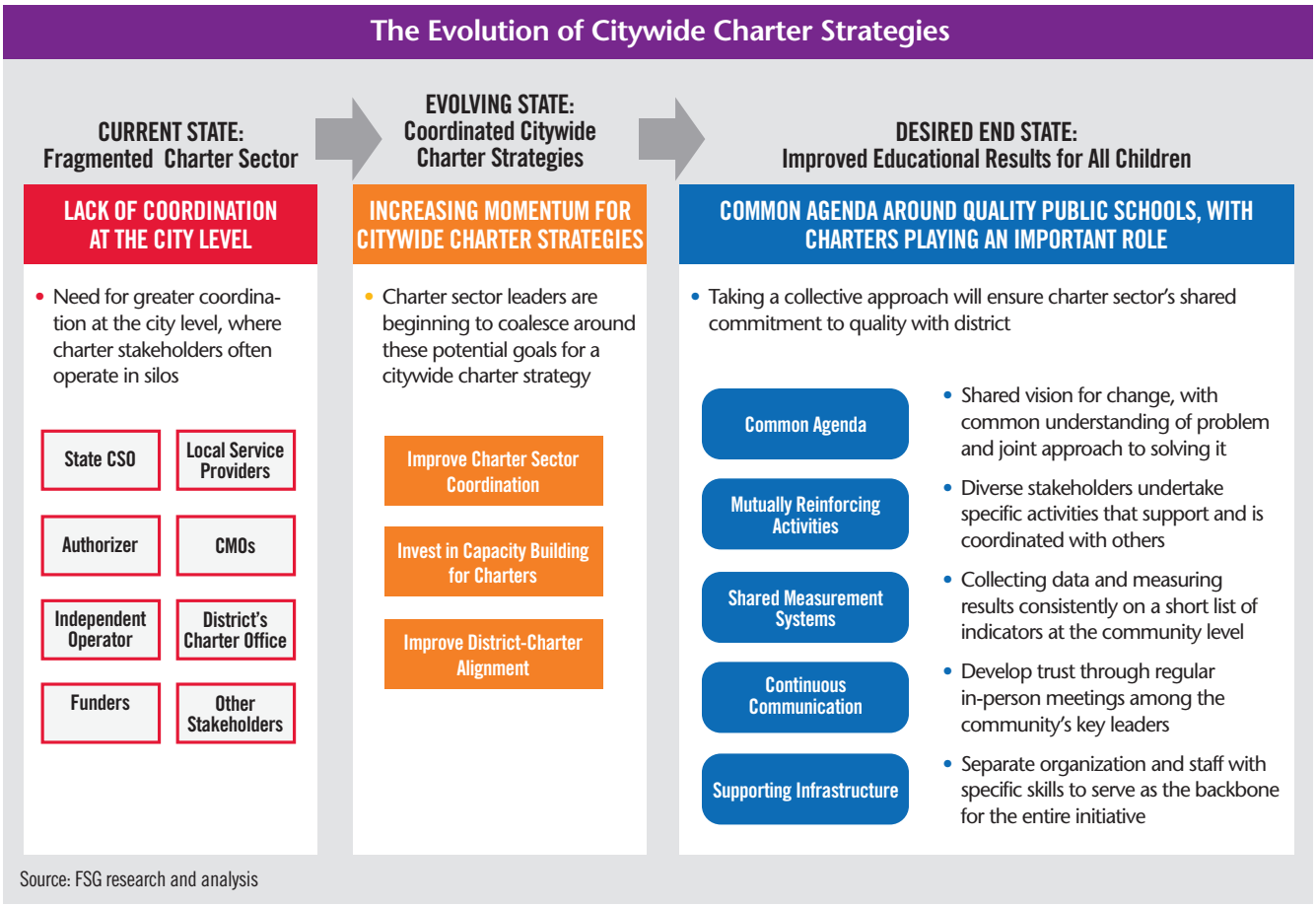
- **Funders:** A local family foundation or community foundation with understanding of city-specific context could play an important role in bringing together multiple organizations to identify a common agenda for a city's charter sector. While large city-based CSOs (with a $4M+ per year budget) will likely not be the primary replication model in other cities given resource requirements, national funders can also play an important role by selectively targeting their philanthropy in cities where they see growing interest in a more coordinated citywide strategy. In those cities where the environment is conducive for a more coordinated citywide strategy, national funders can incentivize collective action by working closely with local funders who may have knowledge of specific local charter needs. This national/local funder partnership could include co-funding local support organizations that provide the "backbone" to facilitate best practice sharing and convening in specific cities. For citywide charter strategies that include grantmaking and data collection for their activities, these national and local funders should continue to pool resources where appropriate, while also ensuring transparency around who is funded and why those organizations are selected.

- **Existing City-based CSOs:** In cities where city-based CSOs exist (e.g., New York, Newark, New Orleans and Washington, D.C.), these entities can build on their success by continuing to increase coordination across a broad range of charter stakeholders. By drawing from insights in this report, city-based CSOs can serve as champions for replicating proven charter models, while also supporting efforts that reduce inefficiency and duplication of efforts at the local level. As charter market share continues to increase, city-based CSOs must consistently maintain relationships with the district to better coordinate service provision. In addition, city-based CSOs should continue to embrace opportunities to share lessons learned with charter stakeholders in other cities that are exploring a citywide charter strategy.

VIII. FUTURE VISION

As described in previous sections, there is a growing need for a more systemic approach to improving charter performance across a city. Moving forward, citywide charter strategies have the potential to create a shared focus on high quality schools. This emphasis on quality will ensure that charter schools have a seat at the table when discussing more broadly collective efforts that ensure high student achievement across the district/city.

The image below illustrates a local charter sector's progression from current state (isolated impact due to fragmentation of local charter resources), evolving state (greater coordination of local charter resources), and ultimate end state (charters play a key role as part of collective district or citywide efforts to significantly improve school quality and student results).



Source: FSG research and analysis

The potential goals of a citywide charter strategy may be sequenced in different ways in each city, depending on local context and the extent to which charters and district stakeholders are already aligned. Before reaching the desired end state in which charters are effectively integrated as part of a collective district reform effort, a city's charter stakeholders must first reach clarity on what they plan to accomplish through greater coordination and increased investment in capacity building.

The promise of successful citywide charter strategies involves moving beyond isolated impact to embody collective impact. This more collective approach requires rigorous, fact-based analysis and strong facilitation to identify gaps and needs, develop a common vision and agenda across a range of stakeholders, determine shared goals and indicators, create coherent multi-organization strategies based on differentiated but aligned activities, put in place ongoing learning and communication loops and ensure that the correct infrastructure and capacity is built to sustain a citywide effort in the long term.

To understand the potential for greater collective impact for charters, the education sector serves as fertile proving ground in other contexts. For example, Strive, a collaborative incubated by the KnowledgeWorks Foundation, has brought together local leaders to improve education throughout greater Cincinnati. Working in partnership with a core group of over 300 community leaders, Strive facilitates a cradle-to-career citywide collective education strategy. Despite the recession and budget cuts, 34 of the 53 success indicators that Strive tracks have shown positive trends, including improvements in high school graduation rates and fourth-grade reading and math scores. The Strive example is not specific to the charter context, but it does provide useful lessons learned for charter stakeholders on the benefits of bringing together a wide-ranging set of actors to address a collective agenda. Appendix H provides greater detail on Strive's model.

In conclusion, citywide charter strategies have the potential to reduce fragmentation and improve charter sector coordination. Local charter stakeholders can take a systematic approach to developing a citywide charter strategy by conducting a situation assessment, identifying goals and supporting activities and ensuring proper levels of infrastructure support at the local level. With a more coordinated citywide charter strategy, the entire charter sector in a city can be strengthened, and charters can still retain their autonomy while benefiting from a more collective approach at the city level.

As the research has confirmed with a broad range of charter stakeholders across the country, citywide charter strategies have the potential to improve efficiency and quality among charters, which can ultimately result in improved educational results for all children.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: List of Interviews

KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN *EXISTING* CITYWIDE CHARTER STRATEGIES

- Aaron Listhaus, Interim Director, Office of Charter Schools, New York City Department of Education
- Christina Brown, Vice President, Strategy & Development, New York City Charter School Center
- Emary Aronson, Managing Director for Education, Robin Hood Foundation
- Bill Phillips, President, New York Charter Schools Association
- Josh Edelman, Deputy Chief, Office of School Innovation, District of Columbia Public Schools
- Lauren Martin, Principal, NewSchools Venture Fund
- Stacy Gauthier, Principal, Renaissance Charter School (NYC)
- Lizz Pawlsen, Managing Director, Explore Schools
- Harvey Newman, Director, Charter School Technical Assistance Center, CEI-PEA
- Mashea Ashton, CEO, Newark Charter School Fund
- Julie Wright, Chief Program Officer, Fisher Fund
- Adam Porsch, Program Officer, Gates Foundation
- Phoebe Boyer, Executive Director, Tiger Foundation
- Cathy Lund, Program Officer, Walton Foundation
- Neerav Kingsland, Chief Strategy Officer, New Schools for New Orleans

KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN *HIGH-POTENTIAL* CITYWIDE CHARTER STRATEGIES

- Jenna Stauffer, Director of Strategic Development, Lighthouse Community Charter School
- Laura Flaxman, Principal, ARISE Charter School
- Tatiana Epanchin, Regional Superintendent, Bay Area, Aspire Public Schools
- Brian Rogers, President, Rogers Family Foundation
- Nick Driver, Vice President, California Charter Schools Association
- Paige Hirsch, Interim Director, Office of Charter Schools, Oakland Unified School District
- John Hall, Founder, East Bay Charter Connect
- Peter Laub, Executive Vice President, EdTec
- Jim Griffin, President, Colorado League of Charter Schools
- Matt Candler, Founder and CEO, 4.0 Schools
- Greg Thompson, Executive Director, Center for Charter School Excellence
- Bill Simms, President, Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools
- Parker Baxter, Director of Charter Schools, Denver Public Schools
- Peggie Garcia, Senior Consultant, American Institutes of Research
- Scott Pearson, Associate Assistant Deputy Secretary, Office of Innovation and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education
- Hae-Sin Thomas, President, UrbanEd Solutions
- Kate Nicol, Director, Oakland Charter Schools Collaborative, California Charter Schools Association
- Alan Coverstone, Director of Charter Schools, Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools

Appendix B: Comparing and Contrasting Existing City-based CSOs

Comparing and contrasting existing city-based CSOs can offer useful insight for those who are exploring the potential of more collective action of a local charter sector. Similarities between city-based CSOs include:

- **Rooted in Local Context:** City-based CSOs are rooted firmly in local context and are structured around unique sets of goals and priorities (e.g., in Newark, with uneven charter quality, a small sector, and an uncertain political environment, work has included direct support to improve schools and scaling promising providers).
- **Flexible and Nimble:** Having emerged to provide on-the-ground expertise to the local charter sector, city-based CSOs' ability to operate with flexibility and nimbleness allows them to continually evolve to meet the shifting needs in a city (e.g., New Schools for New Orleans has tailored its local advocacy strategy around an aggressive reform agenda for charter schools, which has required increased attention over time given that charters now account for more than 60 percent of student enrollment in the city).
- **Grantmaking and Direct Support Activities:** Existing city-based CSOs all conduct grantmaking of various levels and also engage in activities that directly support their grantees and the overall reform environment and sector (e.g., capacity building and re-granting).
- **Resource-intensive Efforts Requiring Local and National Funding:** Although exact amounts vary, existing city-based CSOs in New York City, Newark, and Washington, D.C., are clustered around the same amount (~$20M+) that is invested over three to five years.

In addition to these similarities, there are also several key differences between city-based CSOs given the local context:

- **Organizational and Decision-making Structures:** With different organizational histories (i.e. created anew or from existing intermediaries), city-based CSOs utilize a range of organizational structures and decision-making bodies. For example, the New York Charter City School Center has a nine-member board with three major funders as well as two seats for the New York City Department of Education's Chancellor, two seats for charter stakeholders, and two seats for community members. In contrast, the DC Schools Fund is a short-term investment fund that is managed and governed by NewSchools Venture Fund.
- **Staff and Overhead Size:** Existing efforts differ dramatically in staff size, largely dependent on the degree of support services provided directly (e.g., New York City) or through consultants or grants to providers (e.g., Newark and Washington).
- **Approaches to Funding Schools and Charter Service Providers:** The DC Schools Fund, Newark Charter Schools Fund, and New Schools for New Orleans invest in organizations like Teach for America (TFA) that support the charter sector. The New York City Charter School Center also funded organizations like TFA to begin working with charters in New York several years ago, and after jump-starting that work, the Charter Center has now evolved its work to provide services more directly.
- **Governing Structure of Supporting Systems:** Another important dimension that shapes city-based CSOs in different ways is the overall governance structure of the public school systems in each city. For example, New York City and Washington, D.C., have mayoral control, whereas Newark is under state control. This different local context plays an important role in shaping each city-based CSOs' strategic priorities, particularly around how these organizations engage with state, district and local political leaders on issues such as facilities and funding.

The following table provides more information on city-based CSOs' goals, structure and governance and major funders:

	NEWARK CHARTER SCHOOL FUND	NEWSCHOOLS VENTURE FUND'S DC SCHOOLS FUND	NYC CHARTER SCHOOL CENTER	NEW SCHOOLS FOR NEW ORLEANS
GOALS	• NCSF makes grants to support the quality and sustainability of Newark's charter schools. NCSF is dedicated to improving Newark's charter schools and generally to creating a thriving public school sector in Newark that prepares all Newark public school students for college and work.	• The goal of the DC Schools Fund is to improve the opportunities of public school students in Washington—particularly those underserved—by strengthening the city's charter schools. The Fund expects to: – Significantly improve charter school academic performance – Establish a sustainable infrastructure in DC that will continue to drive the sector to higher levels of achievement	• The Charter Center's mission is to expand access to high-quality public schools for all students in NYC. • The Charter Center believes that charter schools are partners in a larger effort to build and maintain a great system of public schools. As such, the Charter Center is dedicated to fostering an environment in which charter schools can open and flourish.	• The objective of NSNO is to achieve excellent public schools for every child in New Orleans. • It is focused on expanding the supply of high quality charters, and turning around low-performing schools through charter re-starts.
STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE	• Board includes staff representatives from national funders. Board meets every 30-60 days to make investment decisions recommended by staff. Local funders co-invest through matching, but do not hold board seats (convened annually). • Day-to-day operations are conducted by a team of six staff and individual consultants.	• The DC Schools Fund is a short-term investment fund that is part of NewSchools Venture Fund, and as such is led, staffed, and governed by NewSchools. • Representatives from foundations participating in the Fund and members of the community comprise the Fund's Investment Strategy Group, which advises NewSchools on strategy development and investment decisions.	• Local nonprofit intermediary provides governance and structure with a full-time staff of 20 and several consultants. • The board has nine members with three major funders as well as two seats for NYC DOE Schools Chancellor, two seats for charter stakeholders and two seats for community members.	• Local nonprofit intermediary provides governance and structure. • The board has seven members with one major funder. • Thirteen staff and partner organizations support charter development, human capital and advocacy work.
MAJOR FUNDERS	**National Funders** • Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation • The Doris and Donald Fisher Fund • The Robertson Foundation • The Walton Family Foundation **Local Co-Investors** • MCJ Amelior Foundation • Prudential Foundation • Victoria Foundation • GEM Foundation	**National Funders** • Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation • The Doris and Donald Fisher Fund • Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation • The Michael and Susan Dell Foundation • The Robertson Foundation • The Walton Family Foundation • The CityBridge Foundation • The Meyer Foundation	**National Funders** • The Robertson Foundation • Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation **Local Co-Investors** • The Robin Hood Foundation • Joe and Carol Reich (through the Pumpkin Foundation) • The Clark Foundation • Leon Lowenstein Foundation • The Peter & Carmen Lucia Buck Foundation	**National Funders** • NewSchools Venture Fund • The Walton Family Foundation

Source: Adapted from FSG's recent research, interviews and analysis conducted for New Schools for New Orleans

Additional information on city-based CSOs' strategic priorities and activities are on the next page.

	NEWARK CHARTER SCHOOL FUND	NEWSCHOOLS VENTURE FUND'S DC SCHOOLS FUND	NYC CHARTER SCHOOL CENTER	NEW SCHOOLS FOR NEW ORLEANS
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	• Human capital • Aid to mature schools • Charter school incubation • Facilities finance and access: advocates for access by charter schools to under-used facilities and vacant land throughout Newark • Program evaluation and advocacy: funds data collection and program evaluation work in Newark's charter school sector, with particular interest in creating systems for the collection and warehousing of student-level data for multi-year longitudinal analysis of Newark charter schools performance • Increasingly has also significantly invested in school turnaround	Significantly improve charter school academic performance by: • Increasing the number of high-performing charter schools through investments in new school start-ups and growing single-site schools and CMOs • Helping potential high-performers improve by investing in school support organizations that help schools do their work better, including human capital organizations and data management and analysis solutions • Creating an environment of accountability for results by investing in advocacy, organizing and parent training organizations	• Policy and advocacy: building awareness and public support for charter schools through outreach, research, communications and parent coordination • New school development: the New School Institute helps schools in the planning and start-up phases • Sustainability and operational excellence: a range of services to help schools improve operations, reduce costs, share best practices and build their leadership pipelines • Charter 3.0: programs that explore expansion of the charter model and encourage charter-district collaborations to improve education for all students	• Human capital • School support • New school development • Advocacy and communication (to create a reform-driven environment) • School turnaround—recently received i3 grant to replace failing schools with charter re-starts
ACTIVITIES	• Grantmaking • Direct support to schools • Scanning the landscape/R&D • Advocacy/"seat at the table"	• Make high-impact investments in the market, often serving as a "market-maker" • "Connect the Dots" by convening school support organizations to share best practices and maximize ability to meet school needs • Identify system-wide problems and opportunities, advise funders and policy makers • Aggregate philanthropy	• Outreach and education to lawmakers at local and state level • Conducts research and gathers and disseminates data on charter sector • Parent advocacy network educates and rallies parents for charters • Sector-wide convening and troubleshooting • Over 60 trainings/workshops to support high-quality new school development • Makes grants and provides loans and incubation space to start-up schools • Special education cooperatives and ELL consortium • Principal support network and emerging leaders fellowship • Facilitation of NYC's District-Charter Compact • Direct services (for a fee) that promote the sector	• Strategic investment in capacity-building through funding and partnerships with human capital providers (e.g., teachNOLA (TNTP) and New Leaders for New Schools) and performance management providers (e.g., Achievement Network and STEP Program) • New school incubation • School support (board development, leadership training, operational support) • Advocacy, communications and parent outreach

Source: Adapted from FSG's recent research, interviews and analysis conducted for New Schools for New Orleans

Appendix C: Success Factors and Challenges of Existing City-based CSOs

Key Success Factors for Existing City-based CSOs

KEY SUCCESS FACTOR	CRITICAL ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS	REPRESENTATIVE QUOTES
Local Political Will	• **Support from district leaders:** Reform-minded district leadership should view charters as a key part of district's reform strategy. • **Charter-friendly policies:** Effective coordination of state/local advocacy efforts is necessary around key issues (e.g. facilities, funding), should be combined with strategies for tapping parents' support for charter policies	*"Support from the Mayor and the DOE was critical to the early success of NYC Charter Center."* *— City-based CSO leader*
Focus on Quality over Quantity	• **Accountability:** All schools, both charter and non-charter, should be held accountable to quality standards. • **High standards:** CMOs set high bar for quality, and authorizers exhibit strong capacity to enforce quality.	*"A new (citywide) entity needs to 'get dirty' and focus on low-quality schools."* *— Charter reformer*
Clear Delineation of Responsibilities	• **Transparency:** Open communication is necessary between local charter leaders (e.g., state-level CSO, local CSO, authorizers, operators) to avoid duplication of effort. • **Independence:** City-based CSOs should have a working relationship with the district, but ideally it should not be a formal affiliate or extension of the district.	*"We don't look at (city CSO) as competition. We look at it as collaboration."* *— District leader*
Robust Human Capital Pipeline	• **Charter school talent:** Supporting a strong talent pipeline is essential for effective charter school leaders and teachers.	*"First you need to establish human capital capacity."* *— Charter reformer*

Source: FSG research and analysis

Key Challenges for Existing City-based CSOs

High Turnover of District/City Leadership	Stakeholder Alignment	Availability of Philanthropic Funding	Meeting Diverse Charter Needs
• **Turnover stifles momentum:** District and city leadership are usually not in positions for more than four years, restricting the ability to maintain momentum of city-based CSOs. • **Losing champions:** The departure of a vocal district leader can potentially slow progress of a citywide movement.	• **Lack of shared vision:** Charters must be seen as key element of larger reform strategy. • **Concerns over bureaucracy:** Leaders must be thoughtful about whether a city-based CSO draws from existing resources versus creates something new from scratch.	• **Limits of private philanthropy:** Outside of large urban areas like New York, Washington, DC, Chicago, and LA, mid-size markets like Nashville may struggle to attract significant philanthropic funding to sustain a resource-intensive city-based CSO.	• **Varying needs:** Charter operators have very different needs depending on their stage of development and whether they are CMOs or independent operators. • **Mix of services:** Given the sector's diversity, determining meaningful services/collaboration is a challenge.
"Unless leadership is stable politically and committed to charters becoming a key piece of reform, a citywide movement cannot work." *— Charter reformer*	*"We're pulled in so many directions already. I get concerned about being spread too thin."* *— Charter school leader*	*"You can't sustain a movement on $7M/year, so you need a model that is less resource-intensive."* *— State CSO leader*	*"As a veteran charter leader, I have a lot of systems in place, and I don't necessarily want to collaborate with a start-up school. Our needs are very different."* *— Charter school leader*

Source: FSG research and analysis

Appendix D: Oakland Situation Assessment

Oakland's Education Landscape

Oakland, California, is a midsized urban district located in the San Francisco Bay Area. Oakland serves a racially and socio-economically diverse population of 46,000 students.[10]

DEMOGRAPHIC	2008-09
Total Enrollment	**46,000**
African American	34.8%
Hispanic or Latino	37.3%
Asian	13.4%
White	6.5%
Other*	8%
Free or Reduced Lunch	68.1%
English Language Learners	30.6%

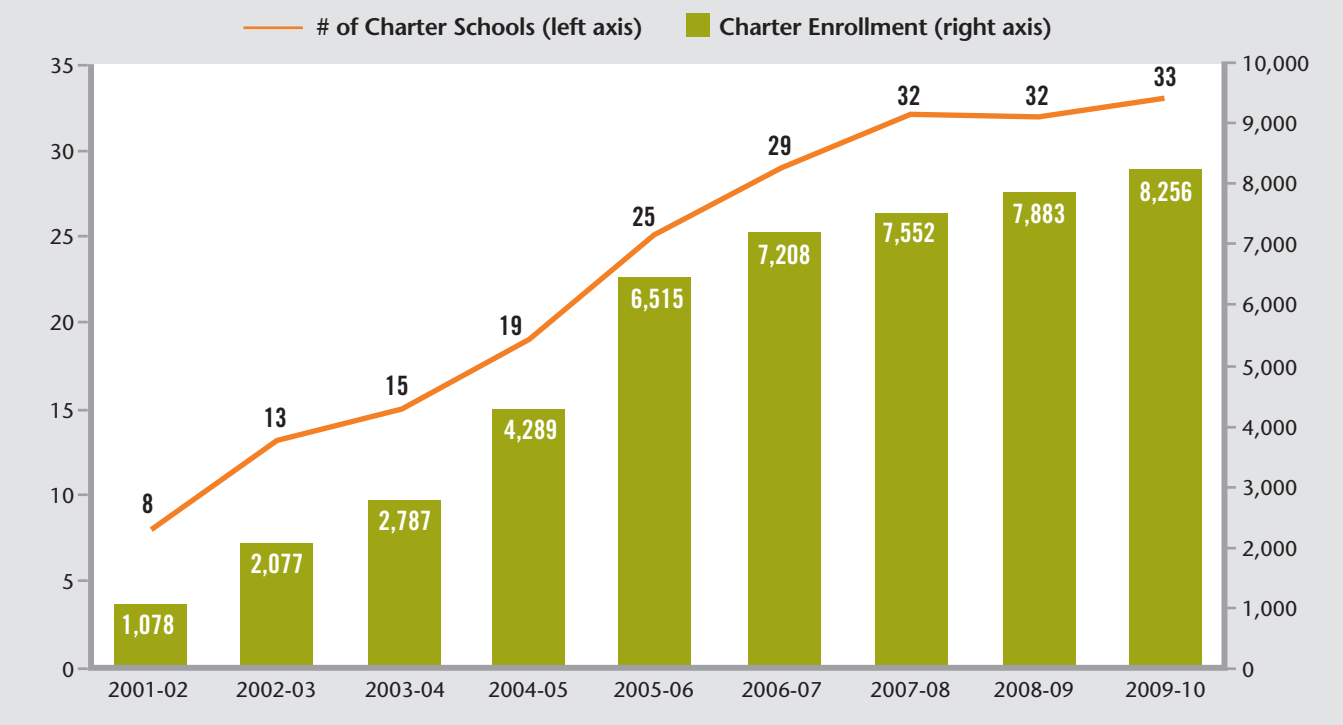
*Includes American Indian, Pacific Islander, Filipino, Multi-racial

In 1993, the first charter school opened in Oakland, followed by a significant number of new school openings between 1999 and 2007.[11] As of fall 2010, 33 charter schools were in operation in Oakland, serving more than 8,000 students and accounting for approximately one-fifth of the student population.[12]

Understanding Local Charter Needs in Oakland

- **Facilities:** Despite high vacancy rates in district buildings, very few Oakland charters occupy district facilities. Oakland charter leaders spend a significant portion of time and dollars financing, developing or renovating facilities.
- **Funding:** California lags behind the national average on per pupil funding, and, when adjusted for labor costs, ranks near the bottom at 43 out of 50 states.[13] To compound the problem, there is a significant funding gap

Oakland Charter Enrollment, 2001-2010



10 Ed-Data website http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us/Navigation/fsTwoPanel.asp?bottom=%2Fprofile.asp%3Flevel%3D06%26reportNumber%3D16
11 OUSD Office of Charter Schools
12 Oakland Unified School District website
13 *How California Ranks*, EdSource, September 2010

between district and charter schools in California. Charter schools, on average, are funded at 69 percent of district schools.[14] Significant cuts to California's education budget, coupled with years of fiscal insolvency, have resulted in severe cuts to Oakland's public schools.[15]

- **Leadership Development:** While several human capital organizations have a presence in Oakland, there is little support in place to help build the capacity of existing principals or other leadership team members (e.g., assistant principals, deans, chief academic officers, and chief operating officers).
- **Board Development:** Building high-capacity governing boards is a critical need in Oakland, and an area that is often overlooked. While a few charter support organizations provide governance workshops and customized board trainings, they are costly, and typically focus on a fairly narrow set of compliance-focused issues, such as open meeting laws and policies, rather than a broader set of governance best practices.

Mapping Existing Players in Oakland

Multiple organizations provide support to Oakland charter schools in a variety of capacities, from authorizing and renewal to advocacy support, legal and technical assistance. As the table below illustrates, the charter ecosystem in Oakland is fairly robust, but there is a significant amount of duplication in the needs that each organization addresses.

Illustrative Ecosystem Map of Existing Charter Support Stakeholders in Oakland

Organization / Priority Needs	HUMAN CAPITAL	FACILITIES	SPECIAL EDUCATION	FUNDING	NEW SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT	COORDINATION/ ALIGNMENT	ADVOCACY	ACCOUNTABILITY/ QUALITY
CCSA		✔		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Oakland Collaborative	✔	✔	✔	✔		✔	✔	
CSDC		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔		✔
EdTec		✔	✔	✔	✔			
East Bay Charter Connect	✔					✔		
GO Public Schools				✔		✔	✔	
OCO					✔		✔	
NLNS	✔							
Teach for America	✔							
Oakland Teaching Fellows (TNTP)	✔							
Rogers Family Foundation				✔			✔	

Source: Based on initial FSG research and analysis. Final version would require additional vetting with local stakeholders.

14 Follow The Money, Center for Education Reform, 2008: http://www.edreform.com/charter_schools/funding/chart.htm
15 "Oakland schools' budget balanced now, but funding outlook bleak," *San Francisco Chronicle,* December 16, 2010.

Preliminary Rating of the Support Environment in Oakland

KEY INDICATORS OF CITYWIDE CHARTER SUPPORT	RATING	EXPLANATION
State Policy Environment	Medium	State charter law provides room for growth; the governor is supportive of charters; and there is a clear process within the state law for renewal.
Local Political Support	Low	Mayor, school board and teachers union view charter schools through competitive rather than cooperative lens.
Strong Authorizing	High	OUSD's Office of Charter Schools recently underwent an overhaul of the authorizing process, resulting in much greater rigor and transparency and the voluntary closure of a number of lower performing charter schools.
District Support	Low	Relations between OUSD and the charter community are strained, and charters are often perceived as a "resource drain" rather than as a part of the reform strategy in Oakland.
High Performing Charters	High	Successful CMOs have a presence in Oakland (e.g., Aspire).
Infrastructure Support	Medium	There is an engaged local funder, strong advocacy and human capital organizations, and emerging interest in greater coordination. However, many local charter service organizations are not closely aligned.

Source: Based on initial FSG research and analysis. Final version would require additional vetting with local stakeholders.

Assessing the Support Environment

An assessment of the conditions that would support or hinder a citywide charter strategy in Oakland reveals a number of strengths and challenges. The chart above provides more detail on the extent to which Oakland's charter support environment meets FSG's preliminary assessment of "high," "medium" or "low" across multiple dimensions of charter support.

Building on the explanation listed in the chart, these additional factors should be considered as strengths when assessing Oakland's infrastructure support:

- **Engaged Local Funder:** While Oakland's philanthropic community is small, one local education foundation is highly engaged and well-respected, both by district and charter leaders, and is well-positioned to potentially help catalyze a citywide charter movement.
- **Strong Advocacy and Human Capital Organizations:** Several human capital and advocacy organizations have a strong presence in Oakland and could serve as important partners if additional funding were available to support charter school placements.
- **Emerging Interest in Greater Coordination:** Interviews revealed a strong desire for greater collaboration and coordination among charter operators, CSOs, funders and the district. Examples of charter-specific collaboration and best practice sharing in Oakland include:
  - *Teacher effectiveness:* The Oakland Collaborative (the local arm of the California Charter Schools Association) convened Oakland charter leaders to learn about Aspire Public Schools' talent management system aimed at recruiting, developing, and retaining highly effective teachers. The session generated strong interest in further collaboration on teacher effectiveness, and the Oakland Collaborative intends to continue to bring charter leaders together to strategize and share practices around this issue.
  - *College readiness:* Oakland Unified's Office of Charter Schools convened a group of district and charter principals from secondary schools to share practices and challenges around college readiness. Several charter leaders indicated that this was a highly valuable meeting and would welcome other opportunities to come together with district and charter leaders on this topic.
  - *Leadership development:* East Bay Charter Connect organized a school leadership network to provide a venue for peer support and problem solving for charter school leaders around instructional practice.

In addition to these strengths, there are also some challenges to consider with Oakland's charter support infrastructure:

- **Charter-to-charter Alignment:** Unlike most small cities, Oakland has a significant number of support organizations, many with differences of opinions about Oakland's charter movement and how best to support it, which may make it difficult to build consensus around a common agenda. Furthermore, it may be challenging to identify a lead organization that multiple stakeholders trust to champion a citywide movement.

- **Existing Infrastructure Support:** A city like Oakland that already has many uncoordinated actors in place, often with a strong sense of autonomy and different opinions about what is best for charter schools and education reform, may have more coordination hurdles than a city with fewer organizations.

- **Lack of Public and Private Funding:** Low per-pupil funding and a persistent budget deficit make it difficult to attract and partner with support organizations, such as human capital and performance management providers. For example, while New Leaders for New Schools has a presence in Oakland, they place few residents in charter schools because charters cannot typically afford the placement and program costs.[16] Partnering with national support organizations as part of a citywide strategy will require significant philanthropic funding. Alternatively, Oakland may need to identify local organizations to meet this need instead. While high-performing CMOs, such as Aspire Public Schools, are able to attract significant national funding given their scale and brand recognition, grant funding is scarce for independent charters, and fundraising capacity at the school level is limited given tight operating budgets.

- **Limited Political Support:** One interviewee in Oakland noted that the lack of political support for charters at the state and local level is something that "needs to be addressed first and foremost." Limited support from the mayor, school board, and other political leaders will pose particular challenges for a citywide charter strategy to overcome.

16 Research suggests that it could cost a charter school approximately approximately $85,000 a year to hire a new leader.

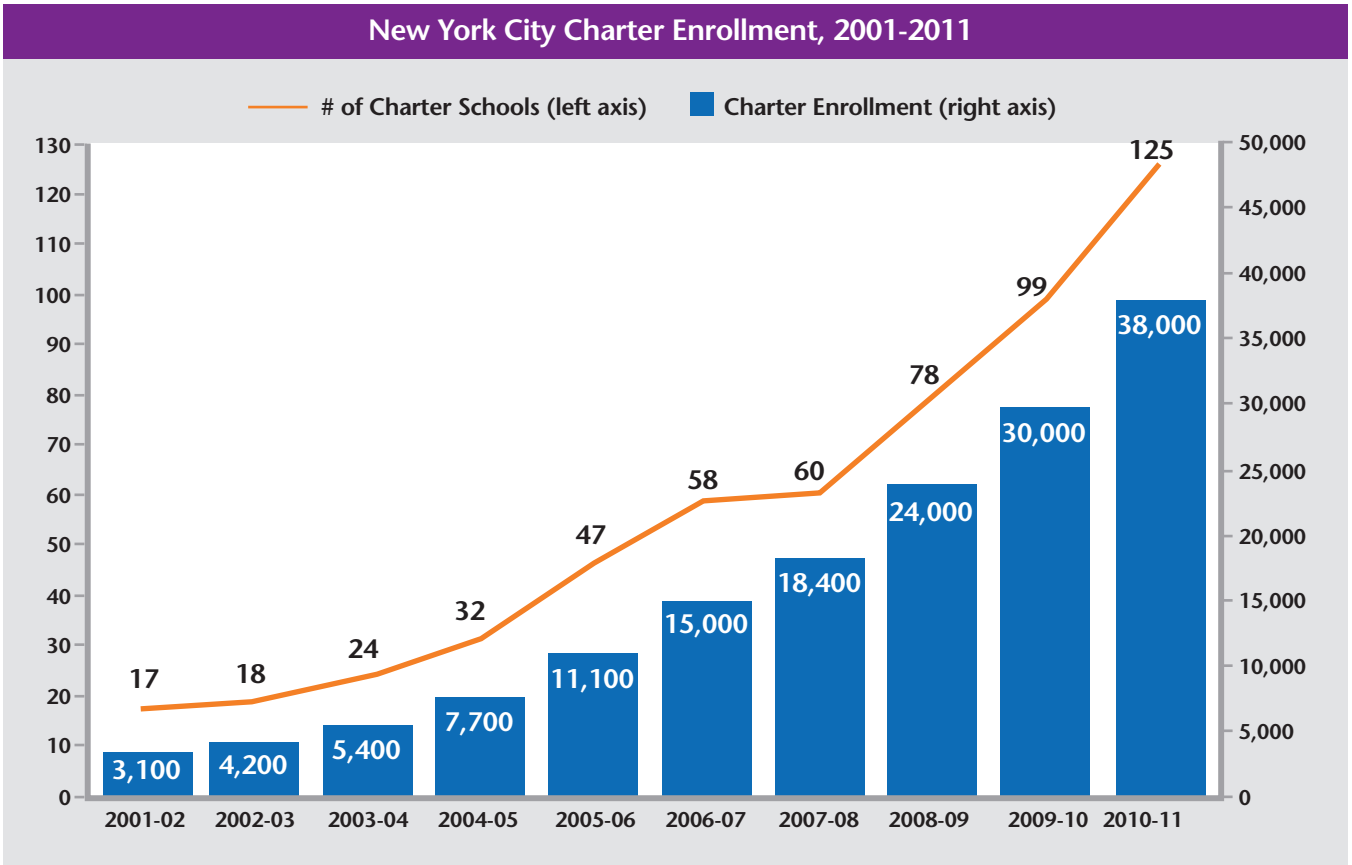
Appendix E: New York City Situation Assessment

New York City's Education Landscape

New York City is the largest school system in the country, serving 1.1 million students across nearly 1,700 schools.[17] New York's charter law was passed in 1998, and in 1999, 27 charter schools opened in New York City, followed by rapid expansion. As of 2010, there were 125 charter schools in operation serving 38,000 students.

Understanding Local Charter Needs in New York City[18]

- **Quality Assurance:** With a favorable policy climate, New York is attracting the most charter applications in a decade and opening over 20 new charter schools per year. This surge poses a challenge for the state's charter authorizers, who must employ flat or declining resources to effectively evaluate and oversee a growing sector. Funders, CSOs and even training programs all share the challenge of matching fast growth with continued educational quality.
- **Operations Funding:** New York charter schools are historically funded at a rate set proportionally to their local districts' spending. However, this formula was set aside in 2009-10 in a funding freeze, and similar freezes have been on the table in the state legislature ever since.
- **Facilities:** Although New York charter schools do not receive facilities funding, they have made use of re-purposed operating funding, generous philanthropy and, for about two-thirds of charter schools in New York City, rent-free use of underutilized district buildings. With philanthropy decreasing and the departure of charter-friendly mayor Michael Bloomberg, facilities are a growing concern.



17 New York City Department of Education: http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/default.htm
18 Information on local charter needs provided by the New York City Charter School Center

- **Serving Special Populations:** A new state law requires charters to increase their enrollment and retention of children with disabilities and English-language learners. Building charter leaders' technical capacity to accomplish this is an important need.

Mapping Existing Players in New York City

A number of organizations play an active role in supporting New York City's charter school movement, as shown in the illustrative ecosystem map below.

Illustrative Ecosystem Map of Existing Charter Support Stakeholders in New York City

Organization / Priority Needs	HUMAN CAPITAL	FACILITIES	SPECIAL EDUCATION	FUNDING	NEW SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT	COORDINATION/ ALIGNMENT	ADVOCACY	ACCOUNTABILITY/ QUALITY
NYC DOE		✔	✔		✔			✔
NYC Charter School Center	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
CEI-PEA	✔		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	
NY Charter Schools Association					✔		✔	✔
Democrats for Education Reform							✔	
Democracy Builders							✔	
Civic Builders		✔						
Building Excellent Schools	✔							
NYC Leadership Academy	✔							
NLNS	✔							
Teach for America	✔							
Robertson/Tiger Foundation				✔				
Robin Hood Foundation				✔				

Source: FSG research and analysis

Preliminary Rating of the Support Environment in New York City

KEY INDICATORS OF CITYWIDE CHARTER SUPPORT	RATING	EXPLANATION
State Policy Environment	Medium	State charter cap offers limited growth, but state law does include many of the model law's provisions for performance-based charter contracts.
Local Political Support	High	Strong mayoral support that counters resistance from teachers' unions and some local legislators.
Strong Authorizing	High	Rigorous, transparent process is in place in New York.
District Support	High	There was strong evidence of district/charter collaboration during Klein's tenure.
High Performing Charters	High	Charters often outperform their traditional district peers. CMOs like KIPP, Achievement First, and Uncommon Schools have a strong presence.
Infrastructure Support	High	There is an actively engaged local funder community and strong service provider network (e.g., beyond NYC Charter School Center, state CSO and groups like CEI-PEA are also actively involved in supporting charters in NYC).

Source: Based on initial FSG research and analysis. Final version would require additional vetting with local stakeholders.

Assessing the Support Environment

An assessment of the conditions that would support or hinder a citywide charter strategy in New York reveals a number of strengths and challenges. The chart above provides more detail on the extent to which New York's charter support environment meets FSG's preliminary assessment of "high," "medium" or "low" across multiple dimensions of charter support.

Building on the explanation in the chart, New York provides a number of compelling examples of ways in which charter stakeholders can increase coordination and alignment around common goals to achieve greater impact. Examples include:

Facilities

The New York City Charter School Center worked to create access to affordable space for New York's charter schools. These efforts have expanded access to affordable facilities in the following ways:

- Saved charter schools, on average, $800,000 annually by defeating the district's attempts to charge rent for shared space
- Helped build four new, state-of-the-art facilities, housing 2,100 students, through a partnership with Civic Builders
- Navigated 39 charter schools through the facilities planning and management process
- Persuaded New York's Education Department to allow charter schools to access tax-advantaged Qualified School Bonds to lower the cost of financing buildings

Human Capital

The Charter Center partnered with Building Excellent Schools, New Leaders for New Schools and Teach for America to recruit and place talented teachers and leaders in charter schools. As a result of these partnerships, 23 school leaders and 120 teachers were placed, and six new charter schools were started. In addition, the Charter Center's Principal Support Network provides existing school leaders with a year-long development program that builds personal leadership skills and the leadership capacity of schools, helping to curb the sector's high turnover rate.

"I do think a city approach strategy is a good thing, but it can get very problematic if funders are dictating the kinds of services or approach a fund/CSO takes."

— Charter expert

Funding

The New York Charter Schools Association (NYCSA) partnered with Democrats for Education Reform, Harlem Success (CMO), Brighter Choice Foundation (CMO) National Heritage Academies (Education Management Organization [EMO]) and Mayor Bloomberg's government affairs team to remove a two-year statutory funding freeze. Lifting the freeze represented a statewide gain of $65M for charters (approximately 8-15 percent increase) in a year where district schools averaged a 2 percent cut. Having NYCSA serve as the lead organization on the effort for an extended period of time was an important success factor, particularly when attempts to pass Race to the Top legislation occurred during the freeze effort. During the Race to the Top effort, it was only through close coordination with these allies (particularly Democrats for Education Reform and the Mayor's office) that NYCSA was able to make sure that the governor and legislative leaders did not use RttT success as an excuse to keep the $65M freeze in place.[19]

Special Education

The Charter Center established special education cooperatives in three boroughs to increase the capacity of charters to serve special needs students. These cooperatives share challenges and best practices, engage in joint professional development and fundraising and trade vendor information.

Advocacy

The Charter Center, the New York City Department of Education, the New York Charter Schools Association and Democrats for Education Reform partner to develop annual policy action plans, create charter-friendly legislation and coordinate the work required to defeat anti-charter legislation. The Charter Center regularly connects with the city's charter leaders through its School Leaders Advocacy and Equity Committee, which sets local charter policy priorities and coordinates mobilization efforts for advocacy events. NYCSA also coordinates with city schools, but as part of its broader statewide communications. NYCSA usually takes the lead on the formal effort to describe the impact of bills—both to schools and legislators. However, NYCSA closely coordinates this "memo work" with the various stakeholders. This is especially true in the area of facilities legislation where the Charter Center, Civic Builders and Brighter Choice Foundation are frequently more expert.[20]

> **"We work together. We understand where our roles are similar and different."**
>
> — New York City Charter School Expert

Despite significant progress in creating a favorable environment for New York City's charter schools, a number of factors continue to threaten the growth and sustainability of the charter movement in the city. These challenges include:

- **Fragmentation Between Independents and CMOs:** According to one interviewee from an independent charter school in New York City, "CMOs navigate at a higher plane and at a political influence different from ours." However, another interviewee in New York noted that CMOs and independents can play differentiated but important roles on issues such as advocacy.
- **Lack of Alignment Around High-leverage Support for Charters:** Some interviewees suggested that charter stakeholders in New York lack a common definition of how best to foster the growth of high quality schools. For example, some organizations are providing intensive start-up support to all charter school teams of all stages of development, while others believe in only working with those teams who have already demonstrated the capacity to be successful.
- **State and Local Advocacy Voice:** One key priority moving forward will be identifying areas of alignment between local advocacy and state advocacy. As one interviewee suggested, local advocacy efforts should focus on meeting city-specific needs, and should not conflict with messages already being delivered at the state level around policy change for charters.

19 Information on funding freeze provided by New York Charter School Association
20 Information on state and local advocacy provided by New York Charter School Association

Appendix F: Denver Situation Assessment

Denver's Education Landscape

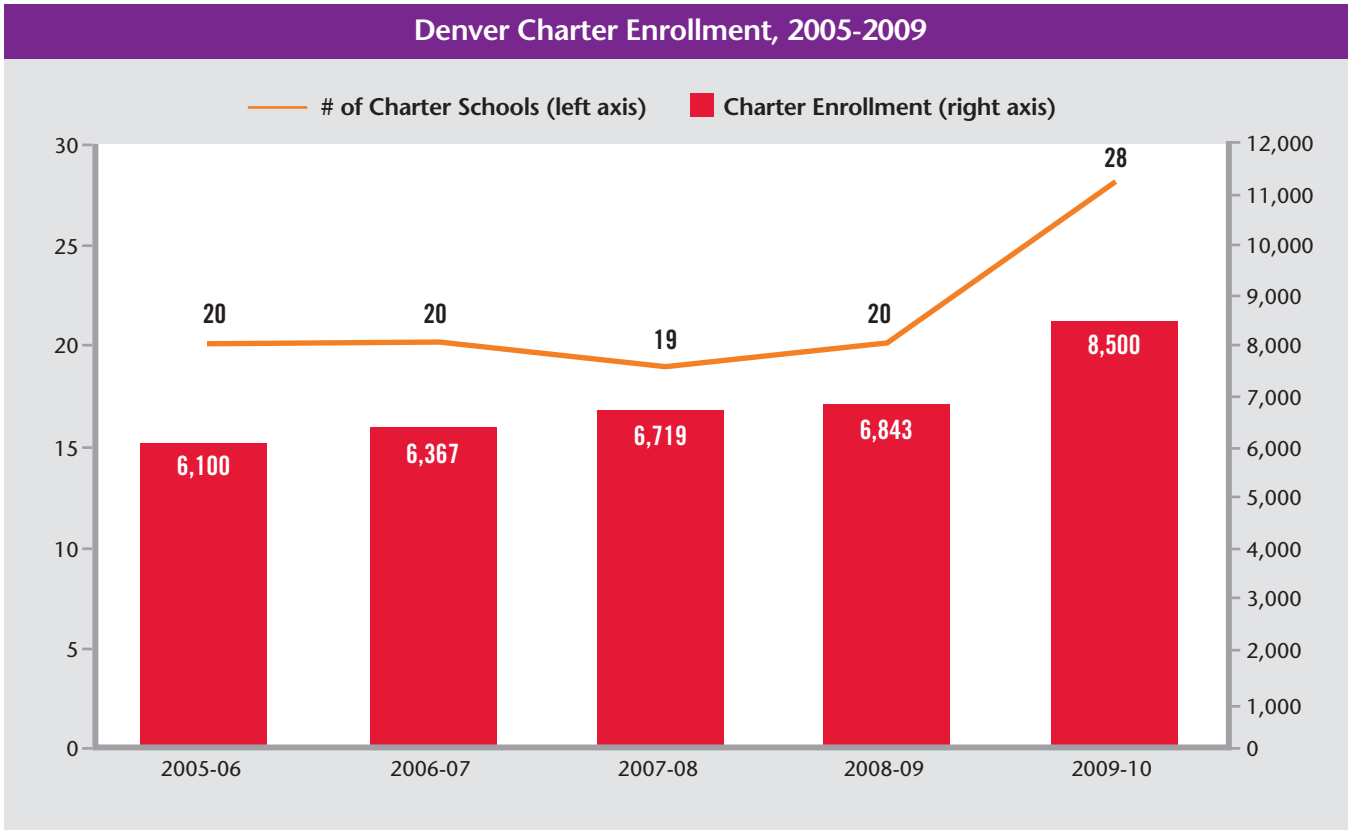
Denver Public Schools serves over 79,000 students across 162 schools.

DEMOGRAPHIC	2009-10
Total Enrollment	**79,423**
African American	14.6%
Hispanic or Latino	58.4%
Asian	3.3%
White	19.8%
Other	3.8%
Free or Reduced Lunch	72%
English Language Learner	31%

Colorado's charter law was passed in 1993. As of 2010, there were 28 charter schools operating in Denver serving more than 8,500 students.

Understanding Local Charter Needs in Denver

Like many other cities, Denver's needs include expanding the talent pipeline, locating affordable facilities, and serving special needs students. However, Denver is unique in the extent to which the district is playing a proactive role in addressing these issues by creating a system-wide teacher evaluation and compensation system, identifying space in district buildings and providing equitable funding for special education. Yet despite a highly collaborative relationship between the district and charter sector, significant challenges still exist, particularly around navigating collective bargaining agreements with the teachers union.



Mapping Existing Players in Denver

While there is only one exclusively charter-focused organization in Denver (The Colorado League of Charter Schools), there are a number of players contributing to a supportive environment for charter growth and quality, with a broader focus on district and statewide reform. Denver is also home to a national charter funder—The Charter School Growth Fund.

The ecosystem map below provides a snapshot of the different charter stakeholders in Denver.

Illustrative Ecosystem Map of Existing Charter Support Stakeholders in Denver

Organization / Priority Needs	HUMAN CAPITAL	FACILITIES	SPECIAL EDUCATION	FUNDING	NEW SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT	COORDINATION/ ALIGNMENT	ADVOCACY	ACCOUNTABILITY/ QUALITY
Denver Public Schools	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔			✔
Colorado League of Charter Schools		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Get Smart Schools	✔							
New Teacher Project	✔							
Teach for America	✔							
Democrats for Education Reform							✔	
Stand for Children					✔		✔	
A+ Denver	✔							
Charter School Growth Fund				✔	✔			

Source: Based on initial FSG research and analysis. Final version would require additional vetting with local stakeholders.

> "Denver's shared facilities initiative has significantly lowered the cost of new school development. You've seen a flourishing of new schools as a result. It's also benefited the district economically."
>
> — Denver Charter School Expert

Preliminary Rating of the Support Environment in Denver

KEY INDICATORS OF CITYWIDE CHARTER SUPPORT	RATING	EXPLANATION
State Policy Environment	High	Colorado's charter law has no cap, and provides for nearly equitable funding of charter and traditional schools as well as access to facilities funding. Charter schools are supported by a quality-conscious state CSO. Colorado also has strong education advocates in the state and U.S. Senate.
Local Political and Community Support	High	Denver has a reform-minded mayor and a strong base of support from business, local media and parents.
Strong Authorizing	High	Denver has a rigorous and transparent performance framework and evaluation process for authorizing and renewing charter schools. This same performance evaluation system is used across all schools in the district—not just charters.
District Support	High	Denver's leadership has created a favorable environment for charters, including providing charters below-market rent within district buildings, and ensuring charters receive equitable special education funding. Charters are viewed as a part of DPS' strategy to create excellent schools for all children.
High Performing Charters	High	Denver is home to many high-performing charter schools, and Denver's charters outperform district schools by an average of 15 percent.[21]
Infrastructure Support	High	Strong infrastructure support in Denver includes an engaged philanthropic community, strong local and national advocacy organizations and the presence of several human capital providers.

Source: Based on initial FSG research and analysis. Final version would require additional vetting with local stakeholders.

Assessing the Support Environment

An assessment of the conditions that would support or hinder a citywide charter strategy in Denver reveals many strengths and a few challenges. Overall, Denver appears to be very well-positioned for a citywide charter strategy. The chart above provides more detail on Denver's charter support environment.

Additional Detail on Infrastructure Support

The following are examples of ways in which Denver has created infrastructure that supports charter growth and quality.

Denver's Shared Campus Initiative

Denver Public Schools (DPS) launched an initiative to increase access to affordable facilities for charter schools by co-locating them with other district or charter schools. Currently, nine district buildings house 22 charter schools. This has proved to be a "win-win" financially for DPS and the charter sector. Charters pay less than half of market rate in rent, and the district earns revenues on otherwise empty facilities. A school construction bond pays for reconfiguration of buildings to accommodate multiple schools.

Special Education Taskforce

A task force of officials from charter schools and DPS was formed to address special education concerns. The task force developed policies to ensure DPS students with severe disabilities have full access to charter schools, and charters are held accountable for serving severe special needs students. To provide charters with the capacity to serve students with disabilities effectively, DPS added $1M to its special education budget for charter schools to provide resources such as speech, occupational and physical therapists.

New School Development

The Charter School Growth Fund provided funding to West Denver Prep, one of the highest performing middle schools in Denver, to open six new middle schools and four new high schools.

"We're saying you need to be serving all kids, and the charter schools are saying you need to help us, and we're saying 'okay.' "

— Denver Charter School Expert

21 Alexander Ooms, "The Performance of Denver's Charter Schools," *Education News Colorado*, December 14, 2010

Appendix G: Potential Activities for a Citywide Charter Strategy

CHARTER SCHOOL NEEDS	*LOWER INVESTMENT* ACTIVITIES FOR CITYWIDE STRATEGY	*HIGHER INVESTMENT* ACTIVITIES FOR CITYWIDE STRATEGY
Human Capital	• Hold bi-monthly charter principal meetings to share practices and challenges around teacher effectiveness. • Jointly write a grant to design and implement a talent management system. • Offer shared database of teacher recruitment resources.	• Bring human capital providers (e.g., Teach for America, New Leaders for New Schools) to a city to expand the pipeline of high quality teachers and school leaders. • Launch a city-based leadership training program and/or teacher certification program from scratch.
Facilities	• Convene charter leaders to jointly problem solve facilities challenges. • Hold quarterly meetings with district and charter leaders to explore opportunities for jointly addressing facilities needs.	• Work with district leadership to develop a facilities master plan and transparent process for assigning buildings (possibly based on school performance and parent demand).
Special Education	• Form a special education consortium. • Hold quarterly meetings with district and charter leaders to explore opportunities for jointly addressing special education needs.	• Charter and district leaders form a joint task force to ensure that charter and district schools are equipped to serve, and are held accountable for serving, equitable numbers of special needs students.
Funding	• Develop fundraising consortium to help charter schools jointly identify and apply for grants and other sources of funds. • Hold annual meetings of district and charter leaders to discuss funding inequities.	• Charter and district leaders jointly identify and apply for grants for district/charter initiatives with high impact potential for an entire school system. • District and charter leaders get a school construction bond on the ballot to fund rehabilitation of existing buildings and new school construction.
New School Development	• Develop and share tools and templates to guide developers through the charter authorizing and start-up process. • Pair developers with experienced school leaders to provide input and guidance on the school development process.	• Incubate new schools by providing office space, start-up grants and individual technical assistance. • Offer group trainings on charter writing, authorization and start-up operations.
Community Engagement/ Local Advocacy	• Hold joint parent nights, choice information sessions and family resource meetings. • Offer information regarding school enrollment and pertinent data in all languages and forms. • Partner with grassroots organizing groups to raise parent awareness about school choice and mobilize support for high quality charters.	• Partner with local and state advocacy groups to support campaigns to elect reform-minded, mayors, school board members, and district superintendents/chancellors. • Launch a PR campaign to raise awareness about high quality charter schools and the obstacles to expanding access to high quality schools. • District and charter leaders work together to create a common, coordinated school choice and enrollment system to ensure that parents are able to make informed, data-driven enrollment decisions (e.g., common enrollment forms, common application dates and transparent communication with parents, students and schools regarding school options).
Accountability/ Quality	• Hold regular convenings to share best practice on data and performance management between district and charter schools.	• Common performance metrics and school performance evaluation is developed and implemented across all schools—district and charter—and all schools are held accountable for results, including rewarding and supporting successful schools, and restructuring or closing failing district and charter schools. • District and charters share access to a common longitudinal data system and data warehouses. • Fund support organizations (e.g., Achievement Network) to help schools develop assessments, data platforms and customized professional development to drive effective data-driven instruction.

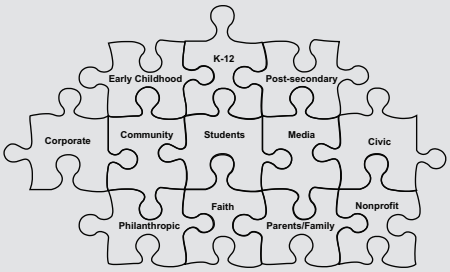
Source: FSG research and analysis.
Notes: "Higher investment" activities could include greater investment of time, additional coordination, and/or more financial resources.

Appendix H: Case Study on Strive

The following two graphics provide more detail on Strive, which is a promising example of collective impact in education.

Strive National

OVERVIEW OF STRIVE



1 COMMON AGENDA

Problem Definition: Improving educational outcomes in the Cincinnati region, focusing on "cradle to career"

Key Levers for Change:
21 key interventions anchored around five transition points

2 MUTUALLY REINFORCING ACTIVITIES

Three hundred organizations in the greater Cincinnati area including school district, universities and community colleges, private and corporate funders, non profits

3 SHARED MEASUREMENT SYSTEMS

Ten community-level indicators
1: % of children assessed ready for school
2: % of students with > 20 dev. assets
3: % of students at or above Reading / Math proficiency
4: % of students graduating from High School
5: Average score on ACT
6: % of graduates that enroll in college
7: % of students prepared for college work
8: % of students retained in college
9: % students graduating from college
10. # of college degrees conferred

4 CONTINUOUS COMMUNICATION

Strive Six Sigma Process for Continuous Learning

- **Network organization:** Actors work in 15 action networks against each intervention
- **Two-Stage Endorsement Process:** Requires establishing evidence that proposed solution will have desired impact based on success in other regions
- **Facilitated Learning:** Bi-weekly learning sessions facilitated by Six Sigma trained coaches and facilitators

5 SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE

Strive is an independent non-profit with eight staff members with $1.5M annual budget that supports action networks with technology, training of facilitators and communications

Materials developed by Strive, a subsidiary of KnowledgeWorks. For more information, see www.strivetogether.org © Strive

Strive National

Strive Community-Level Progress Indicators

Goal 1: Every child is prepared for school
Indicator 1: % of children assessed to be ready for school

Goal 2: Every child is supported in and out of school
Indicator 2: % of students with more than twenty developmental assets

Goal 3: Every student succeeds academically
Indicator 3: % of students at or above proficiency in Reading and Math
Indicator 4: % of students that graduate from high school

Goal 4: Every student enrolls in college or career training
Indicator 5: Average score on ACT
Indicator 6: % of graduates that enroll in college

Goal 5: Every child graduates and enters a career
Indicator 7: % of college students prepared for college level coursework
Indicator 8: % of students retained in college
Indicator 9: % of students graduating from college
Indicator 10: # of college degrees conferred

Materials developed by Strive, a subsidiary of KnowledgeWorks. For more information, see www.strivetogether.org © Strive

Scorecard from Strive's 2nd Annual Progress Report

Goal 1: Every child will be PREPARED for school

	Current percentage	Current benchmark	Change since recent year	Change since baseline year
Cincinnati	48%	59%	3 pts	4 pts
Covington	71%	75%	6 pts	n/a
Newport	62%	85%	8 pts	2 pts

Goals 2, 3, and 4: Every student will be SUPPORTED, SUCCEED academically, and ENROLL in college

Cincinnati Public Schools

	Current average	Current benchmark	Change since recent year	Change since baseline year
Develop. assets	46%		No trend data available	
4th grade reading	60%	75%	2 pts	9 pts
8th grade reading	65%	79%	-2 pts	1 pt
4th grade math	55%	74%	2 pts	12 pts

For more information on Strive, see the article on "Collective Impact," by FSG's John Kania and Mark Kramer, published in the Winter 2011 edition of *Stanford Social Innovation Review*.

OUR MISSION IS TO LEAD PUBLIC EDUCATION TO UNPRECEDENTED LEVELS OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL STUDENTS BY FOSTERING A STRONG CHARTER SECTOR. THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS PROVIDES ASSISTANCE TO STATE CHARTER SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS AND RESOURCE CENTERS, DEVELOPS AND ADVOCATES FOR IMPROVED PUBLIC POLICIES, AND SERVES AS THE UNITED VOICE FOR THIS LARGE AND DIVERSE MOVEMENT.

National Alliance for Public Charter Schools™

1101 15th Street, NW
Suite 1010
Washington, DC 20005

T. 202.289.2700
F. 202.289.4009

www.publiccharters.org

© Copyright 2011
The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools
1101 Fifteenth Street, NW, Washington, DC 2005. (202) 298-2700