

JOB SPECIFICATION

ORGANIZATION: Washington State Charter Schools Association (WA Charters)
POSITION: Executive Director
LOCATION: Washington State
REPORTS TO: Board of Directors

Context

The Washington State Charter Schools Association (WA Charters) is a statewide advocacy organization advancing a policy agenda that enables public charter schools to thrive. This work ensures that students, particularly those from systemically underserved communities, have access to high-quality public-school options.

WA Charters believes charter public schools are a critical lever for improving educational outcomes for all students and that Global Majority communities, immigrant and refugee communities, low-income communities, and individuals living with disabilities disproportionately shoulder the burden of inequitable access to high-quality public schools. Working in partnership with impacted communities to support charter public schools at every stage of their development is a top priority of the work.

Washington is the 42nd state to open its public education system to charter public schools, and the charter public school law places a strong emphasis on ensuring charters are high-quality options for students who have historically been underserved. The policy environment remains challenging with strong opposition and structural funding constraints. The sector currently serves a limited number of schools and students but plays an important role in expanding access to high-quality educational options.

Why This Role Matters Now

WA Charters has undergone a period of significant transition. Historically, the organization provided a broad range of support to the sector. Excellent Schools Washington (ESWA) was formed in 2024 to take over school incubation, growth, and the work of informing and empowering parents, leaving WA Charters to focus on policy, advocacy, and communications and serve as the primary voice and political driver for charter schools in the state.

This evolution comes at a critical time. A recent legislative session resulted in the loss of approximately \$1,500 per pupil in funding, placing financial strain on schools and intensifying urgency across the sector. Stakeholders describe the current moment as pivotal, with both meaningful risk and the opportunity to reset strategy, rebuild trust, and strengthen long-term political positioning. This new chapter calls for a leader with a relentless commitment to high-quality education for all and for systemically marginalized populations.

Opportunity

The next Executive Director will step into a role at a defining moment for Washington charters. The organization is realigning around a clearer mission, and the sector is seeking a more effective, coordinated, and assertive approach to policy and advocacy.

As the new ED of WA Charters, you will manage a \$2M annual operating budget and lead a team of eight professionals. Additionally, this role offers the opportunity to:

- **Lead at an inflection point-** The sector faces real political and financial challenges. This role offers the opportunity to shape the next phase of charter school advocacy in Washington and define a path forward in a complex environment.
- **Align the sector around a common advocacy agenda-** Following a period of leadership transition and mixed results, there is a meaningful opportunity to restore credibility with school leaders, board members, and other key partners relative to a common advocacy agenda, with school leaders engaged as active partners in shaping priorities and participating in coordinated advocacy efforts.
- **Leverage a focused, high-impact ecosystem-** The sector's relatively small size enables alignment, coordination, and the ability to drive meaningful impact across schools, communities, and policymakers.

- **Oversee an aligned C4 scope of work (including a PAC)-** There is a clear need to educate, inform, and back pro-charter candidates running for statewide office
- **Serve as the public voice for the sector-** The ED will play a central role in representing Washington charters to policymakers, funders, families, and the broader public.

For a politically sophisticated, resilient, and mission-driven leader, this role offers the opportunity to lead through a high-stakes moment and drive meaningful change for students across Washington. Success in this role could provide a proof point for effective charter advocacy on behalf of historically underserved students in a liberal political context.

Success in year one looks like:

- Developing a clear policy and advocacy strategy with the input of members and other stakeholders.
- Making progress in the 2027 legislative session towards recovering the \$1500 per pupil funding lost in 2026.
- Continuing to transition WA Charters to a lean, policy- and advocacy-focused organization.
- Developing a long-term diversified funding strategy to ensure the financial sustainability of the organization.
- Engaging members via onsite visits and regular communication and interaction.

Responsibilities

1. Develop and Execute a Clear Policy and Advocacy Strategy

- Define and implement a clear, realistic, and actionable advocacy agenda.
- Shift the organization toward a more proactive and visible political strategy.
- Align stakeholders around shared priorities and a multi-year path forward, translating strategy into a clear sequence of near-term priorities and longer-term policy goals.

2. Prepare for and Influence Legislative Outcomes

- Build strong relationships with legislators, state agencies, and policy influencers.
- Position the organization to advance funding and policy priorities over multiple legislative cycles.
- Strengthen coordination across lobbying, communications, and coalition efforts.

3. Build Political Power and Coalitions

- Expand organizing and coalition-building efforts across families, schools, and partners.
- Build a broader base of support to complement traditional lobbying strategies.
- Engage diverse stakeholders to support a more durable advocacy infrastructure, including consistent and structured engagement with school leaders as partners in advocacy efforts.

4. Lead Organizational Focus and Effectiveness

- Recruit, manage, and develop a high-performing team, including external partners and consultants.
- Drive clarity in roles, priorities, and execution across the organization, operating within a lean structure that requires balancing direct execution with oversight of external partners and making clear choices about where to invest limited capacity.

5. Ensure Financial Sustainability

- Lead fundraising efforts and steward relationships with funders and partners.
- Diversify funding sources over time to support long-term sustainability.
- Partner with the board to strengthen fundraising engagement and accountability.

6. Strengthen Stakeholder Relationships and Trust

- Rebuild trust with school leaders and sector partners through consistent execution, communication, and clear expectations for how they contribute to strategy, feedback, and coordinated advocacy efforts.
- Convene and align stakeholders around a shared vision for the sector.

- Maintain strong, transparent relationships with the Board of Directors.

Who This Job is For

WA Charters is seeking a leader who combines political skill, strategic discipline, and the ability to secure policy wins in a complex, high-pressure environment. The Executive Director must be a visionary and entrepreneurial leader with a demonstrated track record of centering equity in all their work. The role also calls for a leader who can build strong, lasting relationships with a variety of stakeholder groups, convene and align stakeholders around a shared vision for education, understand the relationships among C3, C4, and PAC entities, and marshal resources across multiple levers of opportunity to lead each entity successfully, while bringing clarity to priorities, timelines, and execution in an evolving and resource-constrained environment.

The ideal leader brings:

- Significant experience in public policy, government relations, advocacy, campaigns, or a related field
- Demonstrated success advancing policy or legislative outcomes in complex environments
- Experience building coalitions and working across diverse stakeholder groups
- Organizational leadership experience, including managing teams, budgets, and strategy
- Experience raising funds and stewarding relationships with foundations, donors, and partners

Leadership Attributes

- Politically savvy, with strong instincts for navigating complex and often adversarial environments
- Strategic thinker who can translate vision into clear priorities and execution
- Resilient and comfortable leading through uncertainty, conflict, and high-stakes challenges
- Willing to make difficult decisions, stand firm on priorities, and lead with conviction
- Strong relationship builder who can earn trust across a range of stakeholders
- Entrepreneurial and resourceful, with the ability to operate effectively with a small, high-performing team

Sector and Community Fit

- Deep commitment to improving educational equity and expanding access to high-quality schools
- Understanding of, or ability to quickly learn, Washington's political and education landscape
- Familiarity with the charter school sector and national movement is strongly valued
- Ability to build coalitions across political, ideological, and community differences
- Willingness to serve as a visible and vocal advocate for charter schools in Washington

Compensation and Other Perks

- A salary in the range of \$200k-\$250k
- A chance to transform Washington State's public education to create broader, equitable outcomes and policies for all students in Washington State
- A chance to shape the next five years of strategic priorities for the Association and work with some of the most innovative public education programs and leaders in the country
- A passionate, fun, fast-moving, and collaborative team
- Medical, dental, vision, and Rx benefits; and life insurance (details provided upon request)
- A 401(k) plan with an employer match
- Generous holiday, PTO, and wellness allowance