

THE COST OF WAITING

Why Charter School Facility Planning Should Begin Before Authorization

**Don't wait for authorization to start thinking about your facility.
By then, you may already be giving up options.**

There is a pretty natural order to starting a charter school:

Write the application. Get authorized. Build enrollment. Find a building. Figure out how to pay for it. Open the doors.

It makes sense. The problem is, facilities don't always cooperate with that timeline.

A school may need months for site selection, due diligence, financing, design, permitting, construction or renovation, inspections and occupancy. And while all of that is happening, leaders are hiring a team, recruiting families, building the program and doing approximately 4,000 other things required to open a school.

We see schools reach authorization and suddenly realize:

The charter is approved.

The clock is ticking.

And we still need somewhere to put the kids.

It doesn't have to happen that way.

The answer isn't to commit earlier. It's to prepare earlier.

THE COMMON ASSUMPTION

APPLICATION > AUTHORIZATION > FACILITY > FINANCING > OPEN

A BETTER APPROACH

APPLICATION > FACILITY + FINANCIAL READINESS > AUTHORIZATION > EXECUTION > OPEN

Starting early doesn't mean buying a building before you're authorized. It doesn't mean taking on debt. It means knowing what you're walking into.

TIME ISN'T JUST A SCHEDULING ISSUE.

It's a strategic asset.

Starting late doesn't necessarily kill a facility project. More often, it kills choices.

SITE More time means more opportunity to find the right property instead of taking the property that's left.	FINANCING More time means understanding what the school can afford and preparing for what lenders and investors will evaluate.
PROJECT More time allows for due diligence, design, permitting, construction and the inevitable surprises.	LEADERSHIP More time means fewer major decisions while your team is simultaneously trying to open a school.

When the runway gets shorter, decisions that should take months get squeezed into weeks. A school may find itself saying yes to something simply because it has run out of time to say no.

Urgency is a terrible negotiating strategy.
Preparation gives you options.

WHAT CAN YOU ACTUALLY DO BEFORE AUTHORIZATION?

Understand affordability. What can your enrollment and operating model realistically support?	Think through the facility. How much space? Where? Lease, purchase, renovation or new construction?
Build the real timeline. Work backward from the day students need to walk through the doors.	Prepare for financing. Understand what future lenders and investors will eventually need to see.
Identify the gaps. What could make this project harder six or twelve months from now?	Know what NOT to do. Some of the best early advice is knowing what not to sign, buy or commit to yet.

A school can prepare to move without committing to move.

WHAT DOES A HEALTHY TIMELINE LOOK LIKE?

A comfortable new-build timeline

18-24+ MONTHS PREPARE	15-18 MONTHS IDENTIFY	12-15 MONTHS COMMIT + DESIGN	9-12 MONTHS FINANCE + BUILD	0-9 MONTHS EXECUTE
Affordability, enrollment, facility needs, geography and financing pathways.	Evaluate sites, costs, zoning, entitlements and infrastructure.	Site control, due diligence, budget, financing strategy, design and approvals.	Financing, permitting and construction should be actively moving.	Construction, inspections, occupancy, furniture, technology and move-in.

Every project is different. Renovations, entitlements, site conditions and local permitting can add significant time. The point isn't that every school needs exactly 24 months. The point is that time gives you options.

STARTING EARLY CAN HELP BEFORE YOU'RE EVEN AUTHORIZED.

A strong facility strategy isn't only about getting into a building. It can also make you a stronger applicant. Authorizers want to know that the school they approve can actually open. Facility readiness is often a significant part of that conversation. Qualifying and working with RoundTable Funding early can help your team walk into those conversations better prepared.

AFFORDABILITY	FACILITY	TIMELINE	FINANCING	EXECUTION
What can the school support?	What are you looking for, and why?	Can it be ready when you need it?	What pathways are realistic?	Who is helping navigate the process?

And when it makes sense, we don't have to stay behind the scenes.

RoundTable has supported school teams through the authorization process, including participating in authorizer hearings when facility expertise can help the school answer questions and demonstrate readiness.

EARLY SUPPORT STARTS WITH QUALIFICATION.

We look at the school, its leadership, financial position, facility needs, growth plans and timeline. We want to understand what you're building, where the risks are and whether RoundTable is the right partner to help move it forward.

For schools that qualify, our team is willing to invest early.

Because by the time there's a transaction to finance, some of the most important facility decisions have already been made.

COULD YOUR SCHOOL QUALIFY FOR EARLY SUPPORT?

Talk with RoundTable Funding today to find out.