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# California Public Charter Schools Grant Program “Understanding Autonomy”



**TOM TORLAKSON**  
State Superintendent  
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# Highly Autonomous Defined

- Independence over:
  - o Governance
  - o Operations
  - o Staffing
  - o Financial Decisions
- Autonomy must be demonstrated in both the grant application and the approved charter.



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# Governance Structure

- Elected or appointed independently of chartering authority.
- Includes less than a majority of the current employees or appointees of the chartering authority.
- Operates as or is operated by a non-profit entity.



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# Operations

- Governing board exerts control over a majority of the school's operations:
  - o Professional development.
  - o School year calendar.
  - o Disciplinary policies and procedures.
  - o Curriculum & graduation requirements (beyond minimum state requirements).



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# Personnel

- Teachers and staff are charter school employees.
- The governing board maintains majority of decision-making authority over all:
  - Hiring.
  - Dismissal.
  - Work rule.
  - Employee assignment.
  - Other personnel decisions and actions.
- Governing board or entity, as described in the school's approved charter, has adopted its own employment policies and procedures.



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# Financial Decisions

- Governing board exhibits control over:
  - Development and adoption of the charter school's budget.
  - The receipt and expenditure of funds.
  - Business management ("back office") services.
  - Audit services.
  - Purchasing and contracting decisions.
  - Other financial matters in general.



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# Liability

- Liability
  - A chartering authority shall not be held liable for:
    - o Debts or obligations.
    - o Claims arising from performance of acts, errors, or omissions by the school.



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# Highly Autonomous Charter School

- Autonomy must be explicitly defined and consistent in both the:
  - California Public Charter Schools Grant (PCSGP) Application
  - Approved charter school petition