

OVERVIEW OF THE FLORIDA CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION PROCESS

APPLICATION PROCESS GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

The sponsor will use a multi-stage process to evaluate applications for proposed charter schools. The process is rigorous and thereby enables the sponsor to thoroughly evaluate:

- The quality of the applicant's plan for establishing and operating a quality charter school, and
- The capacity of the applicant to implement that plan.

The following describes each phase in the application process.

STEP 1: APPLICATION PREPARATION TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

A charter school applicant group should participate in any application training and/or technical assistance that is provided by the Florida Department of Education (s.1002.33(6)(g)) or the sponsor to which the application will be submitted. The applicant should contact the Florida Department of Education's Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice and/or the sponsor where the application will be submitted for dates, times and locations of any training or technical assistance workshops available to charter school applicants.

STEP 2: SUBMISSION OF A LETTER OF INTENT

Each applicant should submit a letter of intent to the sponsor where the charter application will be made. The letter should include the following information:

- The name of the proposed charter school
- The mission of the proposed charter school
- Contact information for the main contact person for the proposed school
- The year the school seeks to open
- The proposed general location of the school

This information should be submitted no later than 60 days (e.g. June 1st) prior to the August 1st application submission deadline.

STEP 3: APPLICATION SUBMISSION

An applicant group seeking approval to establish and operate a charter school shall submit to the sponsor a written application that responds to each request for required information as stated in the *Florida Charter School Application*.

The sponsor shall accept written applications by August 1st of each year as per s.1002.33(6)(b), and applications must be received or postmarked by **5:00 p.m. EST on August 1st** to be considered during the current application evaluation cycle, unless the sponsor and the applicant have a written agreement stating that the application can be submitted at an agreed upon date later than the August 1st deadline. The sponsor, at its discretion, may accept any application submitted after the August 1st deadline as per s. 1002.33(6)(b). The sponsor will act on all applications received within 60 days of the application deadline unless otherwise agreed upon by the applicant and the sponsor per section 1002.33(6)(b)3, Florida Statutes.

STEP 4: WRITTEN APPLICATION EVALUATION

Each application will be reviewed by an evaluation team of individual(s) with education, business, non-profit, financial, legal and organizational expertise. The evaluation team will include sponsor

staff and/or external experts such as current and former school administrators and principals; charter school founders; and school, business, non-profit, and public policy leaders.

Each reviewer may evaluate the written application using the *Charter School Application Evaluation Tool*. Reviewers will assess the degree to which the responses to each information requirement meet the stated criteria.

While evaluating the written application, reviewers will identify deficiencies in the written application and/or areas that require further clarity to fully evaluate the quality of the application or the capacity of the group to fully implement the proposed plan. These issues will serve as the basis of inquiry for the applicant interview.

STEP 5: APPLICANT INTERVIEW

The evaluation team may interview applicants to:

- Assess the overall capacity of the applicant to establish and implement the charter school plan;
- Clarify any components of the written application for which reviewers had questions or required additional information to fully evaluate, and
- Corroborate information provided in the written application.

Each interviewer will evaluate the information gathered through the applicant interview against the *Charter School Application Evaluation Tool* and analyze, based on their professional assessment of the written application and interview, whether the applicant should be recommended for approval. Only applicants who have presented a quality plan with no material weaknesses and have demonstrated the capacity to operate a quality charter school should be recommended for charter approval.

STEP 6: RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SPONSOR

The sponsor staff or designee will determine, based on the information gathered throughout the application evaluation process and reviewer recommendations, whether an applicant has met the standard for approval. The sponsor staff or designee will make recommendations to the sponsoring board on whether to grant or deny charter status; and the sponsoring board, in turn, will act on those recommendations.

The sponsoring board will only approve applicants for charter approval that demonstrate quality in all components of the application process. An application cannot have significant weaknesses in some components of the application and still be judged to have met the standard for approval. An applicant that is denied charter school status shall have the right to appeal the sponsoring board's decision as stipulated in s. 1002.33(6)(c).