

Georgia Charter Schools Authorizer Training

Petition Review Process (Part I)
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www.gadoe.org

Poll

- In the chat box, type your name and school district or organization.
- Has your district received charter schools applications in the past?
- Do you currently have charter schools in your district?
- How many applications has your district received in the past?
 - A. 0
 - B. 1-5
 - C. 6-10
 - D. More than 10
- How many charter schools does your district have currently authorized?
 - A. 0
 - B. 1-5
 - C. 6-10
 - D. More than 10
- How many charter applications have you/do you expect to receive for the current petition cycle?
 - A. 1
 - B. 2-5
 - C. 6-10
 - D. More than 10

Agenda

Charter Schools 101

Authorizers and their Responsibilities

Petition Process

Evaluation Process

- Internal Review
- External Review

Elements of a Strong Application

Education Management Organizations (EMOs) and
Charter Management Organizations (CMOs)

Part I

Part II

Definitions

Charter School

- A public school of choice that operates under the terms of a charter, or contract, with an authorizer. Charter Schools receive flexibility from certain state and local rules and laws in exchange for a higher degree of accountability.

Letter of Intent

- A letter submitted by a petitioning group to the local school board and to the State Department of Education, declaring their intent to submit a charter school petition.

Petition

- An application for approval to open a charter school, submitted to an authorizer(s).

Authorizer

- An entity that has the authority to create charter schools (a local school board, the State Board of Education, or the Georgia Charter Schools Commission).

What are Charter Schools?

They are public schools of choice

They are publically funded, but organized and governed by a private group of individuals, a private organization, or state and local public entities

They are free from many of the regulations that govern traditional public schools

They involve partnerships with local communities and businesses

Federal Definition of a Charter School

GaDOE's objective: All charter schools meet this definition

1. Exempt from significant State or local rules
2. Created as a public school, publicly supervised and directed
3. Pursues a specific set of educational objectives
4. Elementary, secondary, or both
5. Nonsectarian and not affiliated with sectarian school or religious institution
6. No tuition
7. Complies with Federal mandates
8. School of choice with enrollment lottery if necessary
9. Complies with Federal and State audit requirements
10. Meets all health and safety requirements
11. Operates in accordance with State law
12. Written performance contract with authorizer with student performance measures

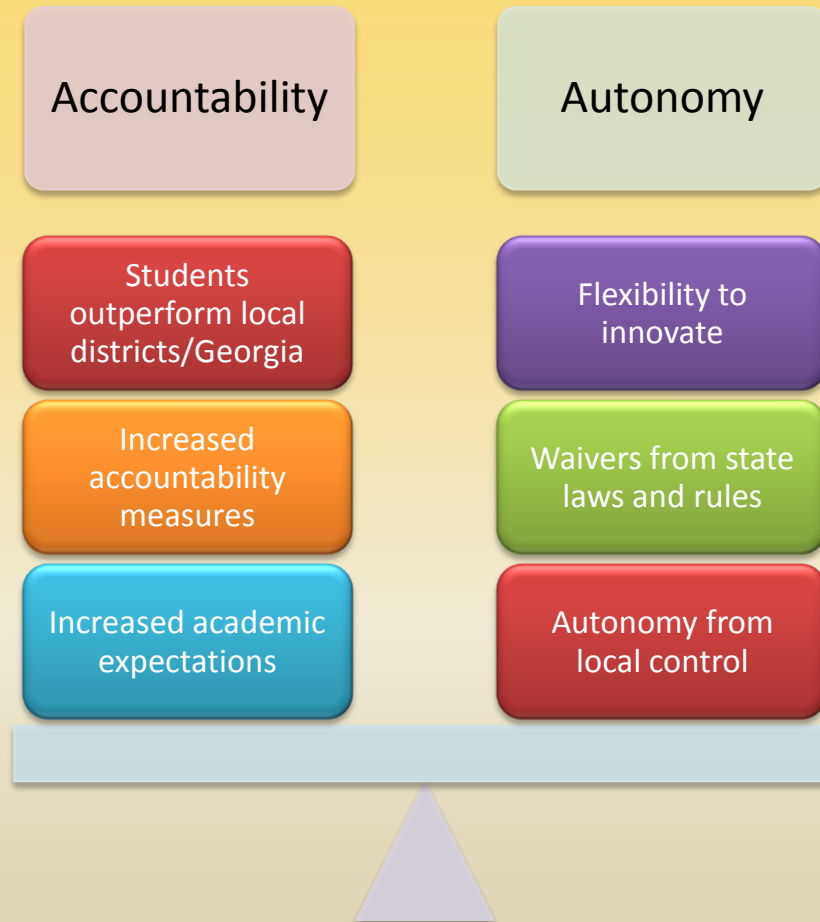
What is a Charter?

A performance-based, legal contract between non-profit governing organization and its authorizer(s)

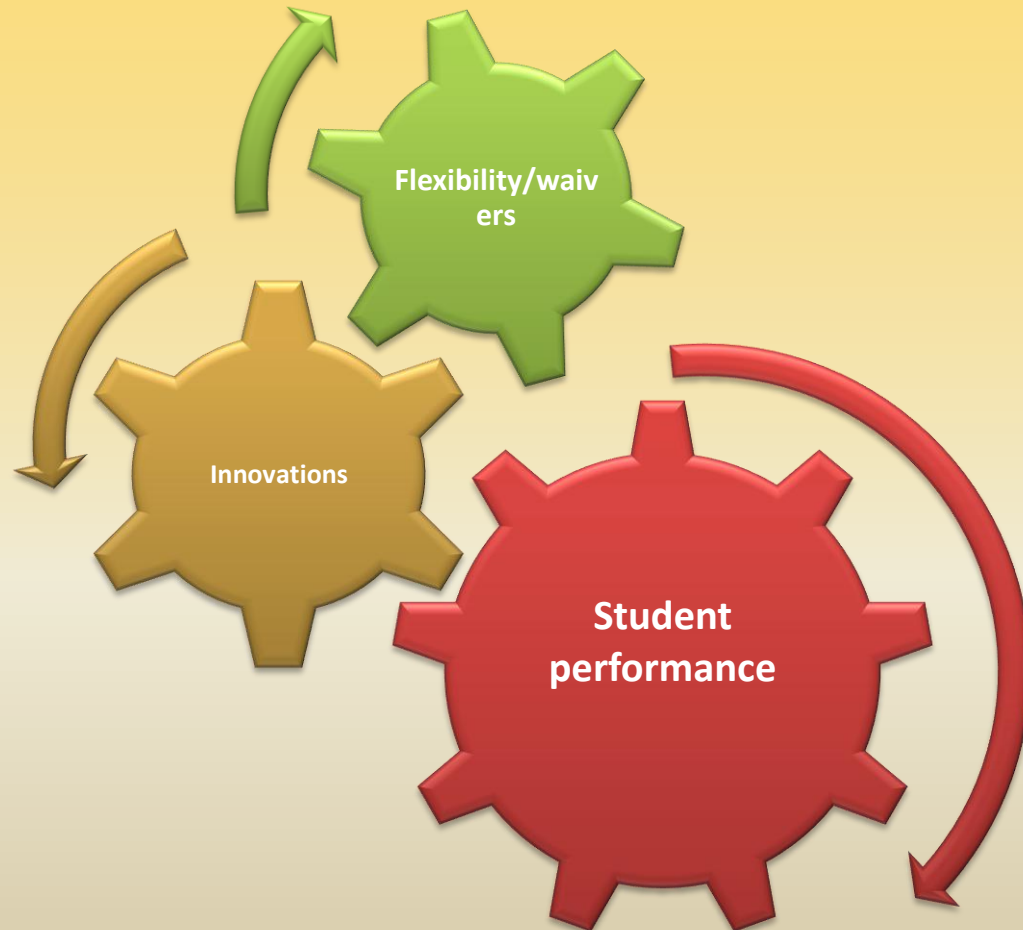
It sets forth the legal obligations under which the charter school is governed

Charter schools are held accountable by their authorizer for upholding the stipulations in their charter

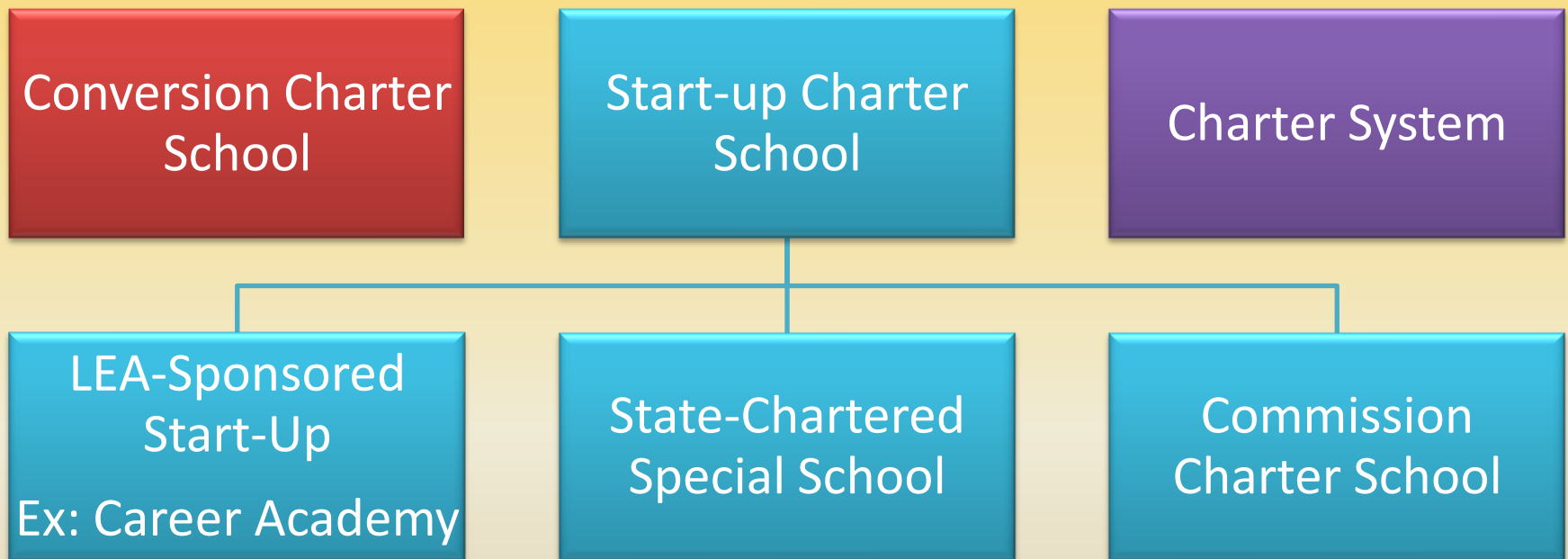
The Basic Bargain



Must Show the Following Links



Types of Charter Schools



Locally Approved Start-Up Charter School

Definition

- Started by private individuals, private organizations, or state and local public entities

Facts & Features

- Did not exist prior to the petition
- Most common type of charter school in Georgia

Relative Advantages

- Opportunity to build school culture from the ground up

Funding

- Local per-pupil allotment
- State QBE allotment
- Must pay for own transportation, rent, facility upkeep
- Commission Charter Schools are funded differently

Conversion Charter School

Definition

- Traditional public school that becomes a charter school
- Gains additional flexibility in exchange for higher levels of accountability

Facts & Features

- 32 conversion charter schools in Georgia
- Strategy for turning around low performing schools

Relative Advantages:

- Student population, building, and operational systems and structures are already in place

Funding

- Retains existing funding structure
- LEA continues to provide transportation, facility and other services

Charter School Benefits to the District

Provide parents with
choices

Increased academic
accountability

Turn around failing
schools

Increased flexibility can
lead to innovative
teaching and
educational
opportunities

What is an authorizer?

An authorizer is an entity that has the authority to create charter schools

Contracts

- Enters into two- or three-party contracts with a non-profit charter petitioning group

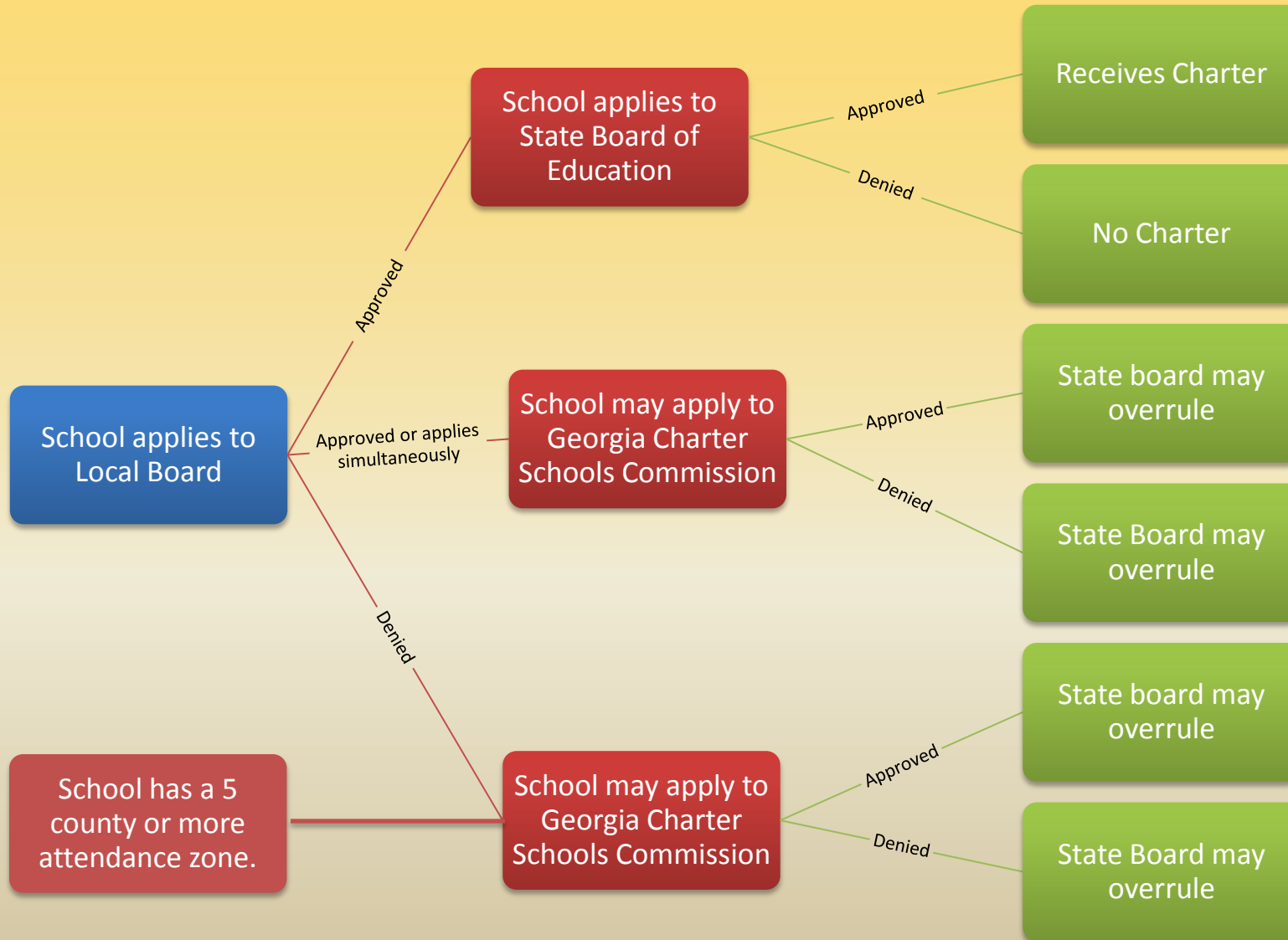
Decision making

- Determines if a petition to start and operate a charter school should be approved
- Determines if existing charter schools should be renewed

Monitoring

- Conducts ongoing oversight of charter schools to evaluate performance, monitor compliance and enforce contract terms
- Ensures that charter schools practice open enrollment and conduct fair and open enrollment lotteries

The Many Pathways to become a Charter School




Authorizer Legal Responsibilities


Must act on a charter petition within 60 days of receiving it



Must provide oversight and management of schools authorized by the district



Must provide equitable per pupil funding to charter schools authorized by the district



Must ensure that charter schools authorized by the district receive federal funds to which they are entitled

Local School Board Roles and Responsibilities

Review and act on local charter school petitions

Enforce compliance with performance goals set forth in charters

Ensure that charter schools comply with state and federal accountability provisions/other nonwaivable rules/laws

Provide federal, state and local funds to local charter schools on the same basis that it provides funds to other local schools

SBOE/GaDOE Roles and Responsibilities

Review and act on local charter school petitions and state-chartered special school petitions

Technical assistance to local school systems

- Technical assistance to petitioners
- Charter petitions
 - Petition renewal applications

Strategic plan and policy for the state's charter schools program

Management of federal grants

Annual report to the General Assembly

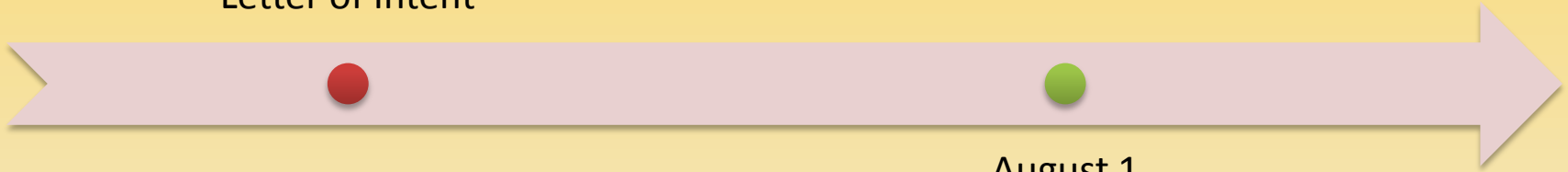
Current State Board of Education Petition Timeline

(Under Revision)

Start-up Charter School Petitioners

February 1

Letter of Intent



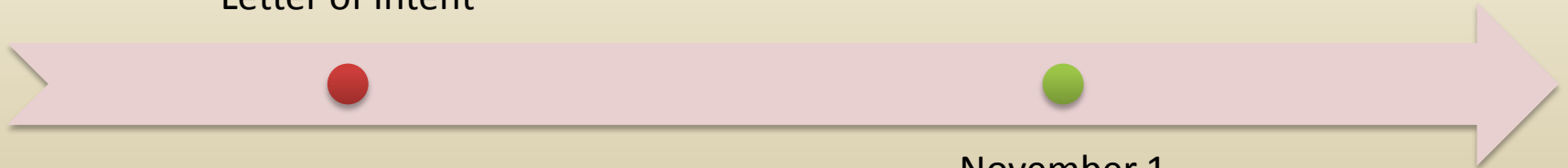
August 1

Petition Deadline

Conversion Charter School Petitioners

May 1

Letter of Intent



November 1

Petition Deadline

State Board of Education Petition Process for Locally Approved Charter Schools



Role of a Quality Authorizer (NACSA Principles and Standards)

1. Maintain and set high standards

2. Uphold school autonomy

3. Protect student and public interest

1. Maintain and set high standards

Set high standards for approval (use GaDOE as a guide)

Maintain high standards in oversight

Effectively cultivate quality charter schools that meet identified educational needs

Oversee schools that meet performance standards set forth in the charter on a range of measures and metrics

Close schools that fail to meet standards set forth in law and by contract

- Academic performance
- Financial irregularities
- Organizational issues/legal concerns

2. Uphold school autonomy

Honor and preserve core autonomies crucial to school success

- Governing board independence
- Personnel
- School vision and culture
- Instructional programming, design, and use of time
- Budgeting

Assume responsibility for holding schools accountable for their performance

Minimize administrative and compliance burdens on schools

Focus on holding schools accountable for outcomes rather than on processes

3. Protect Student and Public Interest (Student)

Make the well-being and interests of students the fundamental value informing all actions and decisions

Hold schools accountable for fulfilling fundamental public education obligations to all students, including providing:

- Nonselective, nondiscriminatory access
- Fair treatment in admissions and disciplinary actions
- Appropriate services for all students in accordance with law

Support parents and students in being well-informed about the quality of education provided by charter schools

3. Protect Student and Public Interest (Public Interest)

Hold schools accountable for fulfilling fundamental public obligations, including providing:

- Sound governance, management, and stewardship of public funds
- Public information and operational transparency in accordance with law

Ensure in the authorizer's own work


- Ethical conduct
- Focus on the mission of chartering high-quality schools
- Clarity, consistency, and public transparency in authorizing policies, practices, and decisions
- Effective and efficient public stewardship
- Compliance with applicable laws and regulations

Petition Process (NACSA Principles and Standards)

Proposal Information, Questions, and
Guidance



Fair, Transparent, Quality-focused
Procedures



Rigorous Approval Criteria



Rigorous Decision Making

Proposal Information, Questions, and Guidance

Issue a charter application information packet or RFP that:

- States authorizers chartering priorities
- Articulates comprehensive application questions to elicit the information needed for rigorous evaluation of applicants' plans and capacities
- Provides clear guidance and requirements regarding application content and format

Proposal Information, Questions, and Guidance

Welcome proposals from first-time charter applicants as well as existing school operators/replicators

Encourage expansion and replication of charter schools demonstrating success and capacity for growth

Be open to considering diverse educational philosophies and approaches

Fair, Transparent, Quality-focused Procedures

Open, well-publicized charter application process

Clear, realistic time lines

Sufficient time for each stage of the application and school pre-opening process

Explain how each stage of the application process is conducted and evaluated

Communicate chartering opportunities, processes, approval criteria, and decisions to the public

Rigorous Approval Criteria

Require all applicants to present:

- Clear and compelling mission
- Quality educational program
- Solid business plan
- Effective governance and management structures and systems
- Founding team members with diverse and necessary capabilities
- Clear evidence of capacity to execute plan successfully

Rigorous Approval Criteria

Establish distinct requirements and criteria for applicants who are existing school operators or replicators

Establish distinct requirements and criteria for applicants proposing to contract with education service or management providers

Establish distinct requirements and criteria for applicants proposing to operate virtual or online schools

Rigorous Decision Making

Grant charters only to applicants that have demonstrated competence and capacity to succeed in all aspects of the school **consistent with State approval criteria**

Rigorously evaluate each application through:

- Thorough review of written proposal
- Substantive in-person interview with applicant group
- Other due diligence to examine the applicant's experience and capacity

Rigorous Decision Making

Engage highly competent teams of internal or external evaluators

Provide orientation and training to application evaluators to ensure

- Consistent evaluation standards and practices
- Observance of essential protocols
- Fair treatment of applicants

Ensure a process free of conflicts of interest

Evaluation Process

Internal Review

- Solicit volunteer subject matter experts from within district
 - Special Education
 - Curriculum experts
 - Legal
- Fulton County uses this process
- Interview petitioners

External Review

- Use charter experts, reviewers with varied areas of expertise
- Balance of local and out-of-state reviewers
- APS uses this process, but also uses internal reviewers
- All reviewers interview petitioners

External Review Process

External Review Timeline

- Approach reviewers for teams at least three months before interviews
- Send applications to reviewers electronically three weeks before interview
- Conference call with reviewers two weeks before interviews to answer any questions.

External Review Facts

- Names for external reviewers can be obtained from NACSA, NAPCS
- Stipend can be provided, but is not always necessary.
- Maximum of 4 applications per reviewer (3 is better)
- With applications, provide reviewers with RFP, rubrics, background information .

Summary



Questions



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Save the Date!

Part II

May 23, 2011

9:00 am

***Please complete the online evaluation
that will open when you exit from
Illuminate.**

