

# Charter School Application Technical Assistance



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# Overview



- Overview of the Expedited Process
- Review Application Document
  - Instructions
  - Application Review and Approval Process
  - Program and Operations Plan
  - Fiscal Section
- Changes to Application
- Potential Pitfalls

# Instructions



- Submit a total of four copies to the NJDOE in three-ring binders by 4:15 PM on the October 15, 2011
  - Use 8 ½ x 11 white paper with a 12 point font
  - Type on only one side of the page
  - Insert dividers between each section
  - Insert headers and footers on each page
- Submit one copy to each district and submit one copy to each county office in your district/region of residence by the 4:15 pm deadline
- Submit signed receipts from each county office and district in your district/region of residence to the Department of Education by October 22, 2011. Receipts may be faxed to 609-633-9825
- Submit one complete copy electronically via CD or flash drive in PDF format
- **DO NOT PERMANENTLY BIND THE APPLICATION**

# Instructions



- Each question must have a discrete response in the body of the application
- Recommended page length is 100 pages for Part 1 – Program and Operations Plan
- Application must include:
  - Title page
  - Application Summary and Grade Level Summary
  - Executive Summary
  - Table of Contents
  - Part 1: Sections 1-17
  - Part 2: Sections 1-4

# Application Review and Approval Process



- Applications must be submitted by 4:15 pm on October 15, 2011 in order to be reviewed
- Applications will be screened for completeness and for timely delivery
- Letters of disqualification will be sent
- Eligible applications will be reviewed
- Addenda to the application may be requested-addenda may not be requested from all applicants
- The Commissioner (or designee) will conduct an in-depth interview with all eligible applicants.
- The Commissioner will render a decision of approval or denial on or before January 17, 2012.

# Charter School Program Act of 1995 and Administrative Code



## Quick Facts

- Charter School law is found at *N.J.S.A. 18A:36A*
- Charter School administrative code is found at *N.J.A.C. 6A:11*
- Charter School administrative code regarding fiscal operations is found at *N.J.A.C. 6A:23A*
- Charter schools operate independently of district boards of education
- Charter schools are governed by their own board of trustees
- Charter schools can not discriminate in admissions based on academic, athletic ability, race, sex, creed, etc.
- All instructional staff must hold appropriate NJ certification
- Each school must employ a certified school business administrator
- Charter schools must make special education programs available to all eligible students

# Program and Operations Plan



- Application Summary
  - Ensure that the enrollment chart allows all students who enter the charter school to progress to each grade offered in the charter school
  - Identify the district or region of residence-this may not be changed for the life of the charter

# Education and Program Plan



- **Section 1**

- **Mission, Vision and Educational Philosophy**

- Develop a mission statement which clearly articulates the vision for the school
- Ensure that the mission and vision are consistent and incorporated throughout the application
- Provide detail regarding the unique and innovative approach to deliver curriculum
- Provide supporting evidence of the need for a charter school in the district or region selected.
- The mission can not be amended at any time during the life of the charter and must be relevant and sustainable for the life of the charter
- Identify and describe any specific area(s) of concentration or theme(s) upon which the charter school may be focused (for example: math and science, technology, the arts, etc. Include the statement, “The specific theme of the charter school is \_\_\_\_\_.”

# Program and Operations Plan



- **Section 2**

- **Goals and Objectives**

- Develop broad goals and objectives that are measurable and realistic
- Goals and objectives cannot be amended and must be relevant and sustainable for the life of the charter
- Clearly differentiate between academic and non-academic goals
- Do not create goals that are implicit
- State minimum requirements; for example, adhering to the NJCCCS and being fiscally viable are not suitable goals

# Program and Operations Plan



- **Section 2**

- **Goals and Objectives – Examples**

- Example 1: Student Gains (Academic)**

*At all grade levels, students at the charter school will average 1.1 years of academic growth as measured by multiple administrations of a nationally norm-referenced growth-measured exam.*

- Example 2: Student Retention (Non-academic)**

*The charter school will retain (percentage) of its enrolled students year-to-year.*

# Program and Operations Plan



- **Section 3**

- **Educational Program**

- Provide a narrative regarding the educational philosophy of the school which indicates how the school will address the Common Core State Standards and the NJCCCS
- The educational program should be aligned with the mission goals and objectives of the charter
- Describe the school's educational program, the process for curriculum development and staff development
- Provide the school day schedule and school year calendar—be sure to indicate the number of school days for both students and teachers for each month

# Program and Operations Plan



- **Section 4**

- **Student Populations**

- Charter schools must identify and meet the needs of all students including students who are at-risk, English language learners, students eligible for services under Section 504, or students eligible for special education and related services
- Be sure to explain how your charter school program will provide the above referenced services in your proposed school
- Charter schools must admit all students, on a space available basis, without regard to abilities or disabilities
- Charter schools must follow all federal and state laws and regulations as they relate to children and adults with disabilities
- Charter schools must provide home instruction, if needed

# Program and Operations Plan



- **Section 5**

- **Student Assessment**

- Charter schools must participate in all required *Statewide Assessments*
- Include a plan which details how the school will measure and report student achievement other than by using statewide assessment tools
- Describe the process that the school will implement to ensure that it complies with the *No Child Left Behind Act*
- Provide details regarding the school's promotion/retention policies
- Provide details regarding how the school will keep parents informed of student progress

# Program and Operations Plan



- **Section 6**

- School Climate, Culture and Discipline

- The application must address the creation of an appropriate discipline policy and ensure that it aligns with the school's mission and vision
- Policies and procedures for short term/long term suspension and expulsion must be clearly articulated
- The board of trustees is responsible for adopting a detailed and appropriate discipline policy prior to opening and must ensure stakeholder input in the development of the policy
- Be sure to refer to NJSA 18A:37 and NJAC 6A:16 to draft this section
- **The charter school can not counsel out students, including those who present challenging behaviors or needs**

# Program and Operations Plan



- **Section 7**

- **Family, Community and Consultant Involvement**

- Create networks with community organizations, and provide details of their involvement
- Consider forming partnerships that can provide fiscal support- provide detail regarding any and all existing partnerships
- Clearly describe how parents and community members will be involved in the charter school application as well as the planning and operation of the school
- Ensure if you intend to utilize the services of a CMO or EMO; all proper bidding procedures must be followed
- Provide detail on the role of all paid consultants

# Program and Operations Plan



- **Section 8**

- **Facility**

- Provide the complete address and a full description of the facility where the charter school will be located
- Provide detailed financing plans and a timetable for facility acquisition and ensure this information agrees with the Part 2: Financial Plan
- Provide as much detail as possible regarding the facility and any renovations which may be needed

# Program and Operations Plan



- **Section 9**

- **Founders**

- Identify: full name, complete address, name of school district of residence, contact information, and affiliations of each founder
- Provide SIGNED, individualized statements of interest from each and every founder- not a statement from all or a canned statement
- Founder's group must clearly indicate the "qualified founder(s)"
- If serving a sending-receiving district, a founder must be identified from each receiving district
- Note-
  - All Information provided to the DOE is public

# Program and Operations Plan



- **Section 10**

- **Founders' Statements of Assurance (I think this is plural possessive)**

- A separate copy of the Statement of Assurance must be completed for each founder
- Each statement must be signed and submitted with the application
- The application may be considered incomplete without a signed statement for each founder
- The Statements of Assurance are separate from the Founder Statement of Interest
- If resubmitting an application, please complete new statements of assurances reflecting new application and date

# Program and Operations Plan



- **Section 11**

- **Governance**

- Identify board of trustee members or qualities that are desired in board of trustees members- board members should bring a variety of talents to the board
- If members of the initial board have been identified, provide all required information
- The school business administrator should act as the board secretary and is a cosignatory on all checks with the Board of Trustees President
- If part of the Board of Trustees, the treasurer should be a non-voting member of the board
- Clearly define the role of the board secretary and recording secretary. These are two separate duties and should not be one person performing them

# Program and Operations Plan



- **Section 11 continued**

- **Governance**

- No more than 50% of the board can be associated with any one non-profit or for-profit entity
- The board cannot designate any of its responsibilities to a non-profit or for-profit entity, i.e. an education management organization (EMO)
- Provide detail regarding the non mandated training of board members
- Provide detail regarding the role of parents on the board
- Describe the establishment and role of the advisory grievance committee

# Program and Operations Plan



- **Section 12**

- **Admissions Policy and Criteria**

- The charter school may not target admissions toward one particular group including the children of founders or staff
- Describe the random selection process that will be used (lottery)
- Clearly articulate whether or not the charter school will have an enrollment priority for siblings
- Clearly articulate non-resident enrollment procedures
- The application must indicate that the charter school will maintain each waiting list for one school year only- resident and non-resident waiting lists must be kept separate

# Program and Operations Plan



- **Section 13**

- **Human Resources**

- **All teaching and administrative staff must hold the appropriate New Jersey Certification.**
- Charter schools may hire a lead person who does not have certification but must contract with someone that holds an administrator's certificate (not a Supervisor certificate)
- If an employee, including the lead person, does not possess a certificate, his or her title may not be one that corresponds with a certificated position
- Ensure that the organization chart is consistent with staffing information provided throughout the application including Part 2 Fiscal Operations
- Include the number of positions per title and a salary scale for all employees
- Teacher-student ratio must agree with the ratio listed on the application summary page
- Ensure that the staffing section ties to the budget section
- Provide assurances that the charter school will comply with Streamline Tenure Guidelines

# Program and Operations Plan



- **Section 14**

- **Self - Evaluation and Accountability Plan**

- Describe the charter school's self-evaluation process
- Describe how all staff, including administrators, will be evaluated
- Describe how programs will be evaluated
- Note: The self-evaluation and accountability plan will be used as an evaluation tool for department monitoring visits

# Program and Operations Plan



- **Section 15**

- **Timetable**

- Use the timetable template to complete the section
- Template is found in Appendix D
- Information provided in the template only partially completes this section. Each applicant must provide additional information to complete the timetable and include who is responsible for each task
- The timeline should include both programmatic and fiscal tasks throughout the year

# Program and Operations Plan



- **Section 16**

- **Conversion Document**

- Answer “Does Not Apply” if this application is not a conversion
- If you are considering conversion, contact the department for more details regarding how to navigate this process

- **Section 17**

- **Waivers and Equivalency of Regulations**

- Answer “Does Not Apply” if not requesting a waiver or equivalency
- The Commissioner may not exempt laws or regulations which pertain to assessment, testing, civil rights, special education or student health and safety
- If considering requesting a waiver or equivalency, please contact the department as soon as possible—it may have implications for application approvability

# Financial Plan Framework



- Budget Summary
- Detailed Budget Narrative
- Cash Flow Schedule
- Pitfalls

# Financial Overview



- Sources of Funding
  - Financial Data Request (FDR)
- No Outside Funding Revenues

# Budget Summary



- Use prescribed format
- Use revenue generated by FDR
- Classify revenue & expenditures properly
- Be consistent
- 60% of budget must be instructional
- No reliance on outside funding sources
- No deficits

# Detailed Budget Narrative



- Should stand alone
- All budget lines must be itemized and show detailed, descriptive calculations
- Must agree to Budget Summary
- Must be consistent in both the fiscal and program sections

# Cash Flow Schedule



- Consider timing of expenditures
- Include ALL planning period activity
- No long term debt- payoff loans by June 30
- No monthly or year end deficits

# Changes to Application



- Ensure that when the application is submitted, a complete electronic PDF version is provided on a CD or a flash drive
- Be sure to address the Common Core State Standards in Section 3

# Potential Pitfalls



- Choose one charter school name and be consistent throughout the application
- Be consistent regarding total enrollment in all sections
- Caution the use of the University, Community, Liberty, Academy Charter School of Excellence-these names are overused
- Be sure to include the words “charter school” in the name of the school
- Do not use the name of a private entity in the name of the charter school
- Carefully choose your founders and ensure they will be available in November to complete any addenda and will be available in December for potential in depth interviews
- Ensure that each district identified has at least one “qualified” founder
- Identify ONE viable facility

# Potential Pitfalls



- Timing is critical- be on time to deliver the application at all required locations
- Be sure that all copies of the application are complete
- Failure to deliver application on time and to all locations will result in disqualification of your application
- Obtain receipts from all districts and county offices- be sure that the names are legible
- Carefully craft mission, goals and objectives, as they can never be amended and must be sustainable for the life of the charter
- Create goals that are measurable and realistic

# Potential Pitfalls



- Application becomes a public, state document; therefore, it must be written in standard English and free of spelling and grammar mistakes
- Have an unbiased third party read and edit the draft and the final application document for errors, omissions, grammar and completeness
- Application may not be approved if it references another application or district which should not be part of the application
- All information, including addresses and phone numbers, listed in the application are public record and are subject to OPRA laws
- The lead person and his or her contact information, as listed on the application summary, will be the one and only address used to contact the school during the application process

# Fiscal Pitfalls



- Budget-No beginning fund balance
- Only include revenues generated by the FDR
- Loans are reflected in cash flow only
- Confirm salaries match organization chart
- Provide renovation and rent details (narrative)
- Check the math
- Include all program expenditures
- Budgets cannot reflect a deficit

# Final Thoughts



- Be consistent
- Be accurate
- Follow directions
- Use an editor
- Check each and every copy of the application prior to delivery
- Update any changes in contact information for the lead person as needed
- Be early