

NYSED 2013 Round 1 Charter School Applicant Information Session

February 25, 2013

Applicant Questions

1. *What is the difference between the Trustees of SUNY and the Board of Regents as charter authorizers?*

As a preliminary step to the submission of a new charter school application, applicants should have reviewed the processes and protocols of New York State's two charter authorizers. Both authorizers operate in accordance with Education Law Article 56 and related sections of statute to approve, oversee, and renew charter schools. Differences in how the two authorizers interpret and implement the law are demonstrated in their respective policies and protocols. Information about the Board of Regents policies and protocols may be found on the NYSED Charter School Office website at

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/OversightPlan.html>

2. *Our Letter of Intent was accepted for Round 1 in the 2013 Charter School review cycle. May our completed Full Application be submitted by the September 18 deadline instead of the March 15 deadline?*

If an applicant group with an accepted Round 1 Letter of Intent chooses not to submit a Full Application by the March 15 deadline, the applicant group may restart the application process for consideration in Round 2. An updated Round 2 Letter of Intent would need to be submitted by the Round 2 deadline of September 4, 2013, and if accepted, the Full Application may be submitted by the Round 2 deadline of September 18, 2013. Applicants who decide to restart the process for Round 2 should assure that the Round 2 Letter of Intent is current and includes up to date information about school development plans and public outreach conducted.

3. *If we were to submit early, in advance of September deadline, would we have time to make adjustments to our application, if needed, for the 2013 application cycle?*

Applicants that submit Round 1 Full Applications that are not found to meet the required criteria will be provided with summative written feedback by the NYSED Charter School Office in May/June.

Applicants may choose to restart the process in Round 2, with the submission of a Round 2 Letter of Intent and (if accepted), a revised Full Application. All Full Applications submitted in Round 1 or Round 2 will be reviewed on a competitive basis by review panels, and evaluated as to whether or not the application meets the required criteria. There is no opportunity for applicants to submit early, receive feedback, revise and resubmit applications within the review round.

4. *Please explain the process for the submission of the full application in the portal. For instance, will the full application be submitted through the portal as one continuous running document or are attachments submitted separately?*

Application sections are uploaded separately, according to the directions provided in ReviewRoom.

Please refer to www.nysed-cso.myreviewroom.com for detailed information. Questions may also be directed to charterschools@mail.nysed.gov.

5. *Please address the interview process, the timing of the interview and when we will be notified of the potential interview. Some of our planning team members living outside of NYC and would like to make advanced travel arrangements to ensure their availability. Also, what will we need to prepare for the interview in advance? Will we be asked certain clarification questions to prepare in advance or only at the interview itself.*

Lead applicants whose Full Applications meet the required criteria will be invited to bring members of the founding group and initial board of trustees to a capacity interview. (Please note that only individuals listed in the Full Application Sections III.A and III.B will be able to participate in the capacity interview). The capacity interview is a two hour meeting with NYSED officials and members of the review panel, in

which general and specific questions about the proposed school are presented to the applicant founding group and initial board of trustees.

Round 1 capacity interviews will be scheduled in either New York City (for schools proposed to be sited in New York City or Long Island) or Albany (for all other schools), during the weeks of May 6th, May 13th and May 20th. After applications are submitted on March 15, we will email a preliminary schedule for Round 1 capacity interviews to the lead applicants. This should assist groups with preliminary scheduling and travel plans (Please note that not all applicant groups will advance to the capacity interview stage).

6. *Given the delay on the final per student allocation for each district, would it be acceptable to preliminarily use the budget template from last year just to get started? In that way, changes can be made once the per-student allocations are finalized. However, we realize this will only work if no other changes are being made to the template.*

Yes. Budget templates are now posted with the application materials in ReviewRoom and on the CSO web page at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/startcharter>. No format changes were made to the template. Applicants should use 2012-2013 rates, posted at <https://stateaid.nysed.gov/charter>, to estimate basic tuition revenue.

7. *Where within the NYSED site are the per student allocation figures? I am unacquainted with the vernacular, however see a table under the following link:
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/sedcar/federal/2012-13/perpupil1213.html>
Might this be it?*

The correct link to the NYSED State Aid Office 2012-2013 Basic Charter School Tuition Rates is <https://stateaid.nysed.gov/charter>

8. *If the charter application is approved, how is funding approved?*

Tuition Funding: After students are enrolled and the school year begins on July 1, 2014, the charter school will commence bimonthly tuition billing to the students' district of residence. See <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/csregs119.1.html> for more information.

CSP Grant Funding: After the charter is issued by the Board of Regents, the NYSED Charter School Office will work with the lead applicant to prepare the documents required to receive federal Charter School Program grant funds. These funds are intended to support school start-up and early implementation activities. See <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/grants.html> for more information.

9. *In terms of the disbursement of the CSP grant funds, we understand that the grant will be spread over three years. Additionally, we understand that the amount for each year does not have to be equal therefore the total annual amount can be different. Can you explain how we disburse the annual amount in the cash flow section of the budget template, in essence what month should we begin with?*

For the purpose of budget planning, applicants should estimate a minimum of 8-10 weeks to complete the process of CSP grant contract preparation and execution. This is a multi-stage process that requires a series of formal approvals by internal Department fiscal and contract offices as well as by the State Comptroller and the State Attorney General. Approved expenses may be charged back to the date of charter approval by the Board of Regents, but funds will not begin to flow until the contract is fully executed and in place.

10. *Please explain about the disbursement of IDEA and any other entitlement funds.*

In preliminary budget preparation, applicants may estimate anticipated revenues from federal IDEA and Title funds. However, in the absence of concrete information about enrolled student eligibility for these funds, applicants often prefer to take a conservative approach and omit these funds from preliminary

revenue assumptions. The approach taken should be explained in application Section III.K. Budget and Cash Flow, and in the assumptions columns in the budget and cash flow template documents.

11. My team is doing a lot of thinking about how to use the Charter School Performance Framework within our charter application. It is a very helpful and comprehensive document and has provided us with concrete information in the planning of our model. We want to reference it as needed and make you all aware that we are aware of the expectations and that we plan to hold our students to high academic expectations.

Benchmark 1: Student Performance provides a list of goals that the state will use to evaluate each charter school. Do we need to restate these goals in the application? We will be adding school specific goals as well that align to our mission and vision for the school and to assess students in grades K-2 (before the state testing grades). The goals in the performance framework become our school goals so I want to be clear on whether or not we should include them or just reference them in the Achievement Goals section.

The Charter School Performance Framework, adopted in November, 2012, sets forth the Board of Regents' expectations of its schools in ten performance benchmarks that measure key aspects of the school's educational success, organizational soundness and faithfulness to charter and law. The measures are used to inform renewal decisions at the beginning of the fifth year of operation, and also used for ongoing Charter School Office oversight and school self-evaluation throughout the charter term. The Performance Framework may be found at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/OversightPlan.html>

Benchmark 1: Student Performance lists indicators and measures based on state assessments and metrics in the areas of student progress over time (growth), student achievement (attainment), state and federal accountability, and college and career readiness. Charter specific goals may be included in this section of the Framework. The Performance Framework is Section III of the Board of Regents Oversight Plan, and is formally appended to the Initial Charter agreement as Exhibit B.

The NYS Charter Schools Act Section 2851(2)(b) requires that applicants submit "A description of student achievement goals for the school's educational program and the chosen methods of evaluating that students have attained the skills and knowledge specified for those goals....Such educational program shall meet or exceed the student performance standards adopted by the board of regents for other public schools." As prompted in the 2013 RFP, applicants should provide a clear description of the proposed school's student achievement goals. While there is no need to restate the Performance Framework benchmarks and indicators, the applicant should clearly reference the Framework if the measures set forth in Benchmark 1 will be used for this purpose.

12. Could board members or their companies be employed or contracted by a charter school? School employees may not serve as members of the charter school board of trustees for their school. Applicable provisions in General Municipal Law prohibit individuals with an interest in a for-profit contract from serving on a charter school board. Although board members or their not-for-profit companies may enter into a contractual arrangement to provide specific services to the school, NYS Charter Schools Act Section 2851(2)(v) requires that applicants provide "a code of ethics for the charter school, setting forth for the guidance of its trustees, officers and employees the standards of conduct expected of them including standards with respect to disclosure of conflicts of interest regarding any matter brought before the board of trustees." In development of the proposed school's code of ethics and by-laws, applicants should consult with legal counsel to assure compliance with applicable statute.

13. *In your experience, what are the most common mistakes boards make with the application? What are the most common stumbling blocks?*

- The written application is inconsistent or incomplete.
- The written application does not address the prompts in the application kit.
- Evidence of public outreach is not recent or clearly documented.
- The proposed initial board of trustees does not present sufficient expertise or knowledge to launch and govern a high quality charter school.
- There are frequent spelling and/or grammar errors in the application.