



**Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent**  
*"Making Education Work for All Georgians"*

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Renewal Applicants

FROM: Charter Schools Division

DATE: April 17, 2013

RE: Important Information for Charter Renewal Applications

The charter renewal process is an important opportunity for a charter school to demonstrate compliance with its current charter contract and an opportunity to describe new initiatives that will generate increased academic performance during the next charter term.

### **What do I need to know to be successful at applying for a charter renewal?**

- **Application Components:**
  - Current applications and the **required** Renewal Charter School Addendum can be located on the Georgia Department of Education's website at <http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Charter-Schools/Pages/Charter-Petition-Application.aspx> .
    - Please note that some of the applications have recently been updated.
    - Please also note that the Application Accountability Template is different from the Accountability Report Spreadsheet. The former is to assist you in drafting your application goals. The latter is used by renewal applicants to report their progress on meeting charter goals.
  - Start-up renewal applicants are required to submit a five-year budget. The Charter Schools Division has developed a Budget Template that renewal applicants are required to use. This template is also found on the Department's website. Budgets should be submitted along with your renewal

petition using the Budget Template, which is an Excel file. Please make sure that the electronic version of your budget is in the Excel file format. Please do not submit budgets in PDF form. Budgets submitted in the wrong format will be rejected, which will delay the renewal process.

- Conversion charter schools are *not* required to submit the Budget Template. Doing so, however, could help demonstrate that your governing board has financial autonomy.
- *All* renewal applicants will be required to submit an Accountability Report Spreadsheet. This spreadsheet is used to demonstrate the success or failure of applicants in meeting their current charter goals. The Accountability Spreadsheet and further instructions can also be located on the Department's website.

- **Application Process:**

- **Interviews:** All renewal applicants will also participate in a panel interview. The panel interview will include GaDOE representatives and at least one outside charter expert. Interviews are scheduled for the following dates: November 19 – 21 and December 17 – 18. For applicants that may want an earlier interview option, we are also happy to offer interviews on October 16 - 17 if a renewal petition is received prior to October 1.
- Applicants will typically be sorted into 3 groups:
  - **Approval Group:** These applications demonstrate near-perfect quality and compliance. The Department will issue an approval recommendation for these applicants without further process.
  - **Clarification Group:** These applications demonstrate moderate quality and compliance, but may require clarification or supplemental information. The Department will issue a clarification letter that will inform applicants of their next steps. Please note that the clarification or supplemental information required is not negotiable.
  - **Revision Group:** These applications demonstrate minimum quality and compliance and would require substantial revision to be approved by the State. The Department will issue a recommendation letter that will inform applicants of their next steps. Applicants receiving a recommendation letter will be required to seek re-approval from their

local district. If they choose to revise their application, applicants will have only one chance to make revisions. Please note that the revisions required to obtain a recommendation for approval are not negotiable.

- Applicants will be notified whether the Department will recommend their school to the State Board of Education for approval or denial. If your school is recommended for approval, the Department will share a draft version of your proposed charter contract with you. This will be your opportunity to provide comment and feedback on the performance measures in the charter contract or to identify any scrivener's errors that you might detect. Please note that charter contracts are not negotiable.

#### **Will there be site visits this year?**

- **Accountability Visits:** The Department is pleased to introduce the implementation of Accountability Visits. Charter schools with contracts expiring in June 2014 may be selected for an Accountability Visit. The Accountability Visit is designed to assist you with identifying potential barriers to renewal in time for your school to begin correction of these issues prior to submitting your renewal petition.
- **Self-Assessments:** As one factor in our Accountability Visit selection process, charter schools currently completing Year 4 of their charter will be *required* to complete and return a self-assessment. Even if your school is not selected for a site visit, this self-assessment may help you identify areas in which your school might require improvement. For your reference, the self-assessment is attached to the end of this memo.
- Accountability Visits will focus on the following areas:
  - Academic Performance
  - Financial Performance
  - Governance
  - EMO relationship (if applicable)
  - Compliance

**Charter Schools Division  
Monitoring Self Assessment**

Date:  
LEA:  
Grades Served:  
Site Location:

Charter School:  
Charter Term:

**1) Preparation for Visit:**

	Yes	No	N/A
A) Charter contract reviewed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B) Student performance data reviewed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C) Most recent audit reviewed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D) Any compliance issues and corrective actions reviewed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**2) Performance Information:**

	Yes	No	N/A
A) School performing above the district level?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B) School performing above the state level?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C) Accountability spreadsheet completed and attached? (spreadsheet can be located on the CSD website)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D) School substantially meeting their goals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E) Percentage of goals being met?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**3) Financial Information:**

	Yes	No	N/A
A) Has the school submitted audits as required?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B) Were there any audit findings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C) If yes, what were the findings?			
D) Proper and complete financial records available for review?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E) Does the school have a fund deficit? (Liabilities > Assets)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
F) If yes, is there a plan for debt reduction?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
G) Up-to-date financial manual available for review?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
H) Inventory management system?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**4) Governance Information:**

	Yes	No	N/A
A) Does the Board meet at least monthly while school is in session?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B) If not, how often?			
C) Are agendas and minutes available for review?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D) Do Board Meeting minutes reflect:			
•Governing Board spent time reviewing academic performance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
•Governing Board reviewed the finances of the school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
•Governing Board considered appropriate issues and did not stray into management?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E) Did the Governing Board receive training at least annually? Provider?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**5) EMO:**

	Yes	No	N/A
A) Was the management agreement reviewed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B) Is the school is able to provide evidence that they hold the EMO accountable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C) Does the school (not the EMO) employ personnel?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**6) Compliance:**

	Yes	No	N/A
A) Has the school encountered any compliance issues?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B) If yes, please explain:			
C) Did the school complete all actions required pursuant to a compliance finding?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>