

***Colorado Charter School
Standard Application,
Checklist,
and Review Rubric***

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Introduction

The “Colorado Charter School Standard Application, Check List, and Review Rubric” was developed to provide guidance in the writing and review of new charter school submissions. The target audience for this document is both the founding group (the applicant) as they develop a charter school application and the potential authorizer (the school district or CSI) as they review and evaluate the quality and completeness of the application.

This standard application is the result of collaboration between the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), the Colorado League of Charter Schools (The League), and the Charter School Institute (CSI). This document is intended to communicate the minimum standard for producing a comprehensive, high quality, and complete charter school application. ***Using the format presented in this document is not a guarantee for charter approval.*** Authorizers are encouraged to build upon this format as a template. Use of this document as a template for applications will have policy implications for authorizers and should be reviewed and adapted accordingly. Applicants must research the expectations of the potential authorizer to ensure compliance with requirements. For example, individual school districts may choose to weight certain items in the application differently, may have additional requirements, or may have adopted an entirely different format.

This standard application is divided into nineteen application components. The components appear in this document in the same order that they appear in the Colorado Revised Statutes (CRS 22-30.5-106.1). It is important to remember that each of these components may require upfront training and education to meet the quality standard expected by the state and the potential authorizer. Each component is divided into three sections: a **Component Description**, a **Checklist for Completion**, and an **Evaluation Rubric**. The Component Description is a narrative designed to give the applicant background information, reference to statute, and general explanation of the component. The Checklist for Completion may be used by both the applicant and the authorizer to monitor the completeness of the application. The Evaluation Rubric provides the authorizer with means of determining the quality of the application component, but may also be used by the applicant when targeting a high quality school program.

The format for the standard application is necessarily compartmentalized into the different application components. However, it is important to remember that each of the components relate to one another. Curriculum is not complete without consideration of assessment. Facilities cannot be sufficiently addressed in isolation from budgetary decisions. The completed application should tell a story that relates the application components into one comprehensive package. The vision and mission should be evident throughout the application and all program elements and resource allocations should be in alignment with the

proposed budget and school program. It is important to also consider that online school applications, or other unique programs, may not conform precisely to all components of this standard application. In these cases communication with the potential authorizer is imperative.

The companion to this standard application is the Charter School Application Flow Chart which presents an outline of the charter school application process. The flow chart can be found at the following Web site:

www.startacoloradocharter.org

Application Components

A. Executive Summary

Although an executive summary is not required by the Charter Schools Act, it serves as a concise explanation of the proposed charter school and identifies who is submitting the charter application.

This section should be two to three pages long and should include:

- The proposed school's name, grade levels to be served, proposed opening date (month and year), grade levels upon opening and growth plan (if the school does not plan to initially open with all grade levels).
- Size of the school at build-out including the number of classes per grade level and the number of students per class.
- Vision and mission statements including a brief explanation of how they were created.
- A short explanation of the key programmatic features the school will implement in order to accomplish its vision and mission.
- How the proposed school will be more effective than the schools currently serving the targeted student population.
- Any other unique features, such as a non-traditional school year, longer school day, key partner organizations, multiple campuses, school culture, etc.
- Student body to be served, such as key demographic data, targeted geographical area, etc.
- Evidence of a community need for a school of this nature.

B. Vision and Mission Statements

1. Component Description

A charter school application must have a mission statement for the proposed school. Many schools have both a vision and a mission statement. The vision statement is a statement of how the charter school will look once it is operating (the big picture view). The mission statement is how the school intends to make that vision a reality.

The vision and mission statements should be succinct, easy to understand and easy to remember. Many schools post their vision/mission statement throughout their building and use it in their printed materials (e.g. Parent/Student Handbook and Employee Handbook). Resist the temptation to please everyone with these statements. Instead, define your school for potential students, parents and staff. Be as clear as possible and don't use education "jargon." Again, be clear so as to lend clarity to those who will ultimately implement the vision over the life of the charter school.

2. Checklist for Comprehensive Application

- The vision and mission statements describe the purpose for the charter school with a focus on outputs rather than inputs.
- The vision and mission statements are the driving force and rationale behind all other components of the application. It's obvious that the school's goals, educational program, operations, etc., align with and support the fulfillment of the vision and mission statements.

- The vision and mission statements express the ideal, long-term impact, scope and scale of the school. The vision articulates what the school hopes to be. The mission statement explains how the school will reach that goal.

3. Evaluation Rubric

Excellent Vision and Mission Statements will have the following characteristics:

- Are clear, focused and compelling.
- Likely to produce high quality education outcomes.
- Express clear guiding purposes.
- Have priorities reflected throughout the application.

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Vision/Mission Statement Strengths	Reference
Concerns and Additional Questions	Reference

C. Goals, Objectives and Pupil Performance Standards

1. Component Description

Accreditation is the process by which school districts and public schools receive certification from the State Board of Education. Accreditation rules are established to foster greater accountability from public schools and school districts for the betterment of public education. This section should be based on the state Accreditation Indicators, which can be found at the Colorado Department of Education (CDE)'s Web site http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_accredit.htm. The authorizer may use this section of the charter school application as a basis for the accreditation plan it creates with the approved charter school. The application should reflect an understanding of the accreditation requirements of the chartering authority with a clear plan from the charter school applicants outlining how data will be obtained, and how that data will be provided to the chartering authority for their accreditation contract requirements with CDE.

It is understood that there are not actual baseline test scores, attendance rates or other data before the school is established. A charter applicant can either use the district average as a baseline and/or state that a baseline will be established in the first year of operation.

In Colorado, there are multiple forms of accountability by which public schools, including public charter schools, are measured. The State Board of Education has approved

accreditation contracts with each of the school districts and the Charter School Institute (CSI). School districts and the CSI, in turn, accredit each of their public schools. The process for individual public schools to be accredited oftentimes mirrors the authorizer’s accreditation plan. Reviewing the authorizer’s accreditation plan is essential before writing this section.

In addition to Accreditation Indicators required by state law, a charter school may choose to have other measures for which they wish to be held accountable. Those indicators may include school climate or culture. Be sure to only include measures that the charter school is willing to be held accountable for over time, as these additional indicators would become a part of the school’s accountability plan.

2. Checklist for Comprehensive Application

- Provide goals that align with District/CSI Accreditation Indicators.
- Specified goals for making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).
- Goals are written “SMART” (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Reflective of the school’s mission and Time-phased) which includes objectives and benchmarks (or state that a baseline will be established and how/when).
- Goals in addition to Accreditation Indicators match the proposed school’s mission and are based on valid and reliable methods to measure progress in non-Accreditation Indicator areas of school performance.
- Outline of how data will be obtained and how that data will be provided to the authorizer and CDE.

3. Evaluation Rubric

An excellent Goals, Objectives and Pupil Performance Standards Plan will have the following characteristics:

- Alignment with the school’s vision/mission and the eleven Accreditation Indicators.
- Goals that are clear, specific, measurable, attainable, reflective of the school’s mission and time-phased.
- Objectives that clearly support the goals.
- A clear plan for the school to meet AYP.
- Plan for measuring student longitudinal growth, in addition to the state model, including data for GT, ESL and Special Education.
- Clear, realistic strategies for improving student achievement and closing achievement gaps for all groups of students.
- Understanding of and strategy for complying with state achievement and reporting requirements including those related to accountability reporting and Accreditation.

1	2	3	4	5

Goals, Objectives & Pupil Performance Standards Strengths	Reference

Concerns and Additional Questions	Reference

D. Evidence of Support

1. Component Description

A charter school application should include the aggregate number of students interested in the charter school at the different grade levels. Individual student and/or family information should NOT be included. Do NOT include copies of the Letters of Intent completed by prospective parents. Reference the figures used in the Intent to Submit Form and update the numbers if necessary. If appropriate to further demonstrate support, disaggregate the number of prospective students by zip code, school of attendance, gender or type of current school (home, private, public). After the charter school is approved, the founders will go through an enrollment process and verify which students will be attending the charter school. See C.R.S. 22-30.5-106(3) for more information.

It may be helpful to include letters of support from community leaders, business people or elected officials. These letters should state why the individual believes a new charter school would best serve the community. The tone of this section should illustrate a positive foundation of community support as opposed to a groundswell based on criticism. Care should be given to avoid derogatory comments about the authorizer's current curricular and program offerings.

Explain how students and parents were informed of the proposed charter school and what community meetings were conducted. Outreach activities should be diverse and designed to reach all students in the community, thereby, ensuring equal access. If relevant to the community, meetings should be bilingual.

Explain the applicant team's ties to and knowledge of the community. If the applicant team has established any partnerships or networking relationships, describe them and any resources or agreements that are planned. Specifically address what type of outreach activities have been made to at-risk populations, especially if the application is for the state CSI, whose mission is to serve at-risk student populations.

2. Checklist for Comprehensive Application

- Information about the proposed charter school's student body including the intended students' educational needs and demographics (racial/cultural, socioeconomic, special needs, and ELL). The application, in its entirety, reflects an understanding of the intended student population.
- A description of the type of outreach the founders conducted to make the student population and their families aware of the proposed charter school. This should include future plans if the charter school is approved.
- A summary of the number of students expressing an interest in the proposed school. This information should be disaggregated in a manner showing additional information about the prospective students.

- Information on community members and leaders who publicly support the proposed school and their role in the development of the school and application, if the proposed school is not being developed by parents.
- If there are any partnerships or networking relationships, provide an explanation of the planned resources or agreements that have been discussed.

3. Evaluation Rubric

Evidence of Support means:

- A complete explanation of the student population the school intends to serve.
- An adequate number of parents, teachers, pupils or any combination thereof support the formation of this proposed charter school.
- Sufficient demand for the school exists and is aligned to the school's growth plan.
- Community notification of a proposed charter school was broad enough to provide equal opportunity for students to enroll.

1	2	3	4	5

Evidence of Support Strengths	Reference
Concerns and Additional Questions	Reference

E. Educational Program

1. Component Description

A charter school application should include a description of the school's educational program, pupil performance standards and curriculum, which must meet or exceed content standards and must be designed to enable each pupil to achieve such standards. Content standards are specific statements of what a student should know or be able to do relative to a particular academic area or areas. Instruction and assessment, in a standards based system, should be aligned with Colorado's content standards. Colorado model content standards and suggested grade level expectations are online at <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeedserv/download/pdf/AccredGuidelines.pdf>.

There should be a current research basis for selecting a particular curriculum. In addition to obtaining information from the publisher, research is available online at ERIC (<http://www.eric.ed.gov>) and the What Works Clearinghouse (<http://www.whatworks.ed.gov/>). The research should support using the curriculum with the student body the proposed school will likely attract, and benchmark assessments should be chosen to align with the chosen curriculum.

All core content areas plus supplemental or elective areas should be described. If certain characteristics of the school culture are critical to the overall educational program (i.e., small school size, character education and high expectations), the research basis should thoroughly support the unique educational program design.

2. Checklist for Comprehensive Application

- Core content areas are described, including the curriculum, and supported by research matching the probable student population for the proposed school.
- Description of the educational program provides an explanation of how the curriculum is either already aligned to state model content standards, or will be aligned within the first three years of school operation including a timeline and process for monitoring the success of the program.
- Description explains why the selected curriculum was chosen for the anticipated population of students.
- Supplemental curricula for electives or “special” courses is thoroughly described and based on state model content standards when available.
- Other vital aspects of the educational program design are thoroughly described and supported by research findings.

3. Evaluation Rubric

An excellent proposal will demonstrate the following qualities related to the Educational Program:

- The curriculum framework is clearly presented, aligned with the school's vision/mission and provides an appropriate level of detail for the objectives, content, and skills for each subject and for all grades the school will serve.
- The curriculum is supported by research, by applicant experience and/or by sound reasoning behind its selection.
- Evidence is provided that the educational program is a good match for the intended student population.
- A clear outline of how the school will monitor the implementation of the curriculum. The plan identifies a timeline, a lead contact and specific action steps.
- A clear outline of how the school will use information from the curriculum monitoring process to facilitate professional development and continuous improvement in the education program. The plan identifies a timeline, a lead contact and specific action steps.
- The school day and school calendar are structured in ways that align with the educational program. The calendar and daily schedule reflect the minimum number of hours required by state statute (1,056 hours for secondary students; 968 hours for elementary students; no fewer than 160 days per year for all students; see C.R.S. 22-33-104 for more information).
- A convincing plan for ongoing curriculum development (e.g., revision of standards and benchmarks, improvement of curriculum alignment and assessment development) and Performance Management is in place for use in data-driven decision making.
- A plan for the development, mentorship, retention and regular evaluation of staff that is manageable and is clearly linked to the school's mission and educational program, including a timeline, a lead contact and specific action steps.
- Evidence that school staff will be held to high professional standards.

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Educational Program Strengths	Reference
Concerns and Additional Questions	Reference

F. Plan for Evaluating Pupil Performance

1. Component Description

A charter school application should include a clear plan for evaluating pupil performance across the curriculum. This plan should align with state performance standards as well as with the school's pupil performance goals, and should be presented along with a clear timeline for achieving these standards/goals. A clear explanation of the types of assessments and frequency of administration should be included reflecting thoughtfulness given to tracking student progress, while still preserving as much class learning time as possible. A plan for the use of data gathered through assessments should include procedures for taking corrective action (both individually and collectively) if pupil performance falls below expected standards.

A quality assessment plan will include summative (end-of-year) assessments as well as formative (more frequent, end of unit assessments) to track student skill and knowledge development. The plan will include how this data will be used to guide professional development of teachers as well as how this data will be used to guide refinement of the curriculum.

When developing the assessment plan consideration should be given to: the appropriateness of assessments to the curriculum; what will serve as baseline for student progress comparisons; the inclusion of state and federal assessments to demonstrate appropriate student growth (i.e., CELA, CSAP, AYP, CBLA); the ability of the assessment plan to provide for the early detection of students struggling with curriculum content; and the ability of assessments to reflect the use of basic skills at grade-appropriate levels (i.e., reading, writing, problem-solving, etc.).

Be aware that all Colorado public schools including charter schools are subject to the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP), which is aligned with the model state content standards. Contact the CDE's Assessment Office at 303-866-6664 or use the CDE Web site (www.cde.state.co.us/index_assess.htm) for detailed information regarding this program. In addition, all Colorado public schools including charter schools are subject to the Colorado Basic Literacy Act (CBLA), which mandates that all students will be reading on the third grade level by the end of the third grade before they can move on to a fourth grade reading class. This law requires that the reading growth of all students be monitored carefully from kindergarten through third grade. Students not reading on that grade level must be placed on Individual Literacy Plans (ILP) through high school. CSAP is an integral

part of this process and all third graders are required to participate in the state reading program and test, which is a part of CSAP. Further information about CBLA is also available on the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.state.co.us/action/CBLA/>.

Lastly, Colorado public schools are also held responsible for demonstrating Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, all states, schools districts, schools and subgroups of 30 or more students within each school are required to make AYP. It represents the annual academic performance targets in reading and math that the state, school districts and schools must reach to be considered on track for 100% proficiency by school year 2013-14. To make AYP a school must (a) assess 95% of its students; (b) reach targets for either proficiency or reduce non-proficiency; and (c) reach targets for one other indicator - advanced level of performance for elementary and middle schools and graduation rate for high schools. Additional information on AYP can be found at <http://www.cde.state.co.us/ayp/index.asp>.

Finally, if the charter application includes high school, include graduation requirements and how those requirements meet standards put forth by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education for college preparation or how your requirements prepare students to enter the workforce (<http://highered.colorado.gov/Academics/Admissions/coursecompletion.html>).

2. Checklist for Comprehensive Application

- A plan is in place explaining the use of internal assessments to include baseline data gathering, short- and long-term goals, types of assessments, and how the school will use this information to revise professional development and instruction.
- The application describes what formal assessments will be used in addition to CSAP that align with the school's goals; that meet requirements of Colorado Basic Literacy Act (CBLA), accreditation, longitudinal growth measures, federal requirements, such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).
- The application describes which assessments will be used for literacy testing, and the process used to bring students up to grade level in reading, as required by CBLA.
- The application explains how the school will collect, analyze, triangulate and manage data on an ongoing basis. The school has created a Data Management Plan to include a Student Information System and Academic Data use summary and timeline of the plan. It identifies what other tools and resources will be used for data management purposes, such as an internal database, data management service, etc. This section also explains how budget resources have been allocated to support these staffing and resource decisions.
- The application explains how student assessment and progress will be appropriately communicated to parents, the authorizer and the broader community.
- Clear information of requirements for promotion to the next grade level or for graduation requirements aligned with CCHE and district requirements as they pertain to a high school are included.
- In compliance with C.R.S. 22-30.5-106 (f), the application provides a description of the charter school's procedures for taking corrective action in the event that pupil performance at the charter school falls below the achievement goals approved by the authorizer in the charter contract. To include a timeline, responsible person and staffing changes as appropriate.

3. Evaluation Rubric

An excellent Pupil Performance Evaluation Plan will include the following characteristics:

- Alignment with the school’s mission and clearly defined educational objectives.
- Evaluation that is sufficiently frequent and detailed to determine whether students are making adequate progress.
- Adequate information on how the school will use a data management system to collect and analyze student academic achievement data, use the data to modify instructional practices and report the data to the school community.
- Clear description of the expected range of assessment tools including, but not limited to, state-mandated assessments.
- Strategies to monitor all students at the school and to take appropriate corrective action including a timeline, a lead contact, and specific action steps (such as a Response to Intervention model).
- Clear procedures for taking corrective action in the event that pupil performance falls short of the goals.
- Plan for administering statewide assessments consistent with C.R.S. 22-7-701-708.
- Plan for sharing CSAP results with each student’s parent or legal guardian, the authorizer and the broader community.
- If a proposed high school, description of the graduation requirements that aligns with CCHE’s admission requirements or to graduates’ ability to enter the workforce.

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Plan for Evaluating Pupil Performance Strengths	Reference
Concerns and Additional Questions	Reference

G. Budget and Finance

1. Component Description

The budget and financial plan for the charter school must include a plan for revenues and expenditures and a plan for compliance with state and federal accounting and reporting requirements. The plan should demonstrate diligent financial practices, clear alignment to the other components in the application, and strong oversight. Particular attention should be given to facility and salary costs, as these often represent a large portion of the school's budget.

The proposed budget should be based on reasonable estimates that reflect choices made throughout the rest of the charter application. For example, enrollment projections used elsewhere in the application need to be the same enrollment projections used in the development of the budget. Similarly, facility, insurance and employment plans discussed in other sections of the application should be reflected in the budget, along with the basis for given assumptions.

The budget should demonstrate an ability to understand the sources of funding available to the charter school and the types of expenditures required to operate the charter school. The primary source of revenue is Per Pupil Revenue (PPR). There are several other sources of revenue, some of which are temporary or restricted and some of which are dependent on market factors other than enrollment. However, PPR is the guaranteed stream of revenue which makes up most of the funding the school receives. When developing the budget all ongoing expenditures required to operate the school should be supported by PPR.

The amount of PPR varies by school district. A charter school receives 100% of the PPR for the district in which the charter school resides. The charter school authorizer, whether a school district or the CSI, may retain up to 5% of PPR to cover the charter school's portion of the authorizer's central administration costs. In cases where the maximum is withheld, the charter school effectively receives 95% of its school district's PPR. When projecting revenue numbers, the single most important factor to understand is enrollment. Enrollment projections must be accurate, and it is best to project conservatively for budget purposes.

Other sources of revenue can be very helpful in funding specific programs or in helping with startup costs for new charter schools. These sources include federal grants, private grants, and more. CDE (www.cde.state.co.us) and the Colorado League of Charter Schools (CLCS) (www.coloradoleague.org) are good resources for finding information about current sources of funding.

When planning expenditures, it is important to understand how choices affect different areas of the budget. For example, the smaller the class size the less revenue there is to spend. Also, the more staff there is in the school the less money per staff member there is to spend. Finally, as another example, the more money spent on facility costs the less money there is for salaries and other discretionary items.

In nearly all cases, the combination of facility costs and staff salaries/benefits represents close to 75% of spending in charter schools. As such, close attention should be paid to these two areas. In addition to these two areas, other items that need to be planned for financially include special education, various professional services, classroom supplies and materials, general supplies and materials, liability insurance, and more. Existing Colorado charter schools that have a similar mission/philosophy are a good resource for assistance with planning expenditures.

In addition to budget projections, the charter school must comply with various requirements. In summary, the charter school needs to set up proper accounting procedures to safeguard its assets and to ensure accurate financial reporting. At the same time, it is important to be able to provide financial information in a clear, understandable format that allows board members and administration to make sound financial decisions. Note that online schools may have special considerations with respect to budgeting and financial reporting.

The CDE requirements for financial management and reporting are available in the Financial Policies and Procedures manual at www.cde.state.co.us/cdefinance/sfFPP.htm. An additional resource with general information is the Colorado Charter School Financial Management Guide at www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/guidebook/fin/pdf/FinGuide.pdf.

2. Checklist for Comprehensive Application

- The plan includes a five-year budget, realistic assumptions and their basis, a cash flow projection for the first year of operation, minimum enrollment needed for

solvency, and adequate staffing that fits with the narrative in educational and other related application sections.

- The budget reflects an understanding of specific statutory requirements including separation of the general fund and the capital reserve fund, direct student instructional expenses, Public Employees' Retirement Association (PERA) contributions, as well as a three percent TABOR reserve (Colo. Const. art. X, Sect. 20) each year.
- The budget narrative reflects the financial policies and procedures plan, anticipated management plan that will ensure checks and balances in cash disbursement and alignment with the mission and goals.
- The budget narrative includes a basic startup plan (facilities funding and FFE acquisition), the curriculum and professional development plan, and the school growth plan to include needed staff along with adequate financial allocations and anticipated timelines.
- The budget is set up in such a way that it reflects an understanding of the CDE's Chart of Accounts and any financial reporting requirements of the district.
- The budget does not include any "soft funds," such as grant money or donations; it includes only grants or donations that have already been received or for which commitments have been received.
- Evidence is provided for anticipated fundraising and grants, if cited in the application.
- The proposed budget balances each year and includes a five-year plan to reach at least a five percent reserve (in addition to the TABOR reserve) that the school can use for emergency purposes or as a long-term reserve.
- The application describes the process the school will follow to contract with a Certified Public Accountant to conduct an annual, independent financial audit. It explains how the school will remain fiscally solvent, adhere to generally acceptable accounting practices, have no material breaches, will address any concerns, and will disseminate the results from the audit to the school district and required state agencies.
- The application includes a list of planned services to be contracted to outside providers.

3. Evaluation Rubric

An excellent proposal will present a Financial Plan with the following characteristics:

- Adequate budget assumptions and financial planning based on realistic revenue and expenditure projections and/or quotes for the term of the proposed contract (at least five years). These budget assumptions should be based on a minimum number of students needed for financial viability in addition to 100% of anticipated enrollment.
- Spending priorities that align with the school's mission, curriculum, plans for management, professional development and growth.
- Three percent TABOR reserve, allocation of funds to capital reserve and insurance, PERA, and direct student instructional allocations as required by law.
- Budget format as prescribed by the proposed authorizer.
- Realistic cash flow projection for the first year of operation including a plan for funding cash flow shortfalls.
- A sound financial management system proposed with adequate checks and balances, controls and staffing.
- A plan for making required school and employee contributions to the Colorado PERA is included.

- There is an adequate and reasonable plan to manage startup costs without complete dependence on federal or private grant funds.
- There is a description of how the school will conduct an annual audit of the financial and administrative operations of the school.
- There is a description of services to be purchased from the authorizer or other outside vendor(s).

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Budget & Finance Strengths	Reference
Concerns and Additional Questions	Reference

H. Governance

1. Component Description

Charter school governance is extremely important to the success of a charter school. Oftentimes, a proposed charter school's applicant team transitions to become the school's founding governing board. The charter school application should describe the process involved in developing the applicant team and the individual expertise represented on the steering committee; the process to appoint or elect the initial governing board; how and when bylaws will be adopted by the board; the governance structure for the school; the nature and/or extent of parental and/or community involvement in governance; and the amount of authority the governing board will convey to the school's administrator, along with a clear delineation of their respective roles and the means by which the administrator will be evaluated.

While some existing Colorado charter schools have staff members on the governing board, others do not. Administrators may be an ex-officio, non-voting board member. If staff members have voting privileges, there should be clear policies to explain when that board member should recuse him/herself. Any potential conflict of interest by any board member should be disclosed and addressed.

The number of directors on a charter school board should not be less than five and its generally considered a best practice to have no more than nine directors.

A good way to mitigate any potential issues with board members is to have the governing board adopt and use a Board Member Agreement. These agreements stipulate the qualifications, responsibilities and expected behaviors of individual board members and the governance structure. If the applicant team intends for the approved charter school's

governing board to use a Board Member Agreement, it could be an attachment to the charter school application.

The charter school application should also describe the school's legal status. Many charter schools file articles of incorporation and bylaws with the Secretary of State in order to have their school recognized as a corporation. Schools authorized by the CSI are required to obtain a nonprofit corporation status. The articles and bylaws define the authority that rests in the charter school governing board and, in essence, "who holds the charter." These legal issues should be discussed with a charter school attorney before decisions are made. Additionally, the charter school can apply for its own tax-exempt status with the IRS. Charter schools can either use their own tax-exempt status or use their authorizer's if the school is authorized by a school district. The CSI requires all of its schools to have their own tax-exempt status. Check with the potential authorizer for more information.

The charter school governing board must operate in compliance with the Colorado Open Meetings Law (C.R.S. 24-6-401) and Public Records Act (C.R.S. 24-72-201) as well as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (20 U.S.C. Sect. 1232). See <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/guidebook/gov/pdf/OpenMeetings-RecordsMemo.pdf> for more information on the Open Meetings and Open Records laws.

If the school will be contracting with an Educational Management Organization (EMO), a full description of the relationship should be provided.

Every charter school governing board should have a set of board policies. Much of what is included in the charter school application will become board policy. For instance, the school's vision/mission statement, legal status, enrollment policy, discipline policy and nondiscrimination policy will all be in the board policy book. These board policies should be made available to school staff and families. Generally, schools put these policies on their Web site and have them available in the school office.

Many sample best practice documents for charter school governing boards are available online at <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/guidebook/gov/index.htm>.

Attach:

- Governing board bylaws.
- Articles of Incorporation (optional)
- Organizational chart explaining the relationship between the board, the lead administrator, subcommittees and/or advisory committees
- Resumes of applicant team members and/or founding board members
- Draft of initial board policies (optional)
- Draft of the Board Member Agreement (optional)
- Draft of Conflicts of Interest and Grievance Process board policies

2. Checklist for Comprehensive Application

- The proposed bylaws explain powers and duties, size, terms, composition, qualifications, term limits, officer positions and duties, election procedure, vacancy replacement, minimum number on the board, quorum and decision making process, how board members are elected or appointed, and when this takes place.
- An explanation of the proposed transition from an applicant team to the founding governing board including the identification of individuals making the transition. This description of the transition process should explain when the governing board will be seated and assume responsibility for school governance. Further, how the

transition plan will provide for a smooth shift of responsibilities and how the founder's original vision and mission will be brought to fruition.

- A plan is included for how a lead administrator will be hired and how the transition of leadership will happen
- Resumes for applicant team and/or founding governing board members are attached.
- A plan for ongoing board training and capacity building is included in a board calendar.
- An explanation of the proposed board meeting frequency and focus, the role of any standing subcommittees (e.g. School Advisory Council) is included.
- A detailed description of the responsibilities of the school's advisory council and its role in relation to the school's board of directors and administration is included. This section demonstrates that the applicant thoroughly understands statutory guidance on School Advisory Councils (or accountability committees) and commits to forming such a committee or has requested a waiver with a complete replacement plan. (See C.R.S. 22-7-106 and 22-7-107 for additional information.)
- An explanation of compliance with Open Meetings and Open Records laws is included.
- A description of how the founding governing board will create and adopt board policies (an initial draft may be attached to the application) is included
- Draft policies for Conflicts of Interest and the Grievance Process are included.
- A description of the relationship between the governing board and the school administrator which includes the amount of authority the governing board will convey to the school administrator.

3. Evaluation Rubric

An excellent application will demonstrate the following characteristics related to the Governance and Management Plan:

- Proposed board members will contribute a wide range of experience and expertise (such as education, management, financial planning, law, and community outreach) that will be needed to oversee a successful charter school.
- Clear description of transition from a developing team to a working board, selection and removal procedures, term limits, meeting schedules, powers and roles of board members, and how decisions will be made and recorded.
- Clear distinction between the roles and responsibilities of the board members and school administrators.
- Plan for meaningful involvement of parents and community members in the governance of the school.
- Organizational plan that clearly outlines roles and responsibilities for implementing the school's program successfully including an internal and external evaluation plan.
- Legal status of the proposed school is clearly explained. Pertinent documents are included as attachments (Articles of Incorporation and/or bylaws).
- Comprehensive plan for providing annual board training in vital subjects to include Open Meetings and Open Records laws for new board members.
- Sufficient resources and support for transition from applicant team to founding governing board and administrator structure prior to the school's opening.
- Conflicts of Interest policy delineates potential conflicts and how they will be addressed appropriately.
- Grievance process is clear and follows an appropriate route for resolution of concerns raised by students or parents.

1	2	3	4	5

Governance Strengths	Reference
Concerns and Additional Questions	Reference

I. Employees

1. Component Description

A charter school must provide an explanation of the relationship that will exist between the charter school and its employees. This must include evidence that the terms and conditions of employment are addressed with affected employees and their recognized representative, if any. In addition, proposed employment policies should be included.

As charter schools are, by statute, public schools, employees of charter schools are public employees. Charter schools and their employees must participate in Colorado's Public Employees' Retirement Association (PERA) or in the Denver Public Schools retirement fund. This is in lieu of participation in Social Security, which makes up the majority of the Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) payroll tax. However, the Medicare portion of FICA is still paid by the employees and matched by the employer.

With the growing presence of private educational management organizations in Colorado, questions are arising about the nature of employees in some charter schools. This is a result of some educational management companies treating employees as employees of the private company, as opposed to employees of the public school. These determinations need to be made with legal counsel, but the nature of employees should be clearly outlined in the charter application.

There are several resources that provide more information about employment issues. Tax information is available at www.irs.gov and through the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment at www.coworkforce.com. Additional information about PERA can be found at www.copera.org. Finally, a human resources manual developed through CDE can be found at www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/download/HREmploymentManual.pdf.

2. Checklist for Comprehensive Application

- An organizational chart is included as an attachment, which explains administrative, teaching and support staff.
- A narrative description gives clear delineation of employee classification and who is responsible for employment decisions and oversight at each level of the organizational chart.

- Job descriptions for administrator, teachers (to include qualifications to meet NCLB standards as well as what certification is required by the school), and key employees are included. (See Highly Qualified Teachers Workbook at http://www.cde.state.co.us/FedPrograms/nclb/tiia_genres.asp.)
- Descriptions of key employee policies to include employment practices, benefits, leave policies, grievance policy, conflict of interest policy, harassment, drug-free workplace, classroom practices, evaluation practices, etc., are attached.
- A clear plan of support for staff development and funding is included.

3. Evaluation Rubric

An excellent application will address the following regarding the Employment Plan:

- Explanation of the relationship that will exist between the charter school and its employees, with employee classification clearly defined.
- Employment policies of the school OR clear plan for timely development and intent of such policies.
- Clear standards are in place for determining staff qualifications to meet NCLB and any licensure requirements.
- A clear delineation of the role of the head administrator to include employee hiring, evaluation and firing.
- A clear plan is in place to develop a comprehensive evaluation plan in alignment with the school’s mission, goals, curriculum assessment and professional development of staff with intent of that plan described.

1	2	3	4	5

Employees Strengths	Reference
Concerns and Additional Questions	Reference

J. Insurance Coverage

1. Component Description

Charter schools must have appropriate insurance coverage. This includes workers compensation, liability insurance, and insurance for the building and its contents. Charter schools are public entities and liability is limited by the Colorado Governmental Immunity Act, C.R.S. 24-10-101 *et seq.*

The risk management office in the local school district is a very good resource for finding information about particular insurance needs. In addition, the Colorado School District Self Insurance Pool is the insurance provider for many charter schools and can provide information. Once insurance needs are understood, costs need to be estimated and incorporated into the proposed budget that includes reasonable assumptions or quotes. The selected or intended insurance coverage should be commensurate with the overall school program and risk factors.

2. Checklist for Comprehensive Application

- A list of the types of insurance for which the charter school will contract.
- Fiscal impact of appropriate insurance coverage is evident in the budget.

3. Evaluation Rubric

An excellent application will provide adequate assurance that the school will meet applicable insurance requirements with reasonable assumptions for the cost.

1	2	3	4	5

Insurance Coverage Strengths	Reference
Concerns and Additional Questions	Reference

K. Parent and Community Involvement

1. Component Description

One of the most distinctive characteristics of charter schools is that they are a choice school. Due to this characteristic, many charter schools have a small school atmosphere and a culture of “everyone belongs to the community.” The application should demonstrate the expectations and plans for ongoing parent and community involvement and the support of volunteers through specific volunteer networks.

It is important for charter school developers to provide adequate notice to the community about the possibility of the new charter school. Some parts of the community may need additional outreach. For example, fliers may need to be published in a second language. Many charter developers have delivered fliers to individual homes in a community.

Be clear about what the new charter school will look like and the process for getting the school approved. Establish early the school’s value for meaningful parental involvement. Explain to parents their role in the charter school through volunteering, monitoring their

child's education and holding the school accountable. Designate an individual on the steering committee to follow up with parents who are interested in getting involved with the development of the charter school.

Network with established civic and organizations in the community your school will serve. Whenever possible, arrange to have Parent Information Meetings in that community. Be sure to reach out to a broad cross-section of the community.

2. Checklist for Comprehensive Application

- A sound plan and timeline are in place to reach a diverse student population.
- Parent involvement in the development of the school is clearly stated along with volunteer requirements and opportunities after the school is open.
- Partnerships or plans for community involvement are clearly defined in the application along with the purpose and expectation. Adequate evidence demonstrates assurance of these partnerships.

3. Evaluation Rubric

A sound Parent and Community Involvement plan will have the following characteristics:

- Informs parents and members of the community about the operations of the school including providing information about the school to students of all races, languages and abilities; a timeline for implementation, a lead contact, and specific action steps.
- An overview of how the parents and community were involved in the development of the school.
- Specific strategies to reach at-risk students and families who might not be aware of this school.
- Evidence such as Letters of Support, Letters of Intent, or MOUs, that the proposed school is welcomed by the larger community, has formed partnerships with community organizations, and is viewed as an attractive educational alternative that reflects the community's needs and interests.
- Detail is given of the types of volunteer requirements and opportunities that are available for the parents/guardians of the students and the larger community.

1	2	3	4	5

At-risk & Community Involvement Strengths	Reference
Concerns and Additional Questions	Reference

L. Enrollment Policy

1. Component Description

The Charter Schools Act allows the authorizer and the charter applicant the flexibility to use any enrollment policy, such as a wait list or lottery. The federal subgrant, administered by CDE, requires the use of a lottery. Many charter schools have elected to use a lottery in order to access these startup and implementation grant funds. More information on lottery requirements can be found in the grant's Request for Proposals at <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/cchgrn00.htm>. The Charter School Program grant is the only federal grant requiring the use of a lottery. A charter school is required to use an approved lottery only during the time it is spending or encumbering these grant funds. (For additional information on lottery requirements, go to <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/cchgrn00.htm> to review the Request for Proposals, page 6.)

The lottery policies and plan for enrollment should demonstrate how the school plans to enroll the intended student population. State law does require a public charter school to not discriminate on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin, religion, ancestry, or need for special education services. It is important to distinguish between admission decisions and academic placement decisions. The Charter Schools Act [C.R.S. 22-30.5-104 (3)] prohibits discrimination based on academic ability. Diagnostic or placement exams may be given to students after they have been officially enrolled.

Charter School Lottery Policies Should Address:

- The date of the annual lottery.
- The definition of “founding family” and “teacher” children not to exceed 20% of the lottery.
- How the community will receive adequate notice about the formation of a new charter school.
- Any requirement for parents to reaffirm their intent to enroll on an annual basis.
- What happens to names not drawn in the lottery.
- How siblings of enrolled students are handled in the process.
- How long parents have to make a decision on whether or not their child will attend the school.

2. Checklist for Comprehensive Application

- A proposed policy or description detailing how the charter school intends to select students for enrollment including the proposed timeline, description of wait list or lottery process, any enrollment criteria, or pre- or post-enrollment testing.
- An explanation of the process that will be used to transfer student records to or from the charter school or a plan to develop such procedures.
- An explanation of how the community will receive information about the formation of a new charter school and any upcoming lottery or enrollment deadline.
- An explanation of the notification of placement and how long parents have to make the decision to accept or not accept. Contents of enrollment packet should be explained, along with an ongoing data information and communication plan.

- An explanation of the requirements of parents to reaffirm intent to enroll on an annual basis.
- A clear definition is provided for “founding family” and “teacher” and any preferences given them in the lottery, not to exceed 20%.

3. Evaluation Rubric

An excellent Enrollment Policy will have the following characteristics:

- Clear description of the enrollment policy consistent with the requirements of section C.R.S. 22-30.5-104(3) (or C.R.S. 22-30.5-507(3) for CSI applications).
- Explanation of criteria for enrollment decisions.
- Clear procedures for withdrawals and transfers from the school that will support an orderly transition for exiting students or a clear plan for developing such procedures.

1	2	3	4	5

Enrollment Process Strengths	Reference
Concerns and Additional Questions	Reference

M. Transportation and Food Service

1. Component Description

A charter school may choose not to provide any transportation or food services or may choose to negotiate with a school district, BOCES or private provider to provide transportation services, or with a district or private provider for food services for its students. Colorado law does not require a charter school to provide transportation or food services.

If a charter school chooses to provide transportation or food services, a plan for each area must be included in the application. The transportation plan should include provisions for transporting students to and from the charter school and their homes, and to and from the charter school and any extracurricular activities. For food services the plan should include a description about how this service will be offered either initially or at a later time. In addition, a description of how the charter school plans to meet the needs specifically of low-income and academically low-achieving pupils should be included for both.

The provision of transportation services has several implications. First of all, the cost must be included in the charter school’s budget. Secondly, insurance and liability issues must be addressed when assessing the charter school’s overall insurance needs. Insurance

coverage should meet required thresholds for liability whether the school uses public or private vehicles.

Finally, many federal and state rules and regulations relate to the provision of transportation services. One specific rule to be aware of is that any small vehicles or school buses owned and operated by a charter school or under contract must meet the safety and operating standards as prescribed in State Board Rules 1 CCR 301-25, 301-26 and 301-29.

For more information, see www.cde.state.co.us/index_nutri_transpo.htm.

Schools with a significant number of students who could qualify for the Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) program are strongly encouraged to offer some sort of lunch program. The provision of food services may or may not have a negative effect on the school's budget, depending on whether it is a program under the district food services umbrella with an agreement for the same provisions given other schools in the district or is provided through a private contractor. The school must collect FRL qualifying information from students and that process should be included in the food services plan. (Schools not providing a lunch program will still collect this information, but using a different form.)

The plan should include whether the school intends to use a private or district food services provider, how the Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) qualification forms will be distributed, collected and recorded, and how the facility will be brought into compliance or be built to meet any federal requirements for food warming or preparation, if needed to meet FRL regulations. The charter school can only be reimbursed for its FRL program through an authorized "school food authority." If the school will not be using an approved FRL program, or provide any lunch program, this section should include how students who would qualify for a Free or Reduced-price lunch and how students who forget their lunch will be accommodated.

For more information, go to http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_nutrition.htm.

2. Checklist for Comprehensive Application

- A description of the charter school's transportation plan including the transportation of low-income and academically low-achieving students.
- A description of daily route and extracurricular transportation needs is included and there is an adequate plan for addressing these needs.
- A plan is in place for adequate safety measures and insurance coverage for the transportation of students to and from school events using private or school vehicles.
- If the school does plan to offer a FRL-qualifying hot lunch program, details should be included about how this service will be provided, reimbursed through an authorized "school food authority" and any other applicable state or federal regulations.
- If the school does not plan to offer a lunch program, this section addresses how the school will address the needs of students who forget or cannot provide a lunch.

3. Evaluation Rubric

An excellent Transportation and Food Service plan will have the following characteristics:

- Statements regarding whether the school plans to provide transportation and/or food services for its pupils including low-income and low-achieving students are included.
- Clear description of how the school plans to meet the transportation needs of its pupils for daily route and/or extracurricular needs, if applicable.
- Clear description of how the school plans to meet the food service needs of its pupils, if applicable.
- Viable financial plan addressing transportation and food service needs.

1	2	3	4	5

Transportation Strengths	Reference
Concerns and Additional Questions	Reference

N. Facilities

1. Component Description

One of the greatest challenges to opening a new school is finding a suitable facility. The most important thing during the application process is to plan as much as possible and to clearly articulate those plans. It can be difficult to negotiate for facility space without having an approved charter. It is not necessary to have a signed formal agreement for a facility during the application process, but any viable options should be explained and should include reasonable space requirements, a reasonable plan for space utilization, a discussion of how the facility will be ready for use when the school opens and, most importantly, reasonable costs of that facility which must be reflected in the proposed budget.

Charter schools may rent, lease, own, or otherwise finance facility space. In some cases, a school district may have an unused facility; in other cases, a charter school may share space with another tenant. Many charter schools have been able to finance their own facilities with tax-exempt bond financing through the Colorado Educational and Cultural Facilities Authority (CECFA). These are typically schools that are established, but information can be found by calling CECFA at 303-297-2538.

With any facility, building permits and inspections are required. Life and safety requirements (including asbestos regulations) apply to rented or contributed facilities as well. The state is responsible for issuing certificates of occupancy for public schools, and information can be obtained by calling the Department of Labor at 303-572-2919. In addition, contact your community's planning and zoning department, as well as the facilities

director for your school district for further information concerning the permit, life and safety and inspection requirements of local entities.

Each year the state legislature designates a specific amount for Capital and Liability Insurance Reserve [C.R.S. 22-45-103(1)(c)]. This revenue should be accounted for separately, spent with authorization via the governing board's action, and used for allowable expenditures.

2. Checklist for Comprehensive Application

- A facility needs assessment including how many classrooms are needed, how many specials rooms are needed (art, music, gym), minimum size of each classroom, library space needed, number of bathrooms needed, number of offices needed, amount of common space needed, outdoor space needed, overall size, cost per square foot, zoning and occupancy requirements, and how each facility aligns with the facility needs assessment is included in the narrative.
- If additional funds or financing will be needed to bring a facility online, the application narrative and attached budget identify potential grants and/or lending sources. If real estate consultants are involved, a brief description of the relationship and budget impacts is included.
- A target location (and prospective sites if not affected by confidentiality issues) is given based on school design and intended population with an explanation of prospective school sites and assistance to find them.
- An explanation of fund allocation is included based on estimated renovation costs, square foot needs per pupil and cost per square foot, average square foot costs in the intended location, and the percentage of budget designated for facility needs.

3. Evaluation Rubric

An excellent Facility plan will have the following characteristics:

If a facility has been identified --

- Designation of the proposed facility and alternatives.
- Evidence that facility will be appropriate for the educational program of the school and adequate for the projected student enrollment.
- Adequate reflection of the costs associated with the proposed facility in the budget including rent, utilities, insurance and maintenance.
- Assurance that the proposed facility will be in compliance with applicable building codes, health and safety laws, and with the requirements of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- A sound plan to identify needed renovations as well as the funds and a timeline for the completion of those renovations.

If a facility has not yet been identified --

- Description of anticipated facilities needs including evidence that the facility will be appropriate for the educational program of the school and adequate for the projected student enrollment.
- Inclusion of costs associated with the anticipated facilities needs in the budget including renovation, rent, utilities, insurance and maintenance.
- Evidence to indicate that facilities-related budget assumptions are realistic based on anticipated location, size, etc.

- Assurance that the proposed location will be in compliance with applicable building codes, health and safety laws, and with the requirements of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Plan for finding a location including a proposed schedule for doing so.

1	2	3	4	5

Facilities Strengths	Reference
Concerns and Additional Questions	Reference

O. Waivers

1. Component Description

The technical means by which charter schools operate is via waiver from certain state laws, state rules and/or school district policies. Information on applying for waivers from the state is on the CDE Charter Schools Web site at http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_charter.htm under Technical Assistance. Charter schools applying for waiver of school district policies should contact their charter school liaison if those policies are not listed on the school district's Web site. An example of a waiver application can be found in the CDE Charter Schools Electronic Guidebook of Best Practices at <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/guidebook/gov/index.htm>.

The Colorado State Board of Education has determined that thirteen statutes may be automatically waived, upon request, for charter schools. Charter schools may request waivers from statutes in addition to those automatically waived, but the process for approval is different.

There are two philosophies on charter schools obtaining waivers. Some believe that authority is given to the charter school via the charter contract, making some waivers unnecessary. In particular, the Board Powers (C.R.S. 22-32-109 and 22-32-110) statutes are considered "delegatory" rather than "substantive." In other words, the charter school governing board is delegated the authority that otherwise would belong to the school district board of education. Others believe that obtaining a waiver is an assurance against charter contracts that may be renegotiated and, therefore, less secure for the charter school. Charter schools should investigate the school district's or CSI's viewpoint on waivers to gain understanding of expectations. A charter school developer should obtain legal counsel when seeking waivers from either the state or the authorizer.

Attach:

- Waivers requested from the state
- Waivers requested from the school district or CSI

2. Checklist for Comprehensive Application

- The request for waiver from state statute by citation, state Board of Education rules or regulations and authorizer policies by policy number are included as attachments. Request includes rationale for requesting the waiver, replacement policy or explanation of intent, expected financial and implementation impact, and how the waiver will be evaluated.

3. Evaluation Rubric

An excellent application will include the following regarding waiver requests:

- A list of the state laws or rules for which a waiver is requested including a replacement plan, rationale and how the waiver will be evaluated.
- A list of each authorizer policy for which a waiver is requested including a replacement plan/rationale.

Moreover, these requested waivers will match the proposed autonomy, school mission and goals, operations, governance, and employment relationships of the proposed charter school.

1	2	3	4	5

Waivers Strengths	Reference
Concerns and Additional Questions	Reference

P. Student Discipline, Expulsion, or Suspension

1. Component Description

Although all charter schools must meet the minimum standards for student discipline, expulsion and suspension, they don't have to fit into the traditional "box." Charter schools can have their own policies as long as the statutory minimums are met. Many charter schools have sought and obtained waivers from related laws that provide for flexibility and a unique approach to student discipline.

Refer to C.R.S. 22-33.106 *et seq.*, the Suspension, Expulsion and Denial of Admission law, for more detailed information. Further detail is provided in a publication prepared by the Attorney General's office at <http://www.ago.state.co.us/schoolvio/svpm2007.pdf>.

Most charter school contracts stipulate which party (the authorizer or the charter school) has the authority to suspend or expel students. C.R.S. 22-33-105(7) states that either a charter school authorized by the CSI, or the CSI itself, may expel, suspend or deny admission of students. During contract negotiations this issue must be decided. Therefore, the charter application should detail how the charter school proposes to handle student discipline, expulsion and suspension. Many applications include policies that the potential charter school would use. Samples are online at <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/guidebook/fam/index.htm>.

The education of expelled students is the responsibility of the public school that expelled them. Include an explanation of how the charter school will provide for an alternative education, if applicable.

2. Checklist for Comprehensive Application

- A proposed policy for student discipline, expulsion or suspension that meets state law and district policy (unless waived), is included.
- An explanation of how the student recommended for expulsion will be afforded due process rights, including manifestation hearings and the implementation of behavior plans.
- A description of the schools an expelled student will be prohibited from attending.
- An explanation of how the charter school will provide the expelled student with an alternative education, if applicable.

3. Evaluation Rubric

An excellent application will include:

- Policies for addressing expulsion or dismissal, suspension and education of expelled or suspended students that provide adequately for the safety of students and staff; provide due process for students to include IDEA requirements; serve the best interests of the school's students; create a positive environment for learning; and are otherwise consistent with the intents and purposes of C.R.S. 22-33-106 and 22-33-203.

OR

- A clear plan for developing such policies including a schedule for doing so.
- An explanation of how the proposed school will conduct appeals for students facing expulsion and meet the requirements for Manifestation Hearings for students with disabilities (both IDEA and 504).
- A description of how students will be expelled, for what offenses and which schools they will be expelled from if the expulsion hearing is conducted by the proposed charter school.

1	2	3	4	5

Student Discipline, Expulsion, or Suspension Strengths	Reference
Concerns and Additional Questions	Reference

Q. Serving Students with Special Needs

1. Component Description

As public schools, charter schools must open their enrollment to any student and must provide appropriate special education services as needed for students with disabilities. The charter school developer should consider the general philosophy of the school when developing the philosophy for delivery of special education services. For instance, a charter school may have an experiential delivery model making the needs of a student with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) more unique. Further, a charter school with a philosophy that no student “falls through the cracks” may have an aggressive remediation program for students who are not attaining their full academic potential and yet do not qualify for special education services.

While charter schools can obtain waivers from teacher licensure, Special Education licensure cannot be waived.

There are many CDE resources available for charter school applicants to consider when writing this section. Those resources are available at <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/guidebook/sped/index.htm>. After reading the overview, read the resource on special education funding for direction on the impact to the charter school’s operating budget. The sample compliance plan describes how all special education services could be delivered at a charter school. Charter applications should not contain as much detail as is in the sample compliance plan because the charter school application becomes the legal basis for the charter school contract. By writing that level of detail in the application, the charter school developer would be committing to how exactly particular services would be delivered rather than allowing for flexibility between the authorizer’s special education director and the charter school. However, it would be good for the charter school developer to fully understand the scope and depth of services for which the charter school would be responsible.

There is a statewide Charter Schools and Special Education Advisory Committee that meets on a regular basis. More information on that committee is at <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/sped/index.htm>.

Potential authorizers are increasingly interested in ascertaining the capacity of the charter school to limit potential liability issues for the authorizer (Special Education administrative unit) and consider program adequacy.

2. Checklist for Comprehensive Application

- The school addresses a Response to Intervention (RtI), or child study process to address a need for adaptations or special education assessments and staffing.
- Clear indications are given that the school understands requirements to meet the needs of IEP's, ELL, IDEA, 504 and plans to comply with the needs to include certified personnel, documentation, assessments, adaptations and modifications. The school may also want to address GT, and enrichment needs.
- Plan is in place to include needed staff, adequate funding, evaluation of programs' success, flexibility to add contracted services, and specific services the district is expected to provide.

3. Evaluation Rubric

An excellent application will have the following characteristics regarding the plan for Serving Students with Special Needs:

- Realistic plan to identify and meet the learning needs of at-risk students, students with disabilities, gifted/talented students, and English language learners.
- Timeline, lead contact, and intervention process with specific action steps for meeting learning needs of students with special needs (such as a Response to Intervention model).
- Plans for serving special populations align with the overall curriculum, instructional approaches and the school mission.
- Budget is adequate to meet the needs of these students (at least \$400 per total student population).
- Plans are in place to provide adequate staff to meet the needs of these students including a licensed special education teacher.

1	2	3	4	5

Serving Students with Special Needs Strengths	Reference
Concerns and Additional Questions	Reference

R. Dispute Resolution Process

1. Component Description

This section is simply a paragraph or two that reflects the school's understanding of and compliance with C.R.S. 22-30.5-107.5, which explains how the school and its authorizer

agree to resolve disputes that may arise concerning governing policy provisions of the school's charter contract.

2. Checklist for Comprehensive Application

- Except as otherwise provided in C.R.S. 22-30.5-108, a plan should be provided to settle any disputes between a charter school and its authorizer, concerning governing policy provisions of the charter contract, to include a reasonable written notice which gives a brief description of the matter in dispute and the scope of the disagreement between parties.
- A process is given to address the issue within thirty days of receipt of notice. Both parties shall either reach an agreement by mutual consent or mutually agree to use any form of alternative dispute resolution as allowed by state law. Alternative dispute resolution shall result in a final issue of findings, by a neutral third party, within one hundred twenty days after receipt of written notice, with costs apportioned reasonably.
- The plan explains that a charter school and authorizer may agree to be bound by the findings of the neutral third party, or may appeal such findings to the state board according to statutory requirements.
- Any decision by the state board, pursuant to state law, shall be final and is not subject to an appeal.

3. Evaluation Rubric

- The dispute resolution plan shows a clear understanding for compliance with statutory requirements for both the charter school and the authorizer.
- The dispute resolution plan demonstrates reasonable method(s) for resolving disagreements, which arise between a charter school and its chartering district or authorizer, concerning governing policy provisions of the school's charter contract.

S. School Management Contracts (to be completed only if the proposed school intends to contract with an education service provider).

1. Component Description

If the proposed charter school intends to contract with an education service provider (ESP), such as a charter management organization, education management organization, or any other type of school management provider, address the following issues:

- An explanation of how and why the ESP was selected.
- Detailed explanation of the ESP's success in serving student populations similar to the targeted student population, including demonstrated academic achievement as well as successful management of non-academic school functions (e.g., back-office services, school operations, extra curricular programs).
- A term sheet setting forth the proposed duration of the management contract; roles and responsibilities; scope of services and resources to be provided by the ESP; performance evaluation measures and timelines; compensation structure including clear identification of all fees to be paid to the ESP; methods of contract oversight and enforcement; investment disclosure; and conditions for renewal and termination of the contract.
- A draft of the proposed management contract including all of the above terms;
- Explanation of the relationship between the school governing board and the ESP, specifying how the governing board will monitor and evaluate the performance of

the service provider, the internal controls that will guide the relationship, and how the governing board will ensure fulfillment of performance expectations, or have a means for severing the contract.

- Explanation of which staff will report to or be paid by the ESP.
- Evidence that the corporate entity is authorized to do business in Colorado.

Attach:

- Term sheet (described above)
- Proposed management contract
- Evidence that the service provider is authorized to do business in Colorado

2. Checklist for Comprehensive Application

- Evidence is included that the service provider has successfully managed other schools.
- Evidence is included that the other schools managed by the proposed service provider have demonstrated academic achievement for similar targeted student populations.
- A term sheet for the proposed management of the charter school is included with clear performance measures and contract severance provision(s).
- A draft of the proposed management contract with a clear Conflict of Interest statement is included.
- An explanation of which staff will be hired and terminated by the ESP or report to or be paid by the ESP.
- Evidence that the ESP is authorized to conduct business in Colorado.
- Clear understanding of financial obligation to ESP and if it increases, decreases or stays the same for the duration of the relationship. This includes building ownership if the developers are making payments to the ESP.

3. Evaluation Rubric

An excellent School Management Contract section will have the following characteristics:

- A logical explanation of how and why the ESP was selected.
- Demonstrated evidence that the ESP has been successful in the academic and business operations aspects of other schools.
- Reasonable management contract terms and fees along with clear performance measures and contract severing provisions.
- Clear evidence that the ESP is authorized to conduct business in Colorado.
- Details sufficient to assure there are no potential conflicts of interest between the ESP and the governing board; there is a clear plan for monitoring and evaluating performance of the ESP and adequate internal controls are in place.
- A clear description of which staff members will be hired, evaluated and terminated by the ESP, and any relationship with the governing board on these decisions.

1	2	3	4	5

Transportation Strengths	Reference
Concerns and Additional Questions	Reference

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Would you recommend approval of this application? Explain your recommendation in the Summary Comments section below.

No, incomplete application or does not meet minimum standards.

Yes, but only with additional information on:

Yes, with conditions such as:

Yes, unconditionally.

Overall Strengths	Reference
Overall Concerns and Additional Questions	Reference
Summary Comments	

Charter School Intent to Submit Form

1. **Name of proposed school:** _____

2. **Primary contact person:** _____

Mailing address: _____

Street and/or PO Box

City

State

Zip Code

Phone: (day) _____ (evening) _____

E-mail address: _____

3. **Model or focus of proposed school:** (ex. Arts, College Prep, Dual Language, etc.)

4. **Grade levels to be served:**

5. Does the school expect to contract with a **charter management organization** or company for school management or operation? Yes No

If yes, identify the charter management organization:

6. **Proposed Principal or Lead Administrator Information:**

Name of proposed Principal candidate: _____

Current employment: _____

Phone: (day) _____ (evening) _____

E-mail address: _____

7. **Projected enrollment and demographics chart**

School year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Year 1													

Year 2													
Year 3													
Year 4													
Year 5													

School year	% ELL	% SPED	% FRL
Year 1			
Year 2			
Year 3			
Year 4			
Year 5			

8. Name of applicant team or founding entity:

- A. Names, roles, and current employment of all persons on the applicant team:
- B. Does the applicant team or any members of the team currently operate any other schools? Yes No
- C. Explain the individual and collective qualifications of the applicant team members to establish a high-quality charter school, in particular the capacity to assume responsibility for public funds, administration and governance.
- D. Include as attachments resumes for each individual on the applicant team.
- E. Explain the circumstances and motivations that brought the applicant team together to propose this charter school.
- F. Which applicant team members will become founding board members?

9. Identify any organizations, agencies, consultants or institutions of higher education that are partners in planning and establishing this charter school, along with a brief description of their current and planned role and any resources they have contributed or plan to contribute to the school's development.