



# Office of Blended and Online Learning

## Certification of a Multi-district Online School

### Instruction Guide and Application



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Instruction Guide and Application

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## Section 1: Overview and Purpose

### A. Purpose

During the 2007 Legislative Session, the Colorado General Assembly enacted legislation (Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-30.7-101, et seq.) to support effective oversight by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) of online education in Colorado. The legislation created a Division within CDE—the Office of Blended & Online Learning—to undertake new activities to promote quality and accountability in Online Schools. The legislation also created the Governor’s Appointed Online Advisory Board to make recommendations to the Office of Blended & Online Learning.

Pursuant to statute, the Online Advisory Board developed *Quality Standards for Online Schools and Programs*, which have been approved by the Colorado State Board of Education. Consistent with the authorizing legislation, the Quality Standards for Online Schools and Programs seek to balance the values of local control of education, innovation, and accountability in publicly-funded programs.

The legislation also directed the Unit to develop and implement a process for certifying multi-district Online Schools. A multi-district Online School serves a student population drawn from two or more school districts and enrolling more than ten students from outside the authorizing school district.

**Certification does not constitute approval of operations for the Online School by CDE.** Approval of the Online School rests with the school Authorizer (a school district, any group of school districts, a board of cooperative services, or the state Charter School Institute). However, prior to authorizing multi-district schools, Online Schools and their relationship with the authorizer must be certified by the Office of Blended & Online Learning based on three criteria:

1. The Authorizer has the resources and capacity to oversee the Online School.
2. The Authorizer has documented and verified that the Online School meets an acceptable level of compliance with the Quality Standards for Online Schools and Programs.
3. The Authorizer and the multi-district Online School have agreed on a plan for operating the Online School.

**The multi-district Online School may begin student instruction and operations only after approval by the Authorizer and receipt of certification from CDE.**

### B. Scope

Only Authorizers of multi-district Online Schools need apply for school certification by CDE. Certification is not required for a single-district Online School or Program. Certification is not required for supplemental Online Programs.

For a multi-district Online School with physical facilities defined in law and regulations as “Learning Centers” located in a district other than the authorizing district, an additional step beyond certification is required: the Authorizer must notify the district in which the Learning Center is located and must offer to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the district. The MOU details agreements related to facilities, communication, sharing of student data, and inter-district sharing of resources and other means to improve student achievement.

### C. Definitions

- "Authorizer" means an entity that authorizes an online program or online school. "Authorizer" shall include a school district, any group of two or more school districts, a board of cooperative services created pursuant to § 22-5-104 C.R.S., or the state Charter School Institute established pursuant to § 22-30.5-503, C.R.S.
- "Learning Center" means a facility in which a consistent group of students meets more often than once per week under the supervision of a Teacher or Mentor for a significant portion of a school day for the purpose of participating in an Online School. A group of parents and students meeting repeatedly, occasionally, and



informally, even if facilitated by a school, shall not constitute a "Learning Center", and a private home shall not be considered a "Learning Center" under any circumstances pursuant to § 22-30.7-102 C.R.S.

- A "significant portion of the school day for the purpose of participating in an Online School" means that students of the Learning Center must be actively participating in the curricula of the certified Online School for more than fifty-percent of the school day.
- A curriculum that is not part of the certified Online School must be non-religious and non-sectarian and may only be offered for less than fifty-percent of the school day.
- In no event shall the parents or guardians of the students enrolled in the Online School be required to pay tuition on behalf of such students for the Online School at such Learning Center.
- "Multi-district Online School" means an Online School that serves a student population drawn from two or more school districts.
- "Online School" means a full-time education school authorized pursuant to § 22-30.7-101 C.R.S. *et seq.*, that delivers a sequential program of synchronous or asynchronous instruction directed by a teacher, primarily through on-line digital learning strategies that provide students choice over time, place, and path, and teacher-guided modality. An online school has an assigned school code and operates with its own administrator, a separate budget, and a complete instructional program. An online school is responsible for fulfilling all reporting requirements and will be held to state and federally mandated accountability processes.
- "Single-district Online Program" or "Single-district Online School" means an online program or online school that serves only students who reside within a single school district.
- "Supplemental Online Program" means a program that offers one or more online courses to students to augment an educational program provided by a school, school district, charter school, or board of cooperative services.

## D. Timeline for Submission and Review of Applications for Certification

For multi-district Online Schools that intend to begin operations during the 2018-2019 school year, the Office of Blended & Online Learning will accept applications for certification on two dates only: Monday, January 2, 2018 and Monday, April 2, 2018. The Office of Blended & Online Learning will act on the applications submitted as expeditiously as possible, not to exceed sixty days from the application deadline.

## E. Review Process Overview

The Office of Blended & Online Learning's process for reviewing applications for certification of multi-district Online Schools is described in Section IV of this document. The certification process is standards-based, but not competitive in the sense that only a limited number of certifications will be granted. The Office of Blended & Online Learning will certify all applications that meet the criteria for certification. **If the Office does not recommend certification based on an insufficient demonstration of Authorizer capacity or a plan for operating the Online School, the Authorizer may revise and resubmit its application upon notification of non-approval.**

## F. Accountability and Reporting

Re-certification is no longer required and Online Schools that have been certified by CDE are certified indefinitely, barring compliance issues or closure, but must submit an amended application of certification if there will be a change in grade levels served.

Each multi-district Online School is held to the same performance standards as all public schools in the state of Colorado pursuant to section § 22-11-210 and will be assigned an improvement plan based on the Online School's performance.



The Online School must annually submit to CDE a unified improvement plan, which will be posted on the CDE website along with the Online School's School Performance Framework (SPF).

Pursuant to § 22-30.7 (3) (l) and 22-30.7-109.5, C.R.S., each Online School and Program shall submit to its Authorizer an annual financial and accounting report, which the Authorizer shall submit to the Department on or before December 31st of each year. Online Schools that are charter schools and already submit the financial information required pursuant to § 22-30.5-109 (1), C.R.S., may submit a single financial report to satisfy requirements for both charter schools and Online Schools. The report will be reviewed by the Office of Blended & Online Learning for sound accounting and financial practices and resources for the Online School.

If the Office of Blended & Online Learning has reason to believe that an Online School is not in substantial compliance with one or more of the statutory or regulatory requirements applicable to Online Schools, to provide notice to the Online School, and its Authorizer, and require that the Online School, together with its Authorizer, address a plan for coming into compliance. The plan may be included in the unified improvement plan required pursuant to section § 22-11-210 (2).

Legislation enacted or rules promulgated in future years may change requirements and the documentation required to maintain certification status.

## Section II: Required Components of the Application for Certification

### A. Cover Page

- The Cover Page is found on page 12.
- Provide all of the information requested on the Cover Page. Do not leave any spaces blank.
- The Cover Page must be signed by a legal agent of the Authorizer-Applicant.
- The Cover Page is the first page of the application.

### B. Application Checklist

- The Application Checklist is found on page 13.
- Use the Application Checklist to ensure the application for certification is complete. *Incomplete applications will be returned to the Authorizer and will delay the review process.*
- Indicate on the checklist which pages of the application address the listed review criteria.
- Include the completed checklist with the application, immediately following the Cover Page. It will serve as a table of contents, to guide reviewers through the application.

### C. Authorizer - Quality Standards for Online Schools and Programs

An Authorizer of a multi-district Online School must, as part of its application for certification, document and verify an acceptable level of compliance by the Online School to the State's Quality Standards for Online Schools and Programs. In order to meet this requirement, Authorizers must describe the process by which the Quality Standards were evaluated and append to their application the *Certification Regarding Compliance with Quality Standards for Online Schools and Programs*.

Authorizers must describe the process that assures the Online School will meet the Quality Standards for Online Programs by the time the school begins student instruction.

Both of these requirements are further clarified in section 2 of this application.

**Any applications submitted without all signatures and initials affixed on the *Certification Regarding Compliance with Quality Standards* will be rejected.**



## D. Required Assurances

- The Required Assurances form is found on page 17.
- By checking the boxes on this form, the Authorizer is verifying acceptance and understanding of the assurances.
- Ensure that a legal agent of the Authorizer signs the form where indicated.

Submit this form as part of the Application for Certification, immediately following the *Certification Regarding Compliance with Quality Standards for Online Schools and Programs*.

## E. Application Narrative

The narrative sets out the case for the Authorizer-Applicant that the multi-district Online School meets the three criteria for certification contained in state law:

1. The Authorizer has the resources and capacity to oversee the Online School.
2. The Authorizer has documented and verified that the Online School meets an acceptable level of compliance with the Quality Standards for Online Schools and Programs.
3. The Authorizer and the multi-district Online School have agreed on a plan for operating the Online School.

Tracking state law, the application for certification must specifically address required components within these criteria as follows:

### Part 1: Oversight: Adequacy of Resources and Capacity of Authorizer

- 1.1 Curriculum and Instruction
- 1.2 Use of Software Applications and Technology
- 1.3 Data Gathering, Analysis and Reporting (Management)
- 1.4 Human Resources Management
- 1.5 Financial Management, Facilities Management and Risk Management
- 1.6 Other Relevant Public Education Administrative Functions

### Part 2: Compliance with Quality Standards for Online Programs

- 2.1 Written Plan for Compliance with Quality Standards
- 2.2 Description of Quality Standards Review Process

### Part 3: School Management Contracts (To be completed only if the proposed Online School intends to contract with an Education Service Provider (ESP))

- 3.1 Explanation of Education Service Provider (ESP) Selection
- 3.2 Examples of ESP Efficacy
- 3.3 Detailed Term Sheet
- 3.4 Draft of the Proposed Management Contract Attachment
- 3.5 Online School 's BOE Relationship with ESP
- 3.6 Explain Which Staff Will Report to or be Paid by the ESP
- 3.7 Evidence Corporate Entity is Authorized to do Business in Colorado

### Part 4: Plan for Operating the Online School

- 4.1 Vision, Mission and Goals
- 4.2 Organizational Structure and Governance of the Online School
- 4.3 Equitable Access for all Students
- 4.4 Guidance Counseling for all Students
- 4.5 Student Academic Credit Policies
- 4.6 Student Achievement and Attendance Policies

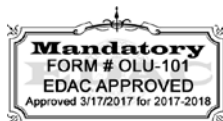


- 4.7 Student Records Policies
- 4.8 Student Placement Policies and Procedures
- 4.9 Staff Development Plans
- 4.10 Student Services, Including Tutorial Support
- 4.11 Staff, Student and Parent Handbooks
- 4.12 Employment and Contractor Policies and Procedures
- 4.13 Annual Budget and Finance Practices
- 4.14 Facility Plans
- 4.15 Risk Management
- 4.16 Data Development Analysis and Reporting
- 4.17 Communication among the Online School, Parents, Community and School Districts in which Students Enrolled in the Multi-district Online School Reside

The Application Narrative lists specific issues that should be addressed in the discussion of each required component. Authorizer-Applicants should address each of the elements listed and refer to the rubric to ensure that all essential requirements are met. In discussing a particular component, an Authorizer-Applicant may include elements that are not specifically listed if the Authorizer-Applicant believes this information is pertinent to the application.

## F. Learning Centers Attachment

- The Learning Centers Attachment form is found on page 26.
- Complete this form *ONLY IF* the multi-district Online School for which certification is being sought operates Learning Centers as defined by statute.
- Provide the requested contact information for each Learning Center for which a local school district and the multi-district Online School have entered a Memorandum of Understanding.
- After the certification of the multi-district Online School is complete, the Learning Centers attachment must be submitted for each new Learning Center beginning operations.
- Ensure that a legal agent of the Authorizer signs the Learning Center Attachment where indicated.
- Submit this form as part of the Application for Certification, immediately following the Required Assurances form.
- If the online school opens learning centers in years subsequent to the application, this section is required to be turned in to the Office of Blended and Online Learning at that time.



## Section III: Developing and Formatting the Application

### A. Coordination between the Authorizer and the Online School in Developing the Application

The Application for Certification must be submitted by the Authorizer on behalf of the Authorizer and Online School. This format demonstrates the collaboration between the Authorizer and the Online School in developing the application.

The application is organized to address the three statutory criteria for certification of a multi-district Online School. The first criterion speaks to the Authorizer's resources and capacity to oversee the Online School. This section should be written by the Authorizer from the perspective of the Authorizer.

The second criterion speaks to the Authorizer's verification that the Online School meets an acceptable level of compliance with the Quality Standards. The Authorizer meets this criterion by signing and submitting with the application the *Certification Regarding Compliance with Quality Standards* document.

The fourth section speaks to the plan for operating the Online School agreed to by the Authorizer and the Online School. It likely would be most logical for the Online School to develop this section of the application, with review and input by the Authorizer. **This section of the application (the school plan) will provide a primary source of evidence on which the Authorizer can rely in evaluating Compliance with the Quality Standards.**

### B. Application Format

- Applications **must not exceed 100 pages**.
- The application must be formatted as an Adobe PDF document (.pdf).
- Please use 12-point single-spaced font.
- Use 1-inch margins.
- Use document footer with the name of the Authorizer.
- Number all pages.
- Append all supporting documentation and submit as a separate email attachment (.pdf format).
- MOUs for Learning Centers should be sent as separate email attachments.
- The following pages must contain the appropriate signatures and/or initials on the digital copy:
  - Application Cover Page
  - Certification Regarding Compliance with Quality Standards
  - Required Assurances
  - Learning Centers Attachment (if applicable)
- Submit the application and all supporting documents via email to:

Renee Martinez, Online & Blended Learning Specialist  
Office of Blended & Online Learning  
martinez\_r@cde.state.co.us





## Section IV: The Review Process

Each application for certification will be reviewed and rated individually by external reviewers using the review rubric. Reviewers will evaluate *each* required component of the application to determine if the application's description of that component meets expectations for certification set out in the review rubric. The rubric focuses on the completeness, specificity and quality of evidence the Applicant presents to support the description. The reviewers will then submit their individual ratings to CDE. Where there is consensus among the external reviewers, the application decision will be communicated to the Authorizer-Applicant. When consensus has not been reached, a CDE team of reviewers will make the final determination based on the evaluation of the external reviewers.

The review process is designed to respect local authority and decision-making about program structure, content, and delivery, while ensuring that:

- The Authorizer has the resources and capacity to oversee the Online School.
- The Authorizer has documented and verified that the Online School meets an acceptable level of compliance with the Quality Standards.
- The Authorizer and the multi-district Online School have agreed on a plan for operating the Online School.

The Office of Blended & Online Learning will recommend certification to the State Board of Education for applications in which all components meet expectations for certification as set out in the review rubric.

If an application does not meet expectations for *all* required components, the Office of Blended & Online Learning will provide specific feedback to the Authorizer about which application components were not addressed with sufficient detail and completeness. Using this feedback, the Authorizer may submit a supplemental application addressing only the identified components within thirty days of receiving notice from CDE. Supplemental re-applications will be reviewed as expeditiously as possible, not to exceed thirty days from the date of receipt of the resubmission.

If after one resubmission the application does not adequately address *all* required components, the certification will be denied. If CDE does not receive a response to the components that were not adequately addressed within the thirty days, the certification will be denied. If certification is denied, the Authorizer-Applicant cannot reapply until the next application window.



# Office of Blended & Online Learning

Application for Certification of a Multi-District Online School

## Filing Instructions

A digital copy must be received by CDE **by 4 pm of the due date (January 2<sup>nd</sup> or April 2<sup>nd</sup>)**. The contents of the Application must be submitted in the order set out on the Application Checklist.

Applications should be sent via email to:

Renee Martinez  
Online & Blended Learning Specialist  
martinez\_r@cde.state.co.us



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**APPLICATION COVER PAGE**

Authorizer Contact Information		
Authorizer District Name	Authorizer District Code	Date
Contact Person	Position Title	
Mailing Address		
Phone number	Fax number	E-mail address

Online School		
Name of the Online School and Code	Opening date of operation	
Contact Person	Position Title	E-mail address
Mailing Address		
Phone/Fax Number	Website	

Grade Levels Served (check all that apply)												
<input type="checkbox"/> K	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 8	<input type="checkbox"/> 9	<input type="checkbox"/> 10	<input type="checkbox"/> 11	<input type="checkbox"/> 12

I hereby certify that I am the Applicant's chief school/administrative officer and that the information contained in this application is, to the best of my knowledge, complete and accurate. I further certify, to the best of my knowledge, that any ensuing program and activity will be conducted in accordance with all applicable Federal and State laws and regulations, and with the Assurances and Certifications contained herein.

_____ <b>Authorizer:</b> Printed Name and Title (Signature should be the District Superintendent, or other person with signature authority for the district.)	_____ Date	_____ Signature
_____ <b>Online School:</b> Printed Name and Title	_____ Date	_____ Signature



## APPLICATION CHECKLIST

**Only complete applications will be reviewed.** Incomplete applications will not be reviewed. Use this application checklist to ensure that all required components of the application are included.

- ☐ Cover Sheet (signature required) – *page 12 of this document*
- ☐ Application Checklist – *page 13 of this document*
- ☐ Application Narrative – *page 18 of this document*
- ☐ Completed Certification Regarding Compliance with Quality Standards (signature and initials required) – *page 15 of this document*
- ☐ Required Assurances (signature required) – *page 17 of this document*

Application Narrative Required Components	Page #
<b>1. Authorizer Oversight: Adequacy of Resources and Capacity</b>	
1.1 Curriculum and Instruction	
1.2 Use of Software Applications and Technology	
1.3 Data Gathering, Analysis and Reporting (Management)	
1.4 Human Resources Management	
1.5 Financial Management, Facilities Management and Risk Management	
1.6 Other Relevant Public Education Administrative Functions	
<b>2. Compliance with the Quality Standards for Online Programs</b>	
2.1 Written Plan for Compliance with Quality Standards for Online Programs	
2.2 Description of Quality Standards Review Process	
<b>3. School Management Contracts (If Applicable)</b>	
3.1 Explanation of Education Service Provider (ESP) Selection	
3.2 Examples of ESP Efficacy	
3.3 Detailed Term Sheet	
3.4 Draft of the Proposed Management Contract Attachment	
3.5 Online School's BOE Relationship with ESP	



<b>Application Narrative Required Components</b>	<b>Page #</b>
3.6 Explain Which Staff Will Report to or be Paid by the ESP	
3.7 Evidence Corporate Entity is Authorized to do Business in Colorado	
<b>4. Plan for Operating the Online School</b>	
4.1 Vision, Mission and Goals	
4.2 Organizational Structure and Governance of the Online School	
4.3 Equitable Access for all Students	
4.4 Guidance Counseling for all Students	
4.5 Student Academic Credit Policies	
4.6 Student Achievement and Attendance Policies	
4.7 Student Records Policies	
4.8 Student Placement Policies and Procedures	
4.9 Staff Development Plans	
4.10 Student Services, Including Tutorial Support	
4.11 Staff, Student and Parent Handbooks	
4.12 Employment and Contractor Policies and Procedures	
4.13 Annual Budget and Finance Practices	
4.14 Facility Plans	
4.15 Risk Management	
4.16 Data Development Analysis and Reporting	
4.17 Communication Among the Online School, Parents, Community and School Districts in which Students Enrolled in the Multi-district Online School Reside	

□ \*Learning Centers Attachment (signature required) – *page 26 of this document*\* only required for those Schools utilizing Learning Centers as a component of the Online School.



## Certification Regarding Compliance with Quality Standards for Online Schools and Programs (To be certified by Authorizer)

Through the process of developing this application for certification, the Authorizer has reviewed the structure, program plan and operations of the Online School and finds that it meets or exceeds the following quality standards in the administration of program and delivery of curriculum:

Quality Standards for Online Schools and Programs	Authorizer Initial
<p><b>3.02.1</b> The Online School involves representatives of the Online School's community, as well as staff, in a collaborative process to develop and communicate the Online School's vision, mission, goals and results, in a manner appropriate to the online model for that program. The Online School provides leadership, governance, and structure to support this vision and these supports are used by all staff to guide the decision-making.</p>	
<p><b>3.02.2</b> [Expired 05/15/2011 per Senate Bill 11-078]</p>	
<p><b>3.02.3</b> The Online School has, or has a plan and timeline in place to accomplish, the technological infrastructure capable of meeting the needs of students and staff, and of supporting teaching and learning. The Online School uses a variety of technology tools and has a user-friendly interface. The Online School meets industry accepted accessibility standards for interoperability and appropriate access for learners with special needs. Technological support structures and programs are in place to reduce barriers to learning for all students.</p>	
<p><b>3.02.4</b> The Online School has, and implements, a technology plan that includes (but is not limited to) documentation that all students and Parents know and understand acceptable use of the internet in accordance with all federal and state statutes. When providing direct services (for example, ISP, computer equipment or "at location") to students, the Online School will use filtering software to prevent access to inappropriate materials.</p>	
<p><b>3.02.5</b> Online Schools must comply with all statutory requirements, including the existing budgetary reporting procedures under state law, as well as being consistent with the format required by the authorizing entity. Budgets and accounting records must be transparent, open to the public, and demonstrate support of student academic achievement.</p>	
<p><b>3.02.6</b> Online School demonstrates levels of attainment of statewide performance indicators that meet expectations established by the Department's annual performance review as described in §22-11-210, C.R.S.</p>	
<p><b>3.02.7</b> The Online School's Teachers use ongoing, research based formative and summative assessments to measure student academic performance. Students have varied opportunities to demonstrate mastery of skills, show academic progress, and receive meaningful feedback on their learning.</p>	



Quality Standards For Online Schools and Programs	Authorizer Initial
<b>3.02.8</b> An Online School has a policy regarding course completion.	
<b>3.02.9</b> An Online School follows policies for tracking attendance, participation, and truancy. The policy includes documentation of Teacher / student interaction.	
<b>3.02.10</b> The Online School has a policy, and the infrastructure to store, retrieve, analyze and report, required student, Teacher, financial, and other required data collections.	
<b>3.02.11</b> The Online School has a policy providing guidance counseling services as appropriate to grade level and student need.	
<b>3.02.12</b> The Online School has a policy guiding school/home communication about student and program progress, school governance, and school accountability that is relevant, regular, and available in native language where reasonable.	
<b>3.02.13</b> Instructional strategies, practices, and content address various learning needs and styles of students. The Online School uses a body of evidence to identify advanced, under-performing, economically disadvantaged, or other special needs students. The Online School will work with its Authorizer to ensure that support structures and programs, including but not limited to, Title I, ESL, Special Ed., and Gifted and Talented, are integrated into the school's instructional program to promote and support student learning.	
<b>3.02.14</b> The Online School evaluates the degree to which it achieves the goals and objectives for student learning. There is a systematic process for collecting, disaggregating, managing, and analyzing data that enables the Online School's leadership, Teachers, Parents, students, community members and other stakeholders to determine areas of strength and challenge. The data collected are analyzed using a systems approach, and the analysis includes the use of the school performance reports required pursuant to §22-11-503, C.R.S.	
<b>3.02.15</b> The Online School shall ensure that background checks in accordance with law are performed on all volunteers and paid staff, including but not limited to Mentors, Teachers, Administrators, or any other persons in unsupervised contact with the student, except Parents supervising their children's educational program.	

Dated this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_\_.

Authorizer:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name and Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature





## Required Assurances

### Application for Certification of a Multi-District Online School

To verify your acceptance and understanding, check all boxes on this form, sign the form where indicated, and submit this form as part of the Application for Certification.

- ☐ The approval of the Online School is the responsibility of the Authorizer. The Online School may begin student instruction and operations only after approval by the Authorizer and receipt of certification from the Colorado Department of Education.
- ☐ The Authorizer has reviewed and has a clear understanding of the obligations and requirements of a multi-district Online School Authorizer as specified by law.
- ☐ The Authorizer has approved the curricula offered by the Online School, and determined that the curricula are aligned with state and applicable district standards.
- ☐ The Authorizer has reviewed the Online School for compliance with the policies of the Authorizer, including compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines for web-site accessibility and policies relating to internet safety and acceptable use.
- ☐ The Authorizer will maintain the records of each student participating in a multi-district Online School on a permanent basis; except that, if a charter school provides the multi-district school, only the charter school and not the Authorizer is required to maintain the records.
- ☐ Legislation enacted or rules promulgated in future years may change requirements and the documentation required to maintain certification status.
- ☐ The Authorizer and the principal, director, charter school governing board, or other chief administrator of the Multi-district Online School agree to the plan for operating the Online School, the required components of which are set out in Section 4 of the Application for Certification.

Dated this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_\_.

**Authorizer:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name and Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

**Multi-District Online School:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name and Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature



# 1. Oversight: Adequacy of Resources and Capacity of Authorizer (To be completed by Authorizer)

## APPLICATION NARRATIVE - REQUIRED COMPONENTS

**At the beginning of the narrative, in the first paragraph, describe how the Online School fully meets the statutory and CDE Rule definition of “Online School.”**

"Online School" means a full-time, education school authorized pursuant to Title 22 of the Colorado Revised Statutes that delivers a sequential program of synchronous or asynchronous instruction directed by a Teacher primarily through online digital learning strategies that provide students choice over time, place, and path and teacher-guided modality of learning. An online school has an assigned school code and operates with its own administrator, a separate budget, and a complete instructional program. An online school is responsible for fulfilling all reporting requirements and will be held to state and federally mandated accountability processes.

### 1.1. Curriculum and Instruction

- a) Describe the process through which the Authorizer will provide oversight and support the Online School's delivery of curriculum and instruction. The description of the process should include, but is not limited to:
  - a. Evidence of capacity to fully implement the curriculum with fidelity
  - b. Evidence that instructional staff have met all applicable State licensure requirements
  - c. A description of the staff evaluation process, with clear links to curriculum implementation and student performance
- b) Describe any services the Authorizer will provide to the Online School related to Curriculum and Instruction.
- c) Attach a copy of the Online School's calendar and schedule that provides evidence of equivalent scheduled hours.

### 1.2. Use of Software Applications and Technology

- a) Describe the Authorizer's plan for developing, implementing and monitoring technological services, equipment, policies and protocols with regards to privacy and the ethical use of technology-related information.
- b) Describe any technology-related services the Authorizer will provide to the Online School.

### 1.3 Data Gathering, Analysis and Reporting (Management)

- a) Describe the information systems the Authorizer will use to manage student data related to the Online School. Include the staff positions that will be responsible for warehousing and interpreting the data along with a description of the work flow.
- b) Describe how the Authorizer will work with the Online School to collect, disaggregate, analyze and apply student and school performance data to inform the development and implementation of the unified improvement plan.

*Note: Compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is addressed in Section 3.7 of this application.*



#### 1.4 Human Resources Management

- a) Describe the Authorizer's system for human resources management **as it relates to the Authorizer's capacity** to oversee the Online School. The description **may include** reference to any personnel handbooks or policies that:
  - a. Describe the process through which the Authorizer will provide oversight of any human resources functions administered directly by the Online School.
  - b. Describe the recruitment, hiring, termination and standard work rules for all staff; and
  - c. Ensure compliance with government regulations (e.g. Fair Labor Standards Act, Equal Employment Opportunity Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, Occupational Health and Safety Act, Family Leave Act).

#### 1.5 Financial Management, Facilities Management, and Risk Management

- a) Describe the Authorizer's financial management system, as it relates to the Authorizer's capacity to oversee the Online School. The description may refer to governance, supervisory controls and routine reporting controls, and to business office policies and practices as relevant.
- b) If applicable for the Authorizer to oversee the Online School, describe the Authorizer's system for facilities management as it relates to the Authorizer's capacity to oversee the Online School. The description may refer to policies and practices related to building safety and security as well as general maintenance.
- c) Describe the Authorizer's risk management system as it relates to the Authorizer's capacity to oversee the Online School. The description may refer to the types and levels of insurance coverage the Authorizer has in force.
- d) The school district or BOCES, as the authorizer, will not receive any state funding under the Public School Finance Act for the first six months of operation. Describe how the school will operate for the first six months. For more information, please see Attachment 3.

#### 1.6 Other Relevant Public Education Administrative Functions

- a) Describe the process through which the Authorizer will monitor and support the Online School's provision of guidance counseling services for all students.
- b) Describe the process through which the Authorizer will monitor and support the Online School's implementation of student academic credit policies.
- c) Describe the process through which the Authorizer will monitor and support the Online School's implementation of student achievement and attendance policies.
- d) Describe the process through which the Authorizer will monitor and support the Online School's implementation of student records policies.
- e) Describe the process through which the Authorizer will monitor and support the Online School's implementation of student services, including tutorial support.

## 2. Compliance with the Quality Standards for Online Schools and Programs (To be completed by Authorizer)

### 2.1 Written Plan for Compliance with Quality Standards for Online Programs

- a) Attach a written plan (including a specific timeline) that assures the Online School will meet the *Quality Standards for Online Schools and Programs* by the time the school begins student instruction. For existing Single-district Online Schools and Programs applying for Multi-District Certification, provide a description of how the *Quality Standards for Online Schools and Programs* compliance is being currently met. Attach a signed copy of the *Certification Regarding Compliance with Quality Standards*.

### 2.2 Description of Quality Standards Review Process

- a) Describe the development through which the Authorizer and the Online School developed a process that assures the periodic review of compliance with the *Quality Standards for Online Schools and Programs* (section 3.02, 1CCR301-71) developed by the Online Advisory Board and adopted by the Colorado State Board of Education.

The Office of Blended & Online Learning may periodically monitor the implementation of the plan for meeting the Compliance with Quality Standards to ensure that the approved goals are being met.

## 3. School Management Contracts (to be completed only if the proposed Online School intends to contract with an education service provider for management services) (Refer to Attachment 1 for additional information on contracting with management companies.)

### 3.1 Explanation of Education Service Provider (ESP) Selection

- a) Provide an explanation of how and why the education service provider (ESP) was selected.

### 3.2 Examples of ESP Efficacy

- a) Provide a 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, extracurricular programs).

### 3.3 Detailed Term Sheet

- a) Include 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 the contract.

### 3.4 Draft of the Proposed Management Contract Attached

- a) Attach a draft of the proposed management contract including all of the above terms.



### 3.5 Online School's Board of Education Relationship with ESP

- a) Explain the relationship between the Online School's school district board of education or charter 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 board will ensure fulfillment of performance expectations or have the means for severing the contract.

### 3.6 Explain which staff will report to or be paid by the ESP

- a) Provide a detailed explanation of which persons or positions are employees of the ESP, and which persons or positions are employees of the Online School.
- b) If the ESP leases employees to the Online School, describe the ESP agreement for employees leased to the Online School or working on Online School operations and provide evidence of legal confirmation provided to the Online School board that the employment structure qualifies as employee leasing.

### 3.7 Evidence Corporate Entity is Authorized to do Business in Colorado

- a) Provide evidence that the corporate entity is authorized to do business in Colorado.

## 4. Plan for Operating the Online School (To be completed by Online School)

### 4.1 Vision, Mission and Goals

- a) State the vision of the Online School. A vision statement describes measurable aspirations for the future of the Online School.
- b) State the mission of the Online School. A mission statement describes why the school exists and its strategy for achieving its vision.
- c) List clearly measurable goals for the Online School aligned with relevant Performance Indicators. (<http://www.cde.state.co.us/Accountability/PerformanceFrameworks>).
- d) Describe how the vision, mission and goals of the Online School align with the needs of the students and families the Online School intends to serve.
- e) Discuss how the vision, mission and goals of the Online School support the Authorizer's vision and mission.

### 4.2 Organizational Structure and Governance of the Online School

- a) Describe the organizational structure of the Online School including lines of decision making and communication within the school (as applicable) and between the school and the Authorizer.
- b) Describe the governance of the Online School, including (as relevant) the legal status of the Online School; responsibilities of the governing board; composition of the governing board; qualifications, terms and process for electing members of the governing board; responsibilities of the board; any board member training specific to K-12 online learning.
- c) Describe the processes through which students enrolled in the Online School and their parents can access the governance structure of the school to share concerns and feedback and contribute suggestions.



- d) Describe how representatives of the Online School's community and staff have the opportunity to be involved in developing the school's vision, mission, goals and results.

#### **4.3 Equitable Access for all Students**

- a) Describe (or attach) policies and/or practices that define equitable access for all students of the Online School, including English Language Learners, migrant students, students with disabilities (students with an Individualized Education Program), gifted and talented students and other populations with exceptional needs.
- b) Describe the Online School's plan for ensuring adequate staffing, technology/software and supplemental curriculum are available to support and provide ongoing monitoring for all students, including English Language Learners, migrant students, students with disabilities (students with an Individualized Education Program), gifted and talented students and other populations with exceptional needs.
- c) Provide a clear description of enrollment policies and procedures, which includes, but is not limited to procedures and criteria for enrollment decisions, withdrawals and transfers.
- d) Describe the process through which the Authorizer will monitor the Online School's implementation of policies and practices related to equitable access for all students.

#### **4.4 Guidance Counseling for all Students**

- a) Describe the guidance counseling services that the Online School will provide to enrolled students in accordance with Authorizer policy, including how the school will staff these services.
- b) Describe how these planned services are appropriate to the grade level and needs of the target population of students who will be served through the Online School.

#### **4.5 Student Academic Credit Policies, Curriculum and Instruction**

- a) Give the name of the curriculum used for student instruction. If provided by a third party, or if self-developed, describe the process of development. Detail how the curriculum is aligned to Colorado Academic Standards.
- b) Describe the process for review, update, and refresh of the curriculum used for instruction (the online portion and the off-line portion) in order to ensure that it maintains alignment with Colorado Academic Standards and how this process allows teachers to differentiate instruction and assessment for individual students.
- c) Describe fully the process of interaction between the student and the teacher in the delivery of instruction and how this process is consistent with the statutory definition of an "Online School."
- d) Describe any other staff roles and responsibilities that support or augment instructional or assessment processes within your online school.
- e) List the type of credits (quarter, semester, or trimester) students enrolled in the Online School will earn and provide a complete list of courses that are available to students.
- f) Describe (or attach) policies and/or practices consistent with the Authorizer that relate to the granting of student academic credit for completion of an online course offered by the school. Describe the requirements for granting a diploma or certificate, if applicable.

#### **4.6 Student Achievement and Attendance Policies**



- a) Describe (or attach) policies and/or practices consistent with the Authorizer related to student achievement, including a preliminary list of formative/summative assessments to be administered and a timeline related to assessment frequency.
- b) Describe (or attach) policies consistent with the Authorizer for tracking student attendance, including how non-attendance will be reported to the student, family, enrolling district, and Authorizer.
- c) Describe the process for tracking graduation, dropout and course completion rates.

#### 4.7 Student Records Policies

- a) Describe (or attach) policies and/or practices consistent with the Authorizer that require the Online School to transmit student records (performance, attendance and assessment data) within 14 days of notice by a school district that the student has enrolled in that school.
- b) Describe (or attach) policies and/or practices consistent with the Authorizer for requesting students records (performance, attendance and assessment data) from a school district from which a student has transferred to the Online School.
- c) Describe (or attach) policies and/or practices related to the collection and maintenance of student records, including those related to compliance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA).
- d) Describe the process through which the Authorizer will maintain the records of participating students on a permanent basis. *Note:* If a charter school provides the multi-district school, only the charter school and not the Authorizer is required to maintain the records.
- e) Provide evidence of easily accessible contact information for the Online School's records personnel.

#### 4.8 Student Placement Policies and Procedures

- a) Describe (or attach) the policies and/or procedures that determine student placement in specific classes offered by the Online School.
- b) Describe the Online School's requirements for grade level promotion, including credit requirements or competency benchmarks used.
- c) Describe how the policies and procedures for student placement and grade level promotion ensure that students will progress toward completion within a reasonable timeline.

#### 4.9 Staff Development Plans

- a) Describe how the current and future training needs of the Online School's staff will be determined.
- b) Describe the preliminary plan for providing training to teachers and administrators in the Online School, including the content of the training (e.g., online delivery of instruction, use of a specific software), the training provider, the method of delivering the training (e.g., workshop, coaching), and the duration of the training.
- c) Describe how staff development activities will be tracked and evaluated for efficacy.

#### 4.10 Student Services, Including Tutorial Support

- a) Describe the orientation activities that the Online School will provide for students/families through the enrollment process.



- b) Describe the process that will be used to identify struggling students and the intervention model/process that will be used to support those students.
- c) Describe the policies and procedures for students to obtain instructional, technological and counseling support services.

#### **4.11 Staff, Student and Parent Handbooks**

- a) Briefly describe the intent and general contents of the Online School's staff handbook and attach a copy.
- b) Briefly describe the intent and general contents of the Online School's student handbook and attach a copy.
- c) Briefly describe the intent and general contents of the Online School's parent handbook and attach a copy.
- d) Describe the processes for distributing the handbooks and ensuring that the target audiences understand the Online School's policies and procedures.

#### **4.12 Employment and Contractor Policies and Procedures**

- a) Provide a roster of school staff positions (instructional staff, paraprofessionals, and administrative staff).
- b) Describe the relationship of the Online School with its current and prospective employees (at will or contractual).
- c) Describe the Online School's plan for hiring staff that have met all applicable State licensure requirements.
- d) Describe (or attach) the policies and/or procedures that apply when the Online School contracts for services with a third party, including the processes for contractor selection, contract oversight, applicable evaluation measures, payment structure and conditions for renewal and termination of the contract.
- e) Details of contracts with a third party Education Service Provider (ESP) who is providing management services should be outlined in section 3 of the application narrative (if applicable).

#### **4.13 Annual Budget and Finance Practices**

- a) Describe the process for developing an annual budget for the Online School. Attach a copy of the preliminary budget based on anticipated student enrollment for the first year of operation.
- b) Describe the systems and processes by which the Online School will manage accounting, purchasing, payroll, and audits.
- c) Specify any administrative services the Authorizer will provide to the Online School.

#### **4.14 Facility Plans**

- a) Describe the Online School's facility plans, including any potential physical sites. If a facility has already been identified, describe the facility. If a physical facility has not been identified, explain the plan to do so.
- b) If the Online School already leases or intends to lease a facility, describe the ownership or lease arrangement of the facility.
- c) Provide evidence that the facility meets any applicable building codes or health and safety requirements based on its proposed use (e.g. Learning Center or business office).





#### 4.15 Risk Management

- a) Briefly describe policies and procedures adopted to ensure compliance with the Children’s Internet Protection Act and attach a copy of the Online School’s acceptable technology agreement for students.
- b) Describe (or attach) policies and/or procedures designed to address safety and security issues related to the physical facilities used by the Online School, if applicable.
- c) Describe (or attach) policies and/or procedures to ensure appropriate conduct between staff members of the Online School and students.
- d) Describe (or attach) policies and/or procedures to ensure compliance with state regulations regarding background checks of school staff and volunteers.

#### 4.16 Data Development, Analysis and Reporting

- a) Describe how the Online School will collect and analyze student academic achievement data to develop and implement its unified improvement plan.
- b) Describe how the Online School will work with the Authorizer to comply with state reporting and accountability requirements. (Cross reference to component 1.3)
- c) Describe the software that will be used to store and analyze data and the personnel that will be responsible to oversee the Online School’s achievement data and unified improvement plan process.

#### 4.17 Communication Among the Online School, Parents, Community, and School Districts in which Students that are Enrolled in the Multi-district Online School Reside

- a) Describe policies and practices that guide communication between the Online School and parents of enrolled students regarding student and school progress, school governance, and school accountability.
- b) Describe the platforms that will be used to communicate relevant, up-to-date information to parents, students and the community.
- c) Describe the policy and procedure for addressing concerns or complaints in a timely manner.



## Learning Centers Attachment

Complete and submit a signed copy of this form as an email attachment to the CDE Office of Blended & Online Learning.

For *each* Learning Center for which a local school district and the multi-district Online School have entered a Memorandum of Understanding, provide the identifying information below:

Learning Center Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Learning Center Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Learning Center Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

By signing this *Learning Centers Attachment*, the Authorizer certifies that for *each* Learning Center listed in this attachment:

- A consistent group of students meets more often than once a week under the supervision of a Teacher or Mentor and actively participates in the curricula of the certified Online School for more than fifty percent of the school day.
- Any curriculum that is not part of the certified Online School is non-religious and non-sectarian and is only offered for less than fifty percent of the school day.
- The parents or guardians of the students enrolled in the Online School are not required to pay tuition on behalf of students for the Online School at the Learning Center.

Multi-district Online School:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name and Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature



## Attachment 1: Education Service Provider (ESP) Agreement Guidelines

**Note:** These guidelines were adapted from the *Colorado Charter School Sample Contract Language and Attachments, Attachment 5*. “Online School” has been substituted for “charter school,” while “Authorizer” has been substituted for “District” though a District may act as an Authorizer. These guidelines have been adapted to apply to school district boards of education contracting with an ESP in addition to a charter school board contracting with an ESP.

The original document can be accessed at: <http://charterschoolquality.org/>

1. The maximum term of an ESP agreement must not exceed the term of a charter contract. After the second year that the ESP agreement has been in effect, the school must have the option of terminating the contract without cause or a financial penalty. The agreement must be in compliance with TABOR restrictions.
2. ESP agreements must be negotiated at ‘arms-length.’ The board and ESP must have independent legal counsel to represent their interests in reaching a mutually acceptable management agreement.
3. No provision of the ESP agreement shall interfere with the board’s duty to exercise its statutory, contractual and fiduciary responsibilities governing the operation of the Online School. No provision of the ESP agreement shall prohibit the board from acting as an independent, self-governing public body, or allow decisions to be made other than in compliance with the Colorado Sunshine Law.
4. An ESP agreement shall not restrict the board from waiving its governmental immunity or require a board to assert, waive or not waive its governmental immunity.
5. No provision of an ESP agreement shall alter the board’s treasurer’s legal obligation to direct that the deposit of all funds received by the Online School be placed in the Online School’s account.
6. ESP agreements must contain at least one of the following methods for paying fees or expenses: 1) the board may pay or reimburse the ESP for approved fees or expenses upon properly presented documentation and approval by the board; or 2) the board may advance funds to the ESP for the fees or expenses associated with the *Online School’s* operation provided that documentation for the fees and expenses are provided for board ratification.
7. ESP agreements shall provide that the financial, educational and student records pertaining to the Online School are Online School property and that such records are subject to the provisions of the Colorado Open Records Act. All Online School records shall be physically or electronically available, upon request, at the Online School’s physical facilities within the state of Colorado. Except as permitted under the contract and applicable law, no ESP agreement shall restrict the Authorizer’s access to the Online School’s records.
8. ESP agreements must contain a provision that all finance and other records of the ESP related to the Online School will be made available to the Online School’s independent auditor.
9. The ESP agreement must not permit the ESP to select and retain the independent auditor for the Online School.
10. If an ESP purchases equipment, materials and supplies on behalf of or as the agent of the Online School, the ESP agreement shall provide that such equipment, materials and supplies shall be and remain the property of the Online School.
11. ESP agreements shall contain a provision that if the ESP procures equipment, materials and supplies at the request of or on behalf of the Online School, the ESP shall not include any added fees or charges with the cost of equipment, materials and supplies purchased from third parties.

12. ESP agreements must contain a provision that clearly allocates the respective proprietary rights of the Online School board and the ESP to curriculum or educational materials. At a minimum, ESP agreements shall provide that the Online School owns all proprietary rights to curriculum or educational materials that (i) are both directly developed and paid for by the Online School; or (ii) were developed by the ESP at the direction of the Online School board with Online School funds dedicated for the specific purpose of developing such curriculum or materials. ESP agreements may also include a provision that restricts the Online School's proprietary rights over curriculum or educational materials that are developed by the ESP from funds from the Online School or that are not otherwise dedicated for the specific purpose of developing Online School curriculum or educational materials. All ESP agreements shall recognize that the ESP's educational materials and teaching techniques used by the Online School are subject to state disclosure laws and the Open Records Act.

13. ESP agreements involving employees must be clear about which persons or positions are employees of the ESP, and which persons or positions are employees of the Online School. If the ESP leases employees to the Online School, the ESP agreement must provide that the leasing company accepts full liability for benefits, salaries, worker's compensation, unemployment compensation and liability insurance for its employees leased to the Online School or working on Online School operations. If the Online School is staffed through an employee leasing agreement, legal confirmation must be provided to the Online School board that the employment structure qualifies as employee leasing.

14. ESP agreements must contain insurance and indemnification provisions outlining the coverage the ESP will obtain. The ESP's insurance is separate from and in addition to the insurance for the board. Insurance coverage must take into account whether or not staff at the school are employees of the ESP or the school.

15. Marketing and development costs paid by or charged to the Online School shall be limited to those costs specific to the Online School, and shall not include any costs for the marketing and development of the ESP.

16. If the Online School intends to enter into a lease, execute promissory notes or other negotiable instruments, or enter into a lease-purchase agreement or other financing relationships with the ESP, then such agreements must be separately documented and not be a part of or incorporated into the ESP agreement. Such agreements must be consistent with the Online School's authority to terminate the ESP agreement and continue operation of the Online School.

17. Online Schools must ensure that the agreements with ESP's comply with the requirements of Colorado's Student Data Transparency and Security Act (C.R.S. 22-16-101 *et. al.*).

## Attachment 2

### Suggestions for Success

1. Carefully read the entire **Application for Certification**, paying particular attention to the ***Review Rubric for Certification of a Multi-District Online School***. The rubric describes the specific criteria that will be applied in reviewing the applications and may be found on the following website:

[www.cde.state.co.us/onlinelearning/events](http://www.cde.state.co.us/onlinelearning/events)

2. **Follow the instructions.** Organize the application to answer the review criteria and application components completely and in the order they are presented. Follow specific directions in this Guide about document formatting and submission of your final proposal.

3. **Present the application logically and specifically.** A strong application flows and builds logically from point to point and is internally consistent. A strong application provides evidence to support its case, using specific examples rather than broad generalizations.

4. **Make the application easy to read.** Write concisely; more is not always better. Avoid the use of technical jargon and define terms with which reviewers might not be familiar. Apply headings that enable the reviewers to track the application narrative against the required components of the application. Format the document so that it is appealing to look at and easy to follow.

4. **Review and Edit.** Look for internal consistency among the sections. Correct typographical or grammatical errors. Apply formatting conventions consistently throughout the application.



### Attachment 3: Funding Timeline & Explanation for Section 1.5 (d)

Projected pupil enrollment counts for the following year's funding are established by the legislature in December. Therefore, when planning to open a new multi-district online school in the fall following the application date, financial considerations must be taken into account. Since the pupil enrollment count date determines the actual amount of funding a district receives, an Authorizer and the Online School must pay attention to cash flows in order to open and operate the school for the first six months of the year. The pupil enrollment count date occurs in October. This enrollment count is completed in December and no adjustments to funding are made prior to December. Funding for the new school students reported on the pupil enrollment count date will be funded in December for the first six months of the school year. The funding for January thru June would occur on a monthly basis. The chart below illustrates the timeline for funding of the new school.

<b>Funding Timeline</b>	
December	Legislature sets projected enrollment for following school year
January	First deadline for school to submit application for following school year <i>including financial plan for operating the first 6 months.</i>
Spring	Legislature adopts funding for following school year based on projected enrollment set in December
April	Second deadline for school to submit application for following school year <i>including financial plan for operating the first 6 months.</i>
July - November	1/12 <sup>th</sup> of funding sent to districts each month based on legislatively approved amounts
October	Districts conduct pupil enrollment count and submit to CDE
December	Pupil enrollment count finalized and districts receive a true up to ensure they have received ½ of the appropriated funding.
January	CDE submits supplemental appropriation to legislature for any changes in pupil counts, assessed valuations and at-risk counts.

BOCES do not receive funds directly through the School Finance Act. The BOCES enters into contracts to provide services to students enrolled in districts.

The section 1.5 (D) narrative should include an explanation of how the Authorizer and school will operate financially for the first six months of the year.