



## General Application/Authorization Process

### Purpose

The purpose of this guidance is to enhance the clarity and utility of critical information for potential applicants. We strongly recommended that applicants read all the guidelines and use them in developing their responses to the charter application. The Office of School Choice - Charter Schools staff and review teams consider all elements of the guidance when assessing the quality of proposals.

HCS seeks charter school applications to cultivate strong school capacity in order to provide high quality academic instruction for all students. The purpose of HCS charter schools is to advance the district's vision for excellence and diversity while meeting the needs of a growing city for new school capacity.

HCS seeks new school proposals that offer one or more of the following:

1. Advance academic achievement for students currently enrolled in schools that underperform (Review and Target) over multiple years on the Academic Performance Framework (APF).
2. Add to and do not diminish the number of schools with student enrollment diversity in Hamilton County.
3. Create educational structures that are not already offered within HCS including thematic curricula.

## Background

A nine-member elected Board and its appointed Superintendent leads the school district. The Board provides leadership and policy direction to HCS. As the Board has no taxing authority, the Hamilton County Commission approves and provides the funding for the school system.

The Office of Charter Schools has developed consistent and strong authorizing practices aligned with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers' (NACSA) Principles and Standards, found at [www.qualitycharters.org/publications-resources/principles-standards.html](http://www.qualitycharters.org/publications-resources/principles-standards.html). Tough decisions, whether to deny popular but incomplete applications, or revoke charters when schools do not meet ambitious academic performance targets, have been a part of this important work. The stage is set for deeper strategic integration of new schools through this approach to quality authorizing.

## Application Cycle

The Application Cycle comes at the nexus of important work to define and compare academic performance across schools, the value of highly effective instruction in diverse and personalized settings, and the maturation of several high performing start-up schools. HCS seeks, and will authorize, new schools with the capacity to operate excellent organizations that drive significant academic gains for all students.

HCS issues guidance for new schools in order to advance the best interests of the students of Hamilton County, thus expanding the accessible opportunities for academic excellence and diversity available to families and students. Decisions regarding location, facility plans, and transportation plans represent formal commitments that are evaluated for their ability to contribute to the clear and ambitious goals set by the HCS Board of Education. All applications are evaluated according to:

- the quality of the academic plan, and
- the quality of the financial management/business plan, and
- the quality of the operational plan, and
- the overall capacity of the sponsor as demonstrated by the application that offers clear evidence of its ability to deliver high quality educational opportunities, build a sustainable institution capable of serving students as

outlined in its application, and is of clear and compelling benefit to the community.

The Tennessee Charter Law provides that districts may authorize charters that are in the “best interests of the students, LEA, or community”, (TCA §49-13-108). HCS issues this annual guidance for quality schools in order to clarify and define what the HCS strategic vision seeks to advance. Our expectation is that **Hamilton County Schools will create pathways to bright futures for *all* students in our community by equipping them with the skills, knowledge, and support required to realize their full potential.**

## **Additional Guiding Indicators**

Since space is at a premium within the district, HCS encourages all charter school applicants who wish to open schools to **identify independent facilities**. Regardless of where applicants propose to locate, all applicants responding to this guidance will address how their proposed school will directly benefit the students and families in the community(ies) they seek to serve. It is the responsibility of a successful new school to actively draw on local assets and contribute to the life of the community in which they locate. Successful applicants will demonstrate strong ties to the particular community in which their proposed school will be located, and provide evidence of parent and community demand and support. Partnerships with parents, community, and faith-based organizations, local residents, and other stakeholders are a valuable component of the new school development process. Prioritizing community engagement enables new school developers to effectively provide the most comprehensive and relevant educational opportunities to their respective student populations.

**Schools that do not serve the best interest of the students, the district, or the community, or that lack a strong facility plan and commitment deadline will be recommended for denial. The district may utilize its facility capacity to attract and support strong school operators to develop, but such discussions do not constitute a right to occupy a particular facility, and we reserve the right to seek additional capacity through the charter application process in order to meet the needs of a growing district enrollment.**

# Process and Requirements for Charter School Applicants

## Letter of Intent

Applicants are required to submit a letter of intent (LOI) to both HCS and the State of Tennessee 60 days prior to submitting a completed application on **February 1** each year, (unless February 1 falls on a weekend or holiday, then submission can occur on the next business day). The deadline for the letter of intent is **December 3** (unless December 3 falls on a weekend or holiday, then submission can occur on the next business day.) Only those applicants submitting a complete letter of intent on or before **December 3** will be eligible to submit full proposals for the application cycle. **(See the state website for details concerning what is to be included in the LOI.)** Letters of Intent may be submitted to the district simultaneously with the submission to the state via email.

**All letters of intent become public record after submission to HCS. Submission of a proposal is an official waiver of confidentiality, notwithstanding any statements to the contrary that may be contained within the proposal, or in any other notifications submitted by the proposer.**

## Application Logistics

The proposal must follow the Charter School Application as found on the State of Tennessee website

(<https://www.tn.gov/education/school-options/charter-schools/charter-school-application.html>).

The application clearly describes the sections that apply to new starts and replications. Applicants should look closely at the application scoring rubric, also found on the State of Tennessee website. The scoring rubric clearly outlines the criteria under which each section will be evaluated by reviewers.

**Full application proposals are due on February 1 by no later than 4:30 p.m. CT. HCS will not accept any proposals received before or after this date. Late or incomplete applications will be returned at the applicant's expense or will be destroyed after 30 days. Applications must be accompanied by a \$2,500.00 application fee made out to the Hamilton County Schools. In the event an application is insufficient and returned to the applicant without review, the fee will be returned.**

**All submitted proposals become public record after submission to HCS. Submission of a proposal is an official waiver of confidentiality, notwithstanding any statements to the contrary that may be contained within the proposal, or in any other notifications submitted by the proposer.**

- Applications must include sections and numbering that align with and correspond to each set of questions found on the application. Full proposals should include a table of contents noting the page number on which each section and each appendix begins.
- **One electronic copy (pdf) and two (2) hard copies of the application are required.** The electronic copy is considered the master copy in the event of discrepancies, and may be submitted through e-mail, flash drive, or Drop Box. E-mailed proposals should be submitted to the Coordinator of Charter Schools at Coffelt\_Kelly@hcde.org Hard copies should be submitted to the Coordinator of Charter Schools at this address:

**School Choice - Charter Schools**

**Hamilton County Schools**

**3074 Hickory Valley Rd.**

**Chattanooga, TN 37421**

- Applicants should copy each question as posed on the application at the beginning of each section, and sub-sections should be clearly referenced in the answers. The questions may be in smaller font if preferred to save space. Each section, sub-section and appendix should be tabbed, labeled, and inserted into a three-ring binder. **(NOTE: Loose applications, or those not in binders, will be sent back to the applicant without review).**

- · Applications must be typed with at least 1-inch page margins and no smaller than 11 point font, (suggested fonts are Times New Roman, Ariel, or Calibri).
- · Applications must not exceed 350 pages including appendices, excluding the budget document and the diversity plan.
- · Pages should be numbered consecutively.
- · Appendix items should be clearly labeled at the top and bottom of the page citing the title of the appendix and the section of the proposal to which it corresponds.
- · Applicant must be a 501(c)(3) non-profit, or submit evidence that they have applied for such status as per Tennessee Charter Law.
- · Each governing body resume should be labeled with the individual's affiliation with the proposed school (e.g. design team,

founding Board member, treasurer, etc.) **Note: It is suggested that resumes be no more than 1-2 pages so the page restrictions can be observed.**

- · If a specific question does not apply to the proposed school, please respond “Not Applicable,” with a rationale explaining why that particular question does not apply to your organization.
- · Spell out all acronyms the first time they are mentioned in the application.
- · Do not assume that reviewers are familiar with all of the organizations, programs, service providers, curricula, vendors, etc. referenced in your application. Please provide descriptions either in the text or in a footnote.
- · When citing research studies, or articles, please include full citations in a footnote or separate reference section. **Research should be current and relevant to the premises outlined in the application.**
- · Replicators should provide links to their original applications. It is highly likely that the reviewers who are evaluating the application to expand an existing school are not the same ones who reviewed the original application. Providing access to the original application gives some context to the current one.

Proposals will be checked for completeness to ensure all components of the application have been thoroughly addressed and all required attachments have been provided.

**Applications missing components or required attachments may not be considered for further review.**

The following constitutes a complete submission:

- All required questions in the state charter application have been addressed
- All attachments have been provided.
- Required financial documents on the correct forms provided by the state have been attached
- Required formatting as described in this application guidance has been followed
- Required application fee (check) is attached
- Required number of bound copies have been submitted

Proposed Timeline for 2022 Submissions

<b>Due Date:</b>	<b>Item:</b>
December 3, 2021	Letters of Intent (LOI) Deadline to HCS and TN Department of Education Office of School Choice
February 1, 2022	<p>Completed charter applications are due in the HCS Office of School Choice no later than 4:30 p.m.</p> <p>Applications will be checked for completeness</p>
February 2, 2022– February 18, 2022	<p>Independent Application Review by HCS Review Team</p> <p>Team Members upload independent rubrics</p>
February 21, 2022– February 25, 2022	<p>Collaborative Analysis of Independent Evaluation</p> <p>Reviewers and charter office staff prepare for capacity interview</p>
February 28, 2022 – March 4, 2022	Conduct Capacity Interview
March 7, 2022– March 11, 2022	Charter Review Team meet to develop consensus rubric
March 14, 2022	Charter Review Team Leads turn in completed consensus rubric

March 15, 2022 – April 11, 2022	The Office of Charter Schools staff complete findings report
April 14, 2022	Findings Reports due to the HCS School Board
April 21, 2022	HCS School Board vote on Charter School Applications