

Georgia Department of Education
Charter School Division
Charter School Planning Grant Application

2009-2010

Charter School Planning Grants are competitive grants for the purpose of funding activities that happen prior to a charter being granted by the State Board of Education. Grants are awarded for **\$8,000** depending on the strength and quality of the application and charter concept. These activities may include among other qualified uses, hiring an accountant to help develop a business plan, paying for fees associated with forming a non-profit organization, participating in a nationally recognized charter leadership training, duplicating materials to publicize your idea to gain community support, or hiring a consultant to help develop an educational plan. A planning grant recipient is required to submit a petition for approval to a local board of education. Grant awards are appropriated through state funds and are contingent on availability.

Contingent on availability of funds, planning grants are awarded for the development of charter schools. These grants will be awarded on a competitive basis to existing public schools, private individuals, non-profit organizations, and state and local public entities that are committed to developing a charter petition to become a charter public school. Home study programs or schools, private for-profit organizations, sectarian or religious schools, private for profit schools, private educational institutions not established, operated, or governed by the State of Georgia, and existing private schools are **ineligible** to receive charter school planning grants or to submit charter school petitions. Additionally, previously awarded applicants are **ineligible** for additional state-funded planning grants. Existing charter schools that seek to expand their current campus through an amendment are also **ineligible** to receive additional state funds.

The Georgia Department of Education expects that planning grant funds will be used for one or more of the following:

- The final development of a petition that will be submitted to a Georgia Charter School Authorizer
- Forming a non-profit corporation (if you are applying as a private individual)
- Attending a multiple day nationally recognized charter school leadership training course within the state of Georgia
- Costs associated with multiple people attending a Governing Board/School Leadership training (within Georgia)
- Costs associated with legal advisement
- Costs associated with curriculum development
- Costs associated with marketing the charter concept
- Teacher and Staff Recruitment
- Costs associated with fundraising/grant writing/budget creation
- Costs associated with site-visits to high performing schools within the state of Georgia
- Costs associated with developing a robust cost model for several years of operation

NOTE: Awarded applicants must submit to a full review by the Georgia Department of Education's Office of Financial Review. Any costs incurred by awarded applicants that are not directly aligned to the areas listed above will not be reimbursed. Any costs incurred that do not have corresponding

legible receipts or invoices will not be reimbursed. Any costs incurred prior to the fiscal year that the award was granted from the State Board of Education will not be reimbursed.

NOTE: Many charter schools are eligible to receive federal charter school funds after their petition is approved. To ensure that petitioners can maximize their use of federal grant funds, the State Board of Education currently uses state funds to fund all planning grant applications.

NOTE: Planning Grants submissions must be postmarked by July 1 to be considered for Round 1. Planning Grant submissions must be postmarked by December 1 to be considered for Round 2. Submissions that are postmarked after the deadline will not be considered.

An application for a charter school planning grant consists of five parts:

1. Cover sheet
2. Letter of Recommendation/Support (10 points)
3. A concept paper (60 points)
4. Assurances for developing and submitting a charter school petition and participation with all requests from the Department's Office of Financial Review (5 points)
5. A budget for using a **\$8,000** planning grant, including anticipated activities to be funded and applicable Department budget forms (25 points)

1. Cover Sheet

If you are submitting an application to convert an existing public school or an entire system to a charter public school or to a charter system complete and attach **Cover Sheet A**.

If you are submitting an application for a start up charter school as a private individual, private non-profit organization, state public entity, or local public entity, complete and attach **Cover Sheet B**.

2. Letter of Support/Recommendation

If you are submitting an application to convert an existing public school or an entire system to a charter public school or to a charter system, please include a letter of support from either the chairperson of the local school board or from the president of the Parent Teacher Association or Organization.

If you are submitting an application for a start-up, please include a letter of support from a current or previous supervisor that speaks to your capacity (either as an individual or as a non-profit organization) to manage a school.

3. Concept Paper

In twenty double-spaced pages or fewer, please answer the prompts (A – D) listed below for a charter school or a charter system. You must label each prompt that you are discussing.

Please Note: Due to the unique nature of a charter system, additional language has been added (within a parenthetical and italicized) to many of the prompts below. Start-up and conversion charter schools should not answer the portion of the prompt that relates to charter systems.

The concept paper is a description of your ideas and plans to develop a charter petition. It is not the **actual** charter petition. The paper must fully address the following:

A. (No more than 5 pages in length)

Identify the desired composition of your ideal Governing Board (*or for a charter system, the ideal School Leadership Team*), including key skills and constituencies that should be represented and any members of the Governing Board (*School Leadership Team*) that have already been identified. Discuss how and when members will be recruited and selected. Describe the type, cost, and source of any board/school leadership team training you will provide. Describe the functions of the board and how that will be communicated to the instructional leader, teachers, parents, and students.

Your essay must include:

- Your rationale for determining how a potential board /school leadership team member will demonstrate competency in a particular skill
- How you will seek out high quality training for the board/school leadership team members and assess the effectiveness of the training.
- How you will ensure that the Governing Board/School Leadership Team is fully engaged and functional on a consistent basis throughout the life cycle of the charter school.

B. (No more than 5 pages in length)

Describe your history and experience in the community you seek to serve. Discuss what your team perceives to be the assets and educational needs of the community, and detail any interactions you have had with parents and community members that have helped formulate this assessment. Describe your rationale for targeting this community and provide an explanation for why the proposed school (*or a conversion to a charter system*) fits the needs and expectations of the community. Describe and analyze the student population. This should include, but is not limited to, socio-economic factors, and specific, measurable indicators of academic performance and achievement. Analyze any recent policy decisions made by the local school board or state that would impact the establishment of a charter school within your proposed community.

Your essay must include:

- A definition of the community you are analyzing (a neighborhood, county, section of a city vs. the entire city itself, etc).

C. (No more than 5 pages in length)

Discuss in detail how you will ensure successful operation of the school or charter system.

If you are proposing a start up charter school, how do you envision selecting a Chief Financial Officer (CFO)? How will you assess their qualifications and commitment to the school? If you have already selected a CFO, describe your process. Do you plan on working with a Charter Management Organization or an Educational Management Organization (CMO/EMO) to provide services to the charter school? Discuss in detail why you will or will not partner with a CMO/EMO. If you will partner with a CMO/EMO, provide data demonstrating the organization's successful management of academic and nonacademic operations, including but not limited to: student performance data, fostering strong charter/authorizer relationships, fiscal audits, facilities maintenance, etc. How will you monitor the quality of both your leadership team (school administrator(s) and Governing Board) and your logistical support (Chief Financial Officer, Data Collections staff, etc.)?

(If you are proposing converting to a charter system, how do you envision successful implementation of the charter concept? How will you communicate to stakeholders and community members the importance of the charter in an ongoing manner? How will you ensure that the charter school remains in compliance with both State and Federal laws and regulations? How will you communicate the flexibility offered through the charter to new staff members? How will you analyze whether the school is successfully implementing the requested waivers in a deliberate fashion?)

Your essay must include:

- A description of how the proposed school and the proposed Board/School Leadership Team will monitor and evaluate the performance of the charter school.

D. (No more than 5 pages in length)

Planning Grant recipients are required to submit a high-quality charter petition within 18 months of receiving an award. Please discuss in detail either your individual, team, or *school system's* proven track record of leadership and successful results in managing complex tasks. Discuss the major objectives that must be met before the charter petition can be successfully submitted to an authorizer. Discuss why you think that this charter school concept (start-up, conversion, *charter system*, or career academy) can be successful in raising student academic achievement and what major challenges you expect to face.

Your essay must include:

- A brief biographical description of those team members who will specifically be working on the creation and implementation of the charter school petition.

Competitive Preference Priority (optional)

Discuss how the creation of this charter school or charter system aligns with the State Board of Education's goal to increase high school graduation rate, decrease high school drop-out rate, and increase post-secondary enrollment, specifically for students most at risk for academic failure throughout the state of Georgia.

4. Assurance

Provide a one page document that states that you agree to spend grant funds only on allowable expenses and that you will submit a charter petition to an authorizer within 18 months of receiving a grant award. Discuss how you will ensure that the Georgia Department of Education will be able to successfully review all financial documents that verify expenditures.

5. Budget

Attach a budget describing how the charter school planning grant will be used. List anticipated activities that would be funded by a planning grant. Costs must be directly related to developing a petition to become or to establish a charter school/charter system.

Permissible expenses include:

- Planning objectives and activities to develop all aspects of the charter school application are appropriate for inclusion in this document. This may include clerical support, facility usage, postage, phone and other technical services. (These cost **should not** exceed \$500)
- Travel: In-state reimbursement for travel costs shall be at the state rate, \$70 plus taxes lodging per night, \$28 meals per day (\$6 breakfast, \$7 lunch, and \$15 dinner). Higher meal rates are allowed for high cost areas including Atlanta, Augusta, Brunswick, and Savannah. In those areas meal reimbursements are \$36 per day (\$7 breakfast, \$9 lunch, \$20 dinner). **Out-of-state reimbursement travel costs are not allowable.**
- Professional Services: Legal services, business plan consultants, professional education consultants, stipends to persons attending planning and/or attending development meetings, non-profit status fees, facility inspection fees. Stipends should not exceed \$500. (Consultants must be able to provide incorporation documentation from the applicable Secretary of State.)

Review Criteria

Schools receiving a total score of **70** or below **will not** be recommended for funding. Schools will be funded based on their ranking and consistent with the availability of funds.

1. **Letter of Support/Recommendation** Demonstrated support of charter school concept. **(0 to 10 points)**
2. **Prompt A** Ability to clarify the expectations of selecting, training, and retaining a high quality Governing Board/School Leadership Team to ensure the ongoing success of the charter school concept. **(0 to 15 points)**
3. **Prompt B** Ability to clarify the need of the charter school concept for the proposed area. Ability to analyze and synthesize community data. **(0 to 15 points)**
4. **Prompt C** Ability to make policies that ensure maximum academic and financial accountability. Ability to create a strategy to ensure the ongoing success of the charter concept once the school is operational. **(0 to 15 points)**
5. **Prompt D** Demonstration of ability to successfully lead and manage a complex organization or tasks to completion. Ability to clarify major challenges and to address those prior to the submission of a high quality charter petition. **(0 to 15 points)**
6. **Assurance Statement** Demonstration of understanding of Georgia Department of Education's policies regarding financial review and accountability. **(0-5 points)**
7. **Planning Grant Budget** Demonstration of understanding of allowable usage of grant funds. Ability to leverage grant funds to maximize utility. Ability to use grant funds to

build and train strong educational leaders, especially at the building level. **(0-25 points)**

*****Competitive Preference. Ability to utilize a research based strategy that is targeted to increasing the graduation rate for secondary students. (0 - 10 points)**

Cover Sheet A

Attach this form to an application from an existing public school.

Georgia Department of Education
Application for Charter School Planning Grant

School _____ System _____

School address _____

School contact person _____

Telephone number of school contact _____

FAX number for school contact _____

E-mail address for school contact _____

Grade levels contained in the school _____

Number of students to be enrolled during the first year: _____

If your local board's grant approval policy requires board action, please complete this section. If board action is not required, please note and only the Superintendent's signature is required.

The signatures below affirm that submission of this application has been approved through official action of the _____ Board of Education at its _____ (Date) board meeting.

Principal Date

Superintendent Date

Three copies of the application (original and 1 copy) and one electronic copy in Microsoft Word format should be submitted to:

Georgia Department of Education
Charter Schools Office
2053 Twin Towers East
205 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive
Atlanta, Georgia 30334
FAX (404) 657-6978

Cover Sheet B

Attach this form to an application from a private individual, private organization, state or local public entity.

Georgia Department of Education
Application for Charter School Planning Grant

This application is being submitted by a (check one and sign on the back of form)

- Private Individual(s)
- Non-Profit Organization _____
(Name of Organization)
- State Public Entity _____
(Name of Entity)
- Local Public Entity _____
(Name of Entity)

School District where proposed charter school will be located _____

Contact person _____

Contact address _____
Street Address Only

City State Zip Code

Contact telephone number _____

Contact FAX number _____

E-mail address _____

Anticipated grade levels to be contained in the school _____

Anticipated date to submit a petition if awarded a Planning Grant _____

NOTE: As stated in the Charter Schools Act of 1998, home study programs or schools; sectarian or religious schools; private for profit schools; private educational institutions not established, operated, or governed by the State of Georgia; and existing private schools are ineligible to submit charter school petitions or to receive charter planning grants.

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Charter Petitioner

Date

Applications (original and 2 copies) should be submitted to:

Georgia Department of Education
Charter Schools Office
2053 Twin Towers East
205 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive
Atlanta, Georgia 30334
FAX (404) 657-6978

