Model Florida Charter School Application Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Application Requirements

1. **What are the page limit and formatting requirements for the application?**
   - **Application narrative:** The application narrative (including applicable addendum information, but not including attachments, budget templates or additional information requested by the District) is subject to the following strict page limits:
     - 110 pages (including question prompts) for applicants completing only this application or 140 pages for applicants required to complete the Charter School Application Addendum (for replications or educational service providers). Application cover sheet and executive summary are excluded from the 110 page limit, as is the table of contents, if included.
     - Pages must be formatted using one side of the page with no smaller than 1" margins, 12-point font and single-spaced.
   - **Executive summary:** The executive summary may not exceed 2 pages.
   - **Attachments:** There are no page limits for attachments that are explicitly requested in the application, with two exceptions:
     - Attachments may not contain additional narrative unless specifically requested and
     - An applicant may include ten (10) pages of attachments in addition to those requested in the chart of attachments.

2. **What happens if I don't follow the page limit and formatting instructions?**
   Applicants will be asked to submit a technical or non-substantive correction within seven calendar days if their application is determined to do any of the following:
   - Exceed the page limits;
   - Use margins, font, or line spacing different from that required; or
   - Attempt to circumvent the page limits by providing information in attachments not explicitly requested in the application and in excess of the ten pages of additional attachments allowed per the instructions.

   If an applicant does not submit a revised application upon request, or if the applicant's amended application still exceeds page limits and/or disregards instructions regarding formatting or attachments, the excess pages and/or information will not be reviewed or considered as part of the application evaluation process. Applications may be denied in part based on missing information that is

otherwise included in the sections that were deemed to fall outside the page limit, formatting, and attachment instructions.

3. Do I have to use a certain font?

As long as you use a 12-point font, which specific font you use is at your discretion. We do recommend, however, that you select a font that is clear and easy to read. Examples of suitable fonts may include, but are not exclusive to, Times New Roman, Franklin Gothic, Calibri, or Arial.

4. Do I need to complete an addendum?

First, ask yourself

- Am I replicating an existing model in which I or my team has already been deeply involved at another school or schools?
- Am I planning to contract with a third-party education service provider for school management and/or operations?

If the answer to either of these questions is "yes" then you must complete the Model Florida Charter School Application Addendum.

Following is guidance on how the Florida Department of Education defines "replication" and "third-party education service provider":

- **Replication of existing schools or school models**: An applicant may be considered to be replicating an existing school design if: 1) the proposed school is substantially similar overall to at least one school, AND 2) the individuals or organization involved in the establishment and operation of the proposed school are deeply involved in the operation of the similar school(s). For example, a plan to implement a specific program, such as a widely used curriculum, would not be categorized as the replication of an existing school design.

- **School operation or management via contract with a third-party education service provider (ESP):** An ESP is any third-party management entity, whether non-profit or for-profit, that provides comprehensive education management services to a school via contract with the school's governing board. ESPs are generally responsible for significant areas of the school's work of educating children, such as selecting and developing the curriculum, hiring and training teachers, overseeing the principal, and more. ESPs also often play a significant role in the school's operations, facilities, and finances. An ESP is different from other types of vendors—such as those contracted for food services, textbook delivery, or accounting support—in terms of the size, substance, and significance of its involvement in the school.

5. **What happens if I need to complete an addendum but don't?**
   If you do not submit the addendum information, your application will be reviewed as submitted, and there will be no further opportunity to amend, revise, or supplement the application. However, the District may use the absence of information as a basis for denial. This is in addition to the impact that the absence of the required information may have on your ability to meet the substantive criteria for approval.

6. **How do I submit the electronic version of the application?**
   The entire application including attachments and addenda *(as applicable)* shall be compiled into a single PDF with each section, attachment, and addenda bookmarked within the PDF. It shall be submitted on one (1) USB flash drive labeled with the school's name. *The electronic version must be identical to the* **two (2)** *hard copies submitted.*

7. **Do I need to submit hard copies as well?**
   Yes, the District requires **two (2**) hard copy applications in binders with labeled divider tabs identifying each section (1-22) of the application, including attachments (A-Z as applicable), and addenda (as applicable), with consecutive page numbers throughout the compiled document and an aligned table of contents.

Application Submission

8. **When is the application due?**
   There is no due date or deadline for application submissions. Application cycles run annually between August 1 – July 31. To ensure the District is prepared to receive the application, submit a **notice of intent to apply** to charterinfo@hcps.net **30 days prior** to submission of the application. Applications submitted in-person require 24-hour advanced notice to charterinfo@hcps.net and will be accepted Monday-Friday between 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM. A pre-scheduled delivery appointment may be assigned. **Applications are accepted in-person and via mail at:**
   Raymond O. Shelton School Administrative Center (ROSSAC)
   c/o Charter Office
   901 E. Kennedy Blvd.
   Tampa, FL 33602.

Technical or Non-Substantive Corrections or Clarifications and Other Amendments

9. **What is a technical or non-substantive correction or clarification?**
   Per state statute, "before approving or denying a final application, the District shall allow the applicant, upon receipt of the written notification, at least 7 calendar days to make technical or non-substantive corrections and clarifications, including, but not limited to, corrections of grammatical, typographical, and like errors or missing

signatures, if such errors are identified by the District as cause to deny the application." It is not the District's responsibility to point out all technical errors (e.g. grammatical and typographical mistakes) to applicants, but the District will notify applicants of any technical or non-substantive issues that could be cause for application denial.

Technical or non-substantive corrections and clarifications are typically very limited and will not include rewrites of application sections except as necessary to meet page and formatting restrictions. Applicants should not submit incomplete or insufficient applications.

Typical technical corrections may include, but are not limited to:
- Submission in excess of page limits or outside of formatting and attachment requirements
- Grammatical or typographical errors that significantly impede the District's ability to evaluate the application

Issues that are typically *not* considered technical or non-substantive clarifications or corrections and instead are considered substantive may include, but are not limited to:

- Blank or missing response to a question
- Blank or missing attachment and/or addenda
- Substantively incomplete or insufficient responses to questions or attachment requirements
- Inconsistencies present in the application, such as references to different curricular programs in different places in the application, except as determined to be a typographical, non-substantive error by the District
- Lack of alignment among sections of the application, such as staffing plans that do not align with budgets

What happens if I need more than 7 days to make technical or no-substantive corrections or clarifications? No additional time will be provided. The application will be reviewed as originally submitted.

10. If my application passes the initial review, does that mean that I have a good chance of being approved?
A finding that the application is technically and non-substantively correct implies **no judgment or indication** about whether the application meets the substantive criteria for approval. This substantive review will take place in the next phase.

11. What happens after my application passes the initial review?
After your application passes the initial review, it will proceed to a full substantive review by a team of evaluators. The evaluators' **individual reviews** will provide the basis for a **capacity interview** that the District will conduct with your applicant team. From there, District staff will gather the body of evidence for the Superintendent to

make a **recommendation** about whether the application meets the criteria for approval and the school board will make a **decision** to approve or deny the application.

12. May I amend or supplement my application during the application review process?

An applicant may not amend or supplement an application during the application review process, except as explicitly requested by the District for technical or non-substantive corrections and clarifications, as described above. The District will not accept or consider any unsolicited information.

13. What happens if my resubmission still has technical or non-substantive problems?

Applicants will have only one opportunity to make any and all technical or non-substantive changes and clarifications that the District identifies. If you submit a revised application in response to a request to address technical or non-substantive changes or clarifications, this submission will be considered final. If your resubmission still does not comply with the technical requirements, it will be reviewed as is and the District may consider the failure to make corrections as a basis for denying the application along with any other substantive considerations.

Plagiarism

14. What is your plagiarism policy?

As stated in the model application, "Individuals and groups seeking the right and responsibility to educate public school children at the public's expense should be accountable to the highest standards of academic integrity. Plagiarism, including the copying of language from substantive portions of any other charter application without proper attribution or authorization, is prohibited. In order to implement an existing curriculum, instructional framework, or educational model (e.g. Montessori, arts integration, project-based learning, etc.) with fidelity, key concepts must be discussed. However, it is not acceptable to copy and paste this discussion or description from another source. A high-quality applicant team with the capacity to operate a high-quality school must be able to thoughtfully explain in their own words how they intend to educate children. Existing operators or applicants with their own previously submitted applications may use their own intellectual property without violating this provision."

15. What does plagiarism look like?

Plagiarism may include, but not be limited to, doing any of the following:

- Copying and pasting from someone else's work without proper attribution;
- Heavily paraphrasing from someone else's work without proper attribution; or
- Representing others' ideas as your own.

Note that while properly attributed information from other sources may not be plagiarism, applicants should be careful of overly relying on others' work to describe their plans for a school. High-quality applicants bring their own ideas to their applications and are able to describe their plans in their own words and demonstrate their knowledge and capacity while using existing evidence, data, and sources to supplement and support, as necessary.

16. Some components of a school application are very technical and even based on laws, rules, regulations, and required processes. How do I represent these technical components without being accused of plagiarism?

Applications will inevitably include some technical information that primarily responds to legal requirements. For example, lottery, ADA, Title I, Special Education, building code, and other technical components of a school plan often necessitate that applicants include very specific ideas or even language to properly align with compliance requirements. Applicants should attempt to describe their plans and processes in their own words and include innovations on typical practices when appropriate. However, as long as applicants include proper attribution, the use of vetted, legally compliant language for technical components will not be considered to be plagiarism.

17. What happens if we take language from one of our own previous applications for a school that we operate or draw from other materials that belong to our organization?

Taking language that is yours or your organization's and reusing it is *not* considered plagiarism.

18. What happens if the District believes my application contains plagiarism?

Plagiarism is *not* a "technical" or "non-substantive" problem. Plagiarism brings into question the applicant's honesty, ethics, knowledge, or capacity to open and operate a quality school.

Applicants are not entitled to "correct" the misrepresentation of others' words or ideas as one's own. It is a serious substantive problem in any educational setting and particularly where a group is seeking to serve as educational leaders and models for children. Where identified, the District will use plagiarism as a basis for denial.

District Priorities, Policies, and Supplemental Request

19. What are the District's specific priorities that we should be aware of for the application process?

The District looks for an application that meets all statutory requirements, offers an innovative, alternative to traditional public schools, and addresses areas of need within the District, such as serving low performing or "at-risk" populations and overpopulated areas.

20. **If my District has established application priorities, will I get denied if I don't respond to those priorities?**

Applicants are encouraged to consider a District's priorities as part of their planning process. However, a District will not deny an applicant solely on the basis that the application did not respond to the District's established priorities.

Miscellaneous

21. **Are my application materials public records? Could someone request copies of them under the Sunshine Law?**

Your application materials will be considered public records and may be requested under the Sunshine Law, per Chapter 119 of the Florida Statutes.