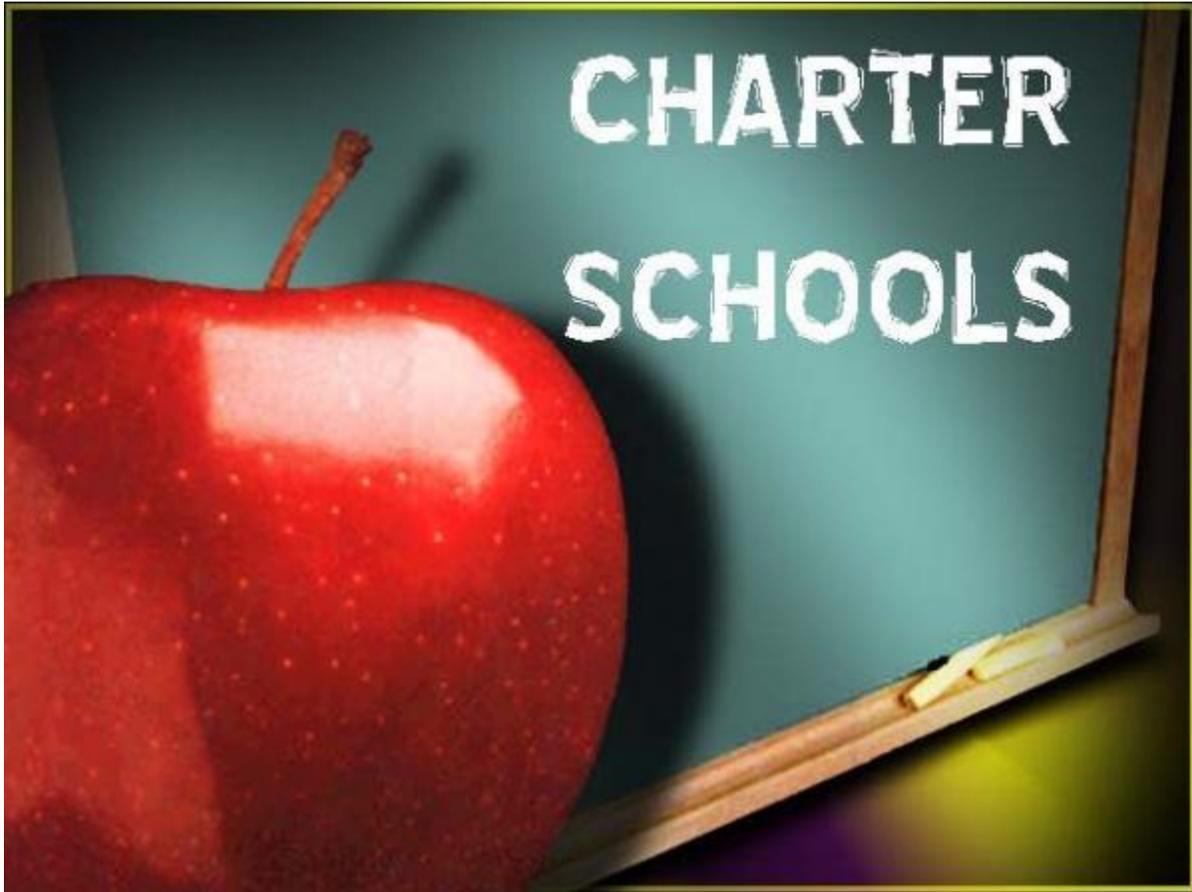


**2016 Charter School Application Guide
For Potential Charter Operators Opening a School in
2017**



**Office of Charter Schools
2601 Bransford Avenue, C-404
Nashville, TN 37204
Carol Swann, Coordinator of Charter Schools
Carol.swann@mnps.org**



Table of Contents

Purpose and Background.....3

Process and Requirements for Initial New School Application.....7

- Letter of Intent.....7
- Application Logistics.....7

Capacity Review.....9

Charter Review Cycle Timeline Dates to Remember.....11

Process and Requirements for Amending the Application.....12

Amended Review Cycle Timeline Dates to Remember.....13

Appendix A	Education 2018 - Excellence for Every Student
Appendix B	Diversity Management Plan
Appendix C	District-Charter Collaborative Compact
Appendix D	2016 Charter School Application
Appendix E	2016 Charter School Application Scoring Rubric
Appendix F	MNPS Performance Frameworks (Academic, Operational, Financial)
Appendix G	2016 Letter of Intent
Appendix H	Charter Agreement

Charter Schools Opening for the 2017-18 School Year

The vision of the MNPS Office of Charter Schools is a world where all children and communities are empowered through exemplary public schools, and our mission is to authorize excellent public schools that change lives.

Purpose

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

MNPS seeks charter school applications to cultivate strong school capacity in order to provide high quality academic instruction for all students (**Appendix A – Education 2018**). We seek proposals for both new charter schools addressing growth and demand in areas projected by the district to have student populations significantly in excess of currently available in-zone capacity, and potential conversions of existing schools when such conversion provides substantially improved academic performance and serves all students eligible to attend the school being converted. In addition, we seek schools with proven track records of academic achievement for English Language Learners or strong success in raising the achievement of all students in reading.

The purpose of MNPS 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. Therefore, this call for proposals is shaped by analysis of the academic performance of schools, rapid enrollment growth in schools that are overenrolled, the diversity goals of the MNPS Diversity Management Plan (**Appendix B – Diversity Management Plan**).

The analysis of these factors suggests that MNPS seek 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. Reduce pressure on overcrowded (>100%) and significantly overcrowded schools (>120%) as recommended by MGT.
3. Add to and do not diminish the number of schools with student enrollment diversity in Nashville.
4. Successfully convert management and transform school performance for a school whose 3-year status is Review or Target on the Academic Performance Framework (APF).

5. Demonstrate a strong record of success in improving academic achievement in reading.
6. Demonstrate a strong record of success in improving academic achievement for English Language Learners.

Background

MNPS is the 42nd largest urban school district in the nation. The consolidated city-county district covers Nashville and Davidson County, an area of about 525 square miles.

MNPS is a vast and diverse school system, serving students from more than 120 different countries, speaking almost as many languages. MNPS has evolved into one of the most racially, ethnically, socio-economically diverse school districts in the country. The district is comprised of 159 schools, serving 84,500 students.

The school district is led by a nine-member elected Board and its appointed Director of Schools. The Board provides leadership and policy direction to MNPS. Funds for the system's operation are approved and provided by the Metropolitan Nashville City Council, as the Board has no taxing authority.

MNPS seeks proposals for new schools that will assist the Board in meeting its goals, address the challenges of rapid student enrollment growth, improve academic achievement to address persistent performance gaps, and advance the goals of the District's Diversity Management Plan (Appendix B)

MNPS issues this application guidance for applicants who are committed to advancing the best interests of the students of Davidson County and 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 will be evaluated for their ability to contribute to the clear and ambitious goals set by the MNPS Board of Education.

The district articulates its identified needs according to academic performance gaps and trends, enrollment trends, diversity status, population growth, and school capacity rates each year in October. All applications will be evaluated according to quality of the educational plan, financial management and business plan, operational plan and overall capacity in order to determine whether the sponsoring organization demonstrates clear evidence of its ability to deliver high quality educational opportunities and build a sustainable institution capable of serving students as outlined in its application. Applicants who demonstrate this strong capacity for success will also be evaluated on their ability to advance the best interests of Nashville as identified through this annual needs assessment.

TCA §49-13-108 provides that districts may authorize charters that are in the "best interests of the pupils, school district or community".

Requirements for Charter School Applicants

Letter of Intent

Applicants are required to submit a letter of intent (LOI) to both MNPS and the State of Tennessee 60 days prior to submitting a completed application on April 1. The deadline for the 2016 application review cycle is February 1, 2016. Only those applicants submitting a complete letter of intent on or before February 1, 2016 will be eligible to submit full proposals for the 2016 application cycle. (see **Appendix G or the state website for details concerning what is to be included in the LOI**).

Application Logistics

The proposal must follow the Charter School Application as found on the State of Tennessee website, or in **Appendix D** (these are the same documents).

Full application proposals are due on or before Friday, April 1, 2016 by no later than 4:30 p.m. CT. MNPS will not accept any proposals received after this date and time. 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 \$500.00 application fee made out to the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools. In the event an application is insufficient and returned to the applicant without review, the fee will be returned.

- 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 (pdf) and five (5) 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 Carol Swann at Carol.Swann@mnps.org. Hard copies should be submitted to Carol Swann at this address:
**Carol Swann
Metropolitan Nashville Board of Public Education
Office of Innovation, Suite C404
2601 Bransford Avenue
Nashville, TN 37204**
- 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, but 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.

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
- Diversity Plan is included
- Required formatting as described in this application guidance has been followed
- Required application fee is attached
- Required number of bound copies have been submitted

All submitted proposals become public record after submission to MNPS. 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 Review

The application review consists of an evaluation of the application as submitted and an interview with the prospective applicant and their proposed governing board. The district has 90 calendar days from April 1 to submit recommendations to the MNPS Board of Education and for the Board to vote on those recommendations. Please note the exact timeline on the last page of this guidance.

The application review will include the following steps:

- 1) Each application will be reviewed by the Executive Officer of Charter Schools and the Coordinator of Charter Schools independently using the appropriate forms. The applications will be reviewed for:
 - Education Plan Capacity
 - Operational Plan Capacity
 - Financial/Business Plan Capacity
 - Evidence of overall capability to open and sustain long-term a high quality learning environment that offers opportunities to all students
- 2) The Executive Officer of Charter Schools and the Coordinator of Charter Schools will review their initial evaluations together and compile a consensus report that highlights areas and questions for external reviewers to probe more deeply.
- 3) Each charter application will also be reviewed by three (3) independent, external reviewers. Each external reviewer will complete a separate review report and submit it to the Office of Charter Schools.
- 4) The Executive Officer of Charter Schools and the Coordinator of Charter Schools will review the independent reviewers' reports and prepare questions to elicit further specific information during a conference call or in-person meeting with external reviewers.
- 5) On a conference call or at an in-person meeting, the Executive Officer of Charter Schools and the Coordinator of Charter Schools will ask specific questions to draw out further information and will record sound bites, conclusions, objective strengths, weaknesses and questions for the applicant interview phase.
- 6) Legal/technical review of specific sections will be undertaken by qualified

Central Office staff with the appropriate expertise. Discipline, finance, special education, 504, and EL will be reviewed by the heads of those respective departments or their designees. Facilities, transportation, and insurance will similarly be reviewed by reviewers with expertise in those areas.

- 7) The in-person applicant interview will be conducted by the Executive Officer of Charter Schools and the Coordinator of Charter Schools to evaluate the capacity of the leadership team, governing board members, and others in the proposed organization as they address specific questions and/or concerns that have arisen during the review process. Both internal and external reviewers may be added to the interview team as needed.
- 8) The recommendation report will be compiled from the combined analysis of this entire process and presented to the MNPS Board of Education for their review and vote on each application presented.

It is important for applicants to remember that strength in one area of the application does not negate weaknesses in other areas. Every area (Education Plan, Operational Plan, Financial Plan, and Evidence of Capacity) must meet or exceed standard to be recommended for approval to the MNPS Board of Education.

The standards are specifically outlined in each section of the scoring rubric.

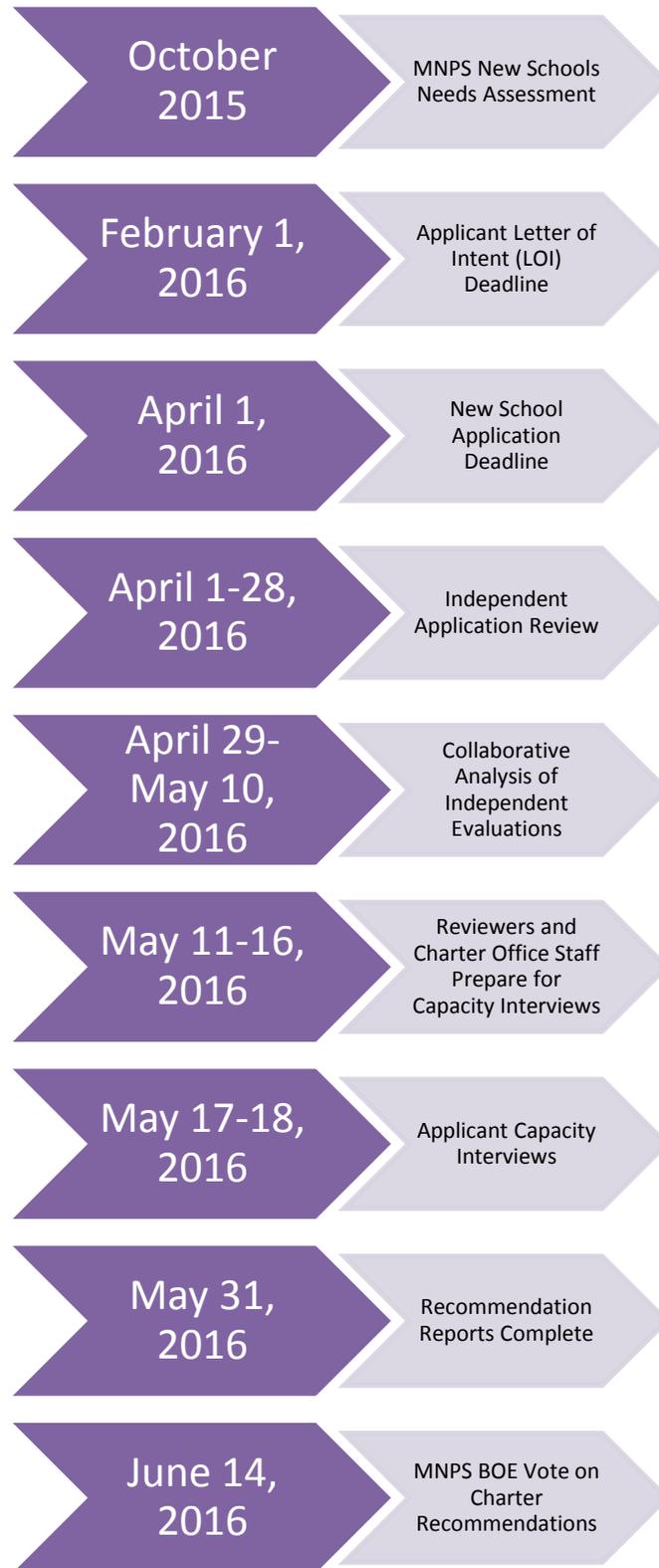
- 9) Tennessee law authorizes consideration of “substantial negative fiscal impact” in decisions to deny charter applications (TCA §49-13-108 (b)). “The local board of education may consider whether the establishment of the charter school will have a substantial negative fiscal impact on the LEA such that authorization of the charter school would be contrary to the best interests of the pupils, school district or community.”

In order to assist the MNPS Board of Education with consideration of “substantial negative fiscal impact,” the Office of Charter Schools will make its presentation of the work of the review teams to the Board in the following manner:

- Schools which do not meet or exceed quality thresholds will be recommended for denial on objective grounds, and those grounds will be provided to the Board for its consideration in approving or rejecting those recommendations.
- Administration will continue to articulate the per school fiscal impact of all new schools proposed so the Board may consider the possibility that new schools, if approved, would carry substantial, negative fiscal impact (be unaffordable).
- Administration will rank order applications not recommended for denial

according to the priorities articulated in this guidance (academic performance, overcrowding, diversity, conversion, and location context) so that Board members may take potential approvals one-by-one in descending order of need and determine, as a Board, the threshold beyond which further approval constitutes substantial negative fiscal impact.

Initial Timeline for the 2015-16 MNPS New Schools Process



Process and Timeline for Amending Applications Denied in the First Application Round

TCA 49-13-108(3) gives applicants 30 days from the date of receipt of grounds for denial to submit an amended application to correct the deficiencies. The MNPS Board of Education then has 30 days after the receipt of the amended application to either deny or approve the application based on the recommendation of the review teams.

The same review team that read and made recommendations on the initial application will evaluate the amended applications to determine if the deficiencies have been corrected and make a recommendation to the MNPS Board of Education to either approve or deny the application.

The following guidelines apply to the resubmissions:

- Amended applications will be due to the Office of Charter Schools on July 15, 2016 by 4:30 p.m. **Amended applications will not be accepted prior to that date.**
- Corrections may be made only to those areas of the application that the review teams have deemed deficient. A **complete re-write of the application will not be accepted.**
- One electronic copy and five (5) written copies will be submitted – these should be the same applications submitted previously with changes outlined or shaded so the review team will see all corrections.
- A table of contents should be submitted with page numbers so corrected work can be found easily.
- Additional information will not be accepted after July 15, 2016 unless the review team specifically requests it.

Amended Application Timeline

