



**TENNESSEE**  
PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION

## **Charter Application Rubric**

**For use by Achievement School District Charter Schools  
applying to Tennessee Public Charter School Commission**

**Opening in the 2022-23 School Year**

**DRAFT**



**Ratings and Criteria**

State law and regulation require the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission to develop an application process for evaluating applications from the Tennessee Achievement School District.

This scoring rubric is divided into subsections that correspond to the subsections of the charter application. Each subsection of the rubric identifies the characteristics of a strong response that would qualify as “Meets or Exceeds the Standard.” Evaluators will rate the responses by applying the following guidance:

Rating	Characteristics
<b>Meets or Exceeds the Standard</b>	The response reflects a thorough understanding of key issues. It clearly aligns with the mission and vision of the school. The response includes specific and accurate information that shows thorough preparation.
<b>Partially Meets Standard</b>	The response meets the criteria in some aspects, but lacks sufficient detail and/or requires additional information in one or more areas.
<b>Does Not Meet Standard</b>	The response is significantly incomplete; demonstrates lack of preparation; does not align with the mission and vision of the school; or otherwise raises significant concerns about the viability of the plan or the applicant’s ability to carry it out.

The State Board of Education has adopted Quality Charter Authorizing Standards in Policy 6.111. Standard 2(c) addresses rigorous approval criteria for the application process and decision making. This Standard provides that a quality authorizer “[r]equires all applicants to present a clear and compelling mission, a quality educational program, a demonstration of community support, a solvent and sustainable budget and contingency financial plans, a clear demonstration of the effectiveness of the model for the target student population, effective governance and management structures and systems, founding team members demonstrating diverse and necessary capabilities in all phases of the school’s development, and clear evidence of the applicant’s capacity to execute its plan successfully.” An application that merits a recommendation for approval should satisfy each of these criteria.

Recommendations for approval or denial will be based on the written application (narrative and attachments), independent due diligence, and, if offered by the authorizer, applicant interviews. Ratings for each of the subsections under one of the four categories (academics, operations, finances, and performance record) shall be averaged to determine the summary rating for that category. For an application to be deemed ready for approval by the Charter Commission, the summary rating for all applicable categories must meet or exceed the standard.

Tennessee law states, “An authorizer’s approval of a public charter school application must be in the form of a written charter agreement signed by the sponsor and the authorizer, which shall be binding upon the governing body of the public charter school. The charter agreement for a public charter school must be in writing and must contain all material components of the approved application required under § 49-13- 107(b)” (TCA 49-13-110(a)). Thus, a charter application, to be approved, must be ready to be incorporated into a charter agreement.

**Instructions for Reviewers:**

1. Fill in your name and the name of the school below. Click once on the grey boxes to begin typing.



2. For each required subsection of the application, you should do the following during your initial individual analysis of the proposal:
3. Select a rating for each subsection. Click once on the box to select. If you are not able to check the box, please HIGHLIGHT your selection.
4. Use the "Strengths" area to identify notable positive aspects of the response. Be sure to include page references where applicable.
5. Use the "Concerns/Questions" area to identify weaknesses and areas that should be explored during the debrief calls and/or capacity interview. Again, reference relevant page numbers.
6. Complete the summary page for each major section (academic, operations, and financial) after you have completed all of the subsections within the section. Type a summary of your analysis of each section into the box provided; it will expand as needed. This should be a paragraph outlining the overall strengths or weaknesses of the section as a whole. It should summarize your findings and should not be simply copied from your subsection analysis.
7. Use the "Final Application Review" area to provide your final evaluation of each subsection based on the complete application record (initial proposal, due diligence, capacity interview, and amended application, if applicable). This analysis should support the final rating you select.
8. Complete the "Final Application Review" area on the summary page for each major section. Document any additional evidence gathered during due diligence and the capacity interview and indicate your final rating for each major subsection.
9. Your comments and evidence are at least as significant as your rating. Please also remember that all documents, including your individual review, may at some time be available to the public.

Evaluator Name:

Proposed School Name:



1.1 SCHOOL MISSION AND VISION		
Characteristics of a strong response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The mission statement is clear, concise, compelling and measurable.</li> <li>▪ The vision statement is clear in how it helps to achieve the school's mission.</li> <li>▪ Operator thoroughly describes if the school has achieved its mission under the Achievement School District</li> <li>▪ If the operator has not achieved its mission, it details the challenges that the school faced in achieving the mission, and how the operators plans to overcome these challenges.</li> </ul>		
Initial Application Review		
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Strengths		Page
Concerns/Questions		Page
Post Capacity Interview Review		
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## 1.2 ENROLLMENT SUMMARY

NOTE: Any charter school authorized by Charter Commission is an open-enrollment charter school where any eligible student within the geographic district in which the school is located may attend. Any charter school moving from the ASD would lose any defined attendance zone and would be open to any student within the geographic district.

Characteristics of a strong response:

- As an open-enrollment charter school, the operator clearly describes the community from which the school intends to draw students, including demographics, school zones and academic performance of existing schools, noting any changes if authorized by the Charter Commission.
- The enrollment summary and demographics charts are complete and contain reasonable enrollment projections.
- The use of enrollment practices, policies, and processes is detailed and aligns with the enrollment projections.

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Partially Meets Standard

Does Not Meet Standard

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Does Not Meet Standard

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**1.3 ACADEMIC FOCUS AND PLAN**

NOTE: Reviewers will review the original application for context and may ask questions during the capacity interview regarding the academic program.

Characteristics of a strong response:

- The operator describes in detail the key features of the school’s academic plan that will differ from the school’s original application along with the rationale for these differences.
- The academic plan described is rigorous and research-based, addresses the needs of the targeted student population, and implements the school’s academic focus.

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Partially Meets Standard

Does Not Meet Standard

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**1.4 ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE STANDARDS**

Characteristics of a strong response:

- The operator describes in detail how the school met the academic performance standards of the ASD such that the ASD exit was possible and outlines an actionable plan to continue this upward trajectory.
- The school’s annual and long-term academic achievement goals meet the academic performance standards contained within the Charter Commissioner’s performance framework and are rigorous, measurable, and realistic.
- The operator outlines a distinct process for setting, monitoring, and revising academic achievement goals.
- There is an appropriate, well-defined corrective action plan to be implemented if the school falls below state, district and/or its own academic achievement goals.

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Partially Meets Standard

Does Not Meet Standard

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## 1.5 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION AND POSTSECONDARY READINESS – IF APPLICABLE

Characteristics of a strong response:

- The operator explains how the school will ensure all students meet the Tennessee graduation requirements in accordance with State Board Policy 2.103.
- The applicant clearly and persuasively explains how the school’s graduation requirements will ensure student readiness for college or other postsecondary opportunities and provides evidence for the effectiveness of the school’s graduation requirements.
- The applicant outlines effective systems and structures to address students at risk of dropping out or not meeting graduation requirements.

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Partially Meets Standard

Does Not Meet Standard

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## 1.6 ASSESSMENTS

Characteristics of a strong response:

- The operator identifies the primary internal assessments the school uses to assess individual and sub-group learning needs and progress throughout the year and explains how the assessments align with the school’s curriculum, performance goals, and state standards.
- A process for collecting, analyzing and using data to support instruction is clearly articulated, with detailed plans presented to provide adequate training for teachers and school leaders.

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## 1.7 SCHOOL CALENDAR AND SCHEDULE

Characteristics of a strong response:

- The operator provides the annual academic calendar for the school and the school's daily schedule by grade as **Attachment A** and meets Tennessee minimum requirements of the equivalent of 180 days of instruction.
- The applicant explains how the academic calendar and schedule will be optimal for student learning under its academic plan.
- Tiered interventions, tutoring, enrichment and extra-curricular activities are built into the school day. Any proposal for Saturday School, summer school, or after school programming is reasonable.
- The operator describes how the school will comply with all summer learning programming required under the Tennessee Learning Loss Remediation and Student Acceleration Act.

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**1.8 SPECIAL POPULATIONS AND AT-RISK STUDENTS**

NOTE: Unlike the ASD, the Charter Commission does not have the statutory authority to compel local school districts to provide services to students with disabilities, English Learners (EL), or other special populations. Each charter operator may attempt to contract with a local school district or other partner to provide services, if needed, but the responsibility to establish all agreements lies with the charter operator.

Characteristics of a strong response:

- The operator describes how the school currently oversees special population which includes a leadership team that has strong experience working with special populations.
- The application describes in detail the specific instructional programs, practices, and strategies the school employs to provide a continuum of services and thoroughly describes any programmatic or service changes necessary if authorized by the Charter Commission.
- A detailed description of staffing to meet the needs of students with disabilities and EL students including any required ratios.
- The applicant clearly details how English Learner students will be identified and screened in accordance with State Board Policy 3.207.
- The applicant thoroughly describes how the school provides services to EL students and implements Individual learning plans (ILPs) for all EL students.
- The applicant has well-defined plans for monitoring and evaluating progress and exiting students with disabilities and English Learner students.

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1.9 SCHOOL CULTURE AND DISCIPLINE		
Characteristics of a strong response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The operator provides the school’s Student Handbook as <b>Attachment B</b> and indicates any changes that will be made if authorized by the Charter Commission. The Student Handbook includes relevant, comprehensive, and legally sound policies.</li> <li>▪ The application describes the school’s culture and how it promotes a positive academic environment for students.</li> <li>▪ The applicant describes the challenges the school has had with its culture while authorized by the ASD and notes any adjustments made to the culture to improve the academic environment for students.</li> <li>▪ The applicant provides a coherent plan for integrating new students into the school culture once it becomes an open enrollment charter school.</li> <li>▪ The applicant provided the student discipline policy as <b>Attachment C</b> (if not already included in Attachment B of the school handbook) and indicates any changes that will be made if authorized by the Charter Commission,</li> </ul>		
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**1.10 RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT**

NOTE: Any charter school authorized by Charter Commission is an open-enrollment charter school where any eligible student within the geographic district in which the school is located may attend. Any charter school moving from the ASD would lose any defined attendance zone and would be open to any student within the geographic district.

Characteristics of a strong response:

- The operator provides as **Attachment D** the school’s Enrollment Policy, which should include the following:
  - Tentative dates for the application period and enrollment deadlines and procedures, including an explanation of how the school intends to receive and process application forms and run a lottery, if necessary (considering the authorizer’s open enrollment and lottery schedule)
  - Nondiscriminatory admission policies, pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-107
  - Any proposed articulation plans or agreements, pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-113
  - Identification of any pre-admission activities for students or parents; and
  - Policies and procedures for student waitlists, withdrawals, re-enrollment, and transfers.
- The application describes how parents and other members of the community will be informed about the shift from the ASD to the Charter Commission.
- The operator describes the plan to recruit and retain students, if authorized by the Charter Commission, and focuses particular attention toward the shift from zoned enrollment to open enrollment.
- The operator notes whether the school anticipates any student attrition if authorized by the Charter Commission and details a plan for how they will the school intent to backfill those students.

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**1.11 Parent and COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT**

Characteristics of a strong response:

- The applicant provides parent and/or community feedback regarding the application to the Charter Commission and explains how this feedback has been incorporated into the application.
- The application describes the operator’s parent and community engagement under the ASD and outlines how the operator will communicate the change in authorizer if approved by the Charter Commission.
- The operator provides, as **Attachment E**, any of the following for the application: letters of support, memoranda of understanding, or contracts that indicate the school is welcomed by the community, the community supports the operator continuing to serve the school community, is viewed as an attractive educational alternative, and/or reflects the community’s needs and interests.

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**2.1 GOVERNANCE**

Characteristics of a strong response:

- The applicant notes the current composition and size of the governing board and board committees and explains how the governance structure and composition ensures the school is an educational and operational success.
- The application shares what staff reports to the governing board and how those individual(s) are evaluated.
- The application outlines the plans to recruit additional board members with identified skills and how the governing board has handled board member attrition.
- The applicant provides plans for ongoing board training in compliance with Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-13-111 (o) which requires annual board training, as certified by the Tennessee Charter Schools Center and approved by the State Board of Education
- There is a clear, fair, and transparent process for hearing and handling complaints.
- The current leadership chart is complete and contains a comprehensive list of the governing members and their roles.
- Governance documents (**Attachments F1-F6**) are complete and align with state laws and district policies.

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**2.2 FACILITIES**

NOTE: There are two facility options an operator needs to prepare for:

- i. If the operator has time remaining on the original charter agreement with the ASD, the charter school has the right to continue to use the LEA’s school building for the duration of the initial ten year agreement under the current facility plan (e.g. no rent/lease payments). Upon renewal of the ten-year agreement with the Charter Commission, the charter school shall enter into a lease with the home LEA for at least three years, purchase the facility, or relocate to a new facility.
- ii. If the operator’s original ten-year agreement with the ASD is expiring and the operator is applying for a new ten-year agreement with the Charter Commission, the charter school shall enter into a lease with the home LEA for at least three years, purchase the facility, or relocate to a new facility.

Characteristics of a strong response:

- The operator describes the school’s facility plans that align with T.C.A. § 49-1-614 based on the pathways outlined in the application.
- The application notes whether the operator is planning to rent or purchase the current facility and describes the plans for capital repairs and improvements.
- The applicant has identified a realistic facility contingency plan.

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## 2.3 PERSONNEL/ HUMAN CAPITAL

Characteristics of a strong response:

- The school’s organizational chart (**Attachment G**) clearly delineates the roles and reporting structure of the Board, staff, any related bodies (such as advisory bodies or parent/educator councils), and any external organizations that will play a role in managing the school.
- The applicant describes the plan to ensure a fully licensed teaching staff if authorized by the Charter Commission.
- The application includes the teacher evaluation model that the school utilizes that is in alignment with State Board Policy 5.201.
- The operator discusses the school’s teacher attrition rates and any staffing challenges the school has faced while authorized by the ASD and the steps the school took to overcome those challenges.
- The operator describes any leadership changes that occurred while authorized by the ASD and the steps taken to ensure a smooth transition.
- A copy of the school’s employee manual and personnel policies are included as **Attachment H**.
- The staffing chart is complete and includes reasonable projections for the first year the school is authorized by the Charter Commission.

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## 2.4 INSURANCE

Characteristics of a strong response:

- A copy of the school's current insurance coverage is included as **Attachment I**.

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Partially Meets Standard

Does Not Meet Standard

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## 2.5 TRANSPORTATION

NOTE: Unlike the ASD, the Charter Commission does not have the statutory authority to compel local school districts to provide transportation services. Each charter operator may attempt to contract with a local school district or other vendors to provide these services, if needed, but the responsibility to establish all agreements lies with the charter operator.

Characteristics of a strong response:

- The applicant’s transportation plan is detailed and includes anticipated routes, extracurricular activities, and Saturday school, where applicable.
- The applicant has a sound plan for oversight of its transportation operations and notes who serves as the transportation supervisor.

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Partially Meets Standard

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**2.6 FOOD SERVICE**

NOTE: Unlike the ASD, the Charter Commission does not have the statutory authority to compel local school districts to provide transportation services. Each charter operator may attempt to contract with a local school district or other vendors to provide these services, if needed, but the responsibility to establish all agreements lies with the charter operator.

Characteristics of a strong response:

- The applicant provides a clear description of the school’s food service plans if authorized by the Charter Commission.
- The applicant explains how it will provide daily oversight of food services.

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Partially Meets Standard

Does Not Meet Standard

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**2.7 ADDITIONAL OPERATIONS**

Characteristics of a strong response:

- The operator describes any anticipated challenges of transitioning to a non-ASD authorizer and plans to address those challenges.
- The application details how the school will prepare its school and staff for the adoption of a new student information system (PowerSchool). Note: Commission pays for the all schools to have access to its instance of PowerSchool.
- A detailed description of the school’s current plan for compliance with the coordinated school health program and necessary adjustments to that plan are included by the operator.
- The operator describes how the school will manage compliance monitoring from the Charter Commission, including the monthly reporting calendar submissions and the position who will be responsible.

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**2.8 CHARTER MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION – IF APPLICABLE**

Characteristics of a strong response:

- If the school currently contracts with a charter management organization (CMO), the operator provides a copy of the current contract with the governing board as **Attachment J**.
- The CMO agreement clearly outlines the scope of services and resources provided by the CMO; the division of roles and responsibilities between the board and the CMO, disclosure and explanation of any existing or potential conflicts of interest between the board and CMO, and how conflicts of interest are checked; how performance of the CMO is measured, including any deliverables; conditions for renewal and termination of the agreement; and any monetary obligations of the CMO agreement.

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Partially Meets Standard

Does Not Meet Standard

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Partially Meets Standard

Does Not Meet Standard

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2.9 WAIVERS		
Characteristics of a strong response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each requested waiver includes a compelling and thoughtful rationale describing how the waiver will increase student achievement.</li> <li>• The applicant does not seek a waiver of any rules or statutes that cannot be waived under Tennessee law.</li> </ul>		
Initial Application Review		
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### 3.1 Budgeting

Characteristics of a strong response:

- The operator has included the approved budget for SY2021-22 and a projected budget for SY2022-23 if authorized by the Charter Commission as **Attachment K** and contains reasonable assumptions and budget numbers.
- The applicant identifies financial procedures, policies, systems and processes for accounting, payroll, and independent annual audits.
- The budget is included with clearly delineated line-items as specified in the application.

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Partially Meets Standard

Does Not Meet Standard

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### 3.2 Budget Narrative

Characteristics of a strong response:

- The operator has included as **Attachment L**, a budget narrative including detailed descriptions of budget assumptions, and revenue and expenditure projections.
- The applicant provides a detailed description of the fiscal health of other schools in the network, including a comprehensive description of any schools on fiscal probation or in bankruptcy.
- The budget narrative is included with clearly delineated line-items as specified in the application.

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Partially Meets Standard

Does Not Meet Standard

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### 3.3 NETWORK FINANCIAL PLAN

Characteristics of a strong response:

- The applicant provides a detailed description of the fiscal health of other schools in the network, including a comprehensive description of any schools on fiscal probation or in bankruptcy.
- The applicant provides a complete, realistic, and viable budget for the network (**Attachment M**). The budget includes reasonable, well-supported revenue and cost assumptions, including grant/fundraising assumptions, identification of the amounts and sources of all anticipated funds, property, or other resources (noting which are secured vs. anticipated) and including evidence of firm commitments where applicable.
- The applicant articulates a sound contingency plan to meet financial needs if anticipated revenues are lower than estimated.

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Does Not Meet Standard

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**4.1 PAST PERFORMANCE**

NOTE: While this section is required for all applicants, some questions may not apply to schools that are single-site operators. The Charter Commission will obtain from the ASD copies of the last three years of the school’s School Performance Framework, and this information is reviewed as a part of the school’s application.

Characteristics of a strong response:

- If the school has achieved priority exit status, documentation of this status is provided and a detailed description of how the school achieved priority status is included.
- If the school has not achieved priority exit status, the application must provide, as **Attachment N**, evidence using the last three years of applicable data that demonstrates a trend for 2 of the 3 years of data for the following indicators. Reviewers should look for a school performance to be generally improving but exercise discretion in reviewing the data given the COVID-19 pandemic and gaps in state assessment data.
  - School’s success rate is at or above 10% and trending upwards
  - TVAAS School-Level composite is a Level 4 or 5 in most recent data and growth is trending upwards
  - Academic proficiency levels at or above the ASD average for their grade span (elementary vs. elementary, middle vs. middle, etc.)
  - Chronic absenteeism rate at or below ASD average over last three years and trending downwards
  - Remand and expulsion rates at or below ASD average over last three years and trending downwards
- The operator describes the school’s plans to continue to reduce student discipline and chronic absenteeism rates.
- The application describes why the school’s operational and financial performance qualifies it for continued authorization under the Charter Commission based on this rubric.
- For any school within the operator’s network, the application lists any contracts with charter schools that have been terminated by the network, the school’s authorizer, or the school, including the reason(s) for such termination and whether the termination was for material breach.
- Operator lists any and all charter revocations, non-renewals, shortened or conditional renewals, or withdrawals/non-openings of schools operated by the network with explanations of what caused these actions.
- The operator clearly explains any performance deficiencies or compliance violations that have led to formal authorizer intervention with any school operated by the network in the last three years and how such deficiencies or violations were resolved.
- The applicant provides, as **Attachment O**, the most recent performance/evaluation/renewal reports produced by the authorizer(s) (or by a third- party evaluator, if applicable) of all of the network’s charter schools.
- The operator includes for all schools operating in the state of Tennessee the following in **Attachment P**: (a) the last two years of audited financial statements for each school or school(s); and (b) the most recent internal financial statements, including balance sheets and income statements.
- Applicant identifies any current or past litigation, including arbitration proceedings, that has involved the network or any charter schools it operates. Provides **Attachment Q**, if not subject to confidentiality protection: (1) the demand, (2) any response to the demand, and (3) the results of the arbitration or litigation.

**Application Review**

Meets or Exceeds Standard

Partially Meets Standard

Does Not Meet Standard

**Strengths**

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**Concerns/Questions**

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**Post Capacity Interview Review**

<input type="checkbox"/> Meets or Exceeds Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Meets Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet Standard
<b>Strengths</b>		<b>Page</b>
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