

TENNESSEE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION

APPLICATION REVIEW

2.100

Tennessee Code Annotated (T.C.A.) § 49-13-108 allows public charter school sponsors to appeal the denial of an application by the local board of education to the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission (“Commission”).

The Commission shall not consider appeals of applications that did not include all the statutorily required elements or that were submitted outside the application window set by the local board of education in accordance with T.C.A. § 49-13-107.

Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to set forth the principles and criteria that the Commission will use in reviewing charter school applications received on appeal.

Policy Sections

1. Generally
2. Substantive Application Review
3. Interviews

1. Generally. In reviewing charter school applications received on appeal, the Commission will use the standard of review set forth in Commission Policy 2.000. The Commission is committed to conducting a rigorous evaluation of all charter school applications received on appeal consistent with this policy and national and state authorizing standards.

2. Substantive Application Review.

- (a) The Commission shall assemble a charter application review committee (Review Committee) to conduct a substantive charter application review of each application received on appeal in accordance with the submission instructions set forth in Commission Policy 2.000. In conducting the substantive application review, the Commission shall contract with third-parties or utilize volunteers as it deems appropriate to serve on the Review Committee.
- (b) The Review Committee shall be comprised of teams of internal and external evaluators with relevant and diverse educational, organizational (governance and management), financial and legal expertise, as well as a thorough understanding of the essential principles of public charter school autonomy and accountability. The Commission will provide training to Review Committee members to ensure consistent standards and fair treatment of all application reviews.
- (c) The substantive application review shall be an evaluation of the statutorily required elements, as set forth in T.C.A. § 49-13-107, including but not limited to an evaluation of the proposed charter school’s mission; educational focus, program, and academic plan;

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- (d) business plan, including an operating budget; governance board and structure; discipline code; and compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The Review Committee shall use the sample scoring criteria provided by the Commissioner of Education and available on the Tennessee Department of Education's website to evaluate the charter application.
- (e) The Commission and the Review Committee shall take into consideration and, if necessary, gather additional information regarding the past and current performance, including student growth and achievement, of any charter school operated by the sponsor pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-107(e).
- (f) The Commission will ensure that the application review process, Review Committee members, and decision-making processes are free of conflicts of interest in accordance with Commission Policy 1.100 and will require full disclosure of any potential or perceived conflicts of interest between Review Committee members and sponsors.

3. Interviews.

- (a) The Commission staff shall interview the governing board and school leadership, if named, of each sponsor that has filed an appeal in accordance with Commission Policy 2.000.
- (b) The Commission shall assemble an interview panel that may include Commission staff, a Commission member, Review Committee members, and any other internal or external individuals whose knowledge and expertise would assist the Commission in its decision to authorize the charter school.
- (c) The focus of the interview will be the governing board and school leadership's capacity to operate a high-quality charter school that is consistent with the charter application and in a fiscally responsible manner that advances the mission of the charter school.
- (d) ~~The Commission staff will schedule interviews in a manner that accounts for scheduling conflicts. However, the final decision as to interview time and location is in the discretion of Commission staff. Commission staff will schedule a date for the interview to be conducted electronically.~~
- (e) The interviews will be closed and not be open to the public.
- (f) The officers of the governing board and the school leader (if named) shall attend the interview. Other representatives that may attend the interview include, but are not limited to, all members of the governing board, school leadership positions, and key personnel of identified school partners. The Commission limits the total number of interview participants ~~from the applicant~~ to eight (8).
- ~~(g) Commission staff shall conduct all interviews electronically. All interview attendees (both on behalf of charter school and Commission) shall attend the interview in-person. However, Commission staff may allow certain attendees to participate remotely in extraordinary circumstances.~~

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