



CLEVELAND  
METROPOLITAN  
SCHOOL DISTRICT

2019-20 Charter Renewal Application

## Overview

### **Purpose of a Renewal Application and Process**

Charter schools (also called community schools in Ohio) play a critical role in offering families quality school choice. In order to ensure that the school choices are indeed of high quality, charter schools must be held accountable for performance by their sponsors. A strong charter renewal process is critical to protect students and the public interest, and thereby to protect charter school autonomy, by ensuring that schools are held to high standards of academic, financial, and organizational performance. The renewal process also provides the school an opportunity to present clear and compelling evidence demonstrating how it is serving its students and meeting contractual expectations in order to determine whether the school has earned renewal based on its performance record. While a school's past and current record of performance will be the primary focus of Cleveland Metropolitan School District's (CMSD's) renewal decision, the renewal process also provides an opportunity for each school to outline its future plans, priorities, and potential modifications to its charter if renewed.

### **Performance Framework as the Basis for Renewal**

CMSD uses a Performance Framework that sets out expectations for each charter school as the basis for its renewal decisions. Charter schools must meet standards in that performance framework in order to have their charter renewed. The Performance Framework is included in the school's charter contract and includes academic, organizational, and financial standards. The contract renewal process examines a multitude of criteria to develop a comprehensive portrait of the school and considers the school's past, present, and future. The most important component of the process is reviewing the school's past performance on the frameworks. The academic performance of the school is considered most heavily, but each school also must meet financial and organizational performance standards in order to earn renewal.

### **Board of Education Policy Alignment with State and National Standards**

CMSD's renewal process is guided by the CMSD Board of Education's Policy on Renewal, Nonrenewal, and Termination of Community School Sponsorship Contracts. Under the policy, the Board bases the contract renewal process and renewal decisions on a thorough analysis of a comprehensive body of objective evidence defined by the Performance Framework.

The Board's policy and the process it outlines are aligned with state and national standards for quality charter school sponsorship or authorizing. The process is designed to meet the Ohio Department of Education's (ODE) standards for Sponsor Quality Practices concerning the renewal process and renewal decision making,<sup>1</sup> including the following:

- The sponsor has an application process and requires all schools seeking renewal to apply through a written renewal application.

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<sup>1</sup> Ohio Department of Education Sponsor Quality Practices Rubric, Section E.

- The criteria for renewal are publicly available and include written guidance regarding the renewal application, as well as a timeline and specific criteria used to evaluate the application that consider multiple sources of evidence, both academic and non-academic, in a high-stakes review of the school's performance results over the term of its current contract.
- The sponsor only grants renewal to schools that are fiscally and organizationally viable, have achieved contractual academic targets, and are faithful to the non-academic terms of their contract.

Likewise, CMSD's Board policy and process are designed to meet national professional standards for the renewal process and renewal decision making set forth in the National Association of Charter School Authorizers' (NACSA) Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing, including:

- *A quality authorizer designs and implements a transparent and rigorous process that uses comprehensive and reliable data to inform merit-based renewal decisions.*
- *A quality authorizer uses a formal renewal application and a fair and transparent process, provides schools and the public with a cumulative performance report, and makes renewal decisions based on merit and objective evidence of the school's performance over the term of the charter contract in accordance with the Performance Framework set forth in the charter contract.<sup>2</sup>*

## Overview of the Renewal Process

CMSD's renewal process is a multi-stage review of each school's performance, with the following stages:

**Stage 1: Preliminary Renewal Performance Report.** During the first stage of the renewal process, CMSD prepares a preliminary renewal performance report for each school eligible for renewal in the next school year. The preliminary renewal performance report constitutes CMSD's record of the charter school's academic, financial, and organizational performance in relation to the criteria for renewal and the school's obligations as outlined in its charter contract. Schools will have an opportunity in the next stage to comment on the preliminary renewal performance report and to propose corrections or submit additional contextual information to supplement the record.

**Stage 2: Charter Renewal Application.** The second stage of the process requires the school to prepare and submit this Renewal Application. The application is aligned with the performance expectations set forth in the charter contract and provides schools with the opportunity to augment, or if needed correct, their performance record as reflected in the preliminary renewal performance report. The Renewal Application also provides an opportunity to outline the school's future plans, priorities, and potential modifications to its charter if renewed. However,

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<sup>2</sup> NACSA Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing, <http://www.qualitycharters.org/for-authorizers/principles-and-standards>, at 20-21.

the school's past and current record of performance, and not its future plans or promises, will be the primary focus of CMSD's renewal decision.

### **Stage 3: Site Visit, Collecting of Additional Information, and Renewal Application**

**Analysis.** In the third stage of the process, CMSD will gather any necessary additional information not already collected and will conduct a renewal site visit to each school applying for renewal. The site visit will include meetings with key school personnel and governing authority members, and CMSD will produce a report based on the site visit. In addition, during this stage in the process, an additional year of performance data from the school will become available. CMSD will analyze the school's application and this additional information using renewal criteria.

### **Stage 4: Renewal Recommendations (including Final Renewal Performance Reports)**

**Presented to CMSD Board, and Decisions Made in Public Meeting.** Once all information has been collected, analyzed, and synthesized, CMSD staff will prepare a renewal recommendation for each school and present it to the CMSD Board of Education. The renewal recommendation will include an updated renewal performance report that includes data from the 2018-19 school year, as well as some information from the current school year. Staff will only recommend for renewal schools that earn at least 66 percent of possible points on the application, which is at least 99 out of 150. Each school will receive its renewal recommendation prior to its being made public. The renewal recommendation may include comments from the school or information supplemental to CMSD's findings, if the school offers any. CMSD's Charter Schools Office will present each renewal recommendation to the CMSD Board, and the Board's decision to renew or not renew a charter will be made in a public meeting.

**Stage 5: Renewal or Non-Renewal Next Steps.** If the renewal is approved, the school will begin negotiating its next charter contract with CMSD, and the Renewal Application will help guide discussions regarding adjustments to be made in the new contract. If the renewal is denied, CMSD will proceed consistent with state law and ODE standards that govern sponsors on charter school appeal of a non-renewal decision and on non-renewal or termination. (See Ohio Revised Code section 3314.07).

Please note that Ohio law prohibit a charter school whose contract is terminated or non-renewed for failure to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management, or for failure to meet student performance requirements, from entering into a contract with any other sponsor. (See Ohio Revised Code section 3314.07 (B) (4)).

## Timeline for Charter Contracts Expiring June 30, 2020

Renewal Stage	Purpose	Date
Renewal Application and decision criteria released	Provide school leaders and the public with transparent expectations for renewal decision-making	By June 7, 2019
Preliminary renewal performance report provided to each school up for renewal	Establish a record based on the cumulative evidence of school performance in relation to expectations set by the CMSD Performance Framework, and communicate that record to each school up for renewal	By June 7, 2019 <sup>3</sup>
Renewal Application due	Provide an opportunity for schools to formally request renewal; submit comments, factual corrections, or supplemental data for the preliminary renewal performance report; and present plans for a new charter term	September 6, 2019
Site visit conducted, additional evidence collected, renewal application analyzed	Collect additional evidence, including data from the 2018-19 school year and such data as are available from the current school year, to form a comprehensive assessment of the school; conduct a renewal site visit and prepare a report of that visit; develop a renewal recommendation for each school	September - October 2019
Renewal recommendations shared with schools	Following analysis, CMSD staff share its renewal recommendation with each school	October 2019
Renewal recommendations presented to CMSD Board	CMSD staff present renewal recommendations to the CMSD Board of Education in a public meeting	November 2019
Charter school renewal decisions made	CMSD Board make charter renewal decisions in a public meeting	By December 31, 2019
Renewal decisions communicated to schools	Communicate renewal decisions in writing to each school up for renewal	By January 15, 2020 <sup>4</sup>
Contract negotiations (or closure or separation if applicable) held	For renewed schools, establish the terms for the next charter contract; otherwise, proceed with closure or separation	February - June 30, 2020

<sup>3</sup> CMSD most recently provided performance reports to schools and their governing authority boards, as part of their overall annual reports, in February 2019. The reports included data from up to the 2017-18 school year. CMSD also had provided cumulative performance reports to schools that included performance over the contract term in November 2018. The preliminary renewal performance reports were presented again to the schools at a renewal orientation meeting in June 2019. Performance data from the 2018-19 school year, which will be available in September, and some data from the current school year, will be added to the renewal recommendations.

<sup>4</sup> State law requires that sponsors notify the school by January 15 in writing if the recommendation is termination or non-renewal; and by law, schools may request an informal hearing before the CMSD Board. Any such request must be received by the sponsor within 14 days of the school receiving notification of the decision. Then, within 14 days of the hearing, the sponsor must issue a written decision either affirming or reversing the decision to terminate or non-renew. (See Ohio Revised Code section 3314.07)

## Instructions

Charter Renewal Applications must be submitted to CMSD in digital form by **11:59 p.m. EDT on September 7, 2019**. Please email the electronic document to

[Matthew.Rado@clevelandmetroschools.org](mailto:Matthew.Rado@clevelandmetroschools.org) and also copy Shemekia Love at

[Shemekia.Love@clevelandmetroschools.org](mailto:Shemekia.Love@clevelandmetroschools.org).

## Format for Submissions

- The renewal application narrative should not exceed 10 pages single-spaced, excluding attachments.
- Attachments should not exceed 10 pages, total.
- The application must include the Renewal Application Transmittal Form provided on page 8, below, and must be signed by both the school leader/principal and the governing authority board chair.
- The application should include a table of contents.
- The application should have standard one-inch margins, be clearly paginated, and use at least 11-point font.
- Any attachment should provide information that a) meaningfully augments the body of evidence that CMSD has already collected and reported to the school on its performance, or b) illustrates or supports plans or strategies for the next charter term that would be material to the charter contract for the renewal term. Applicants should reference attachments clearly in the application.
- The application should not include any photographs, pictures, or news clips unless they are being submitted as part of Section B (Context and Clarification), described below.

## Overview of Scoring

The Renewal Application is divided into four sections, each of which is assigned weighting and a methodology for scoring. To be considered for approval, applicants must earn at least 99 of the 150 possible points. Please note, however, that earning the minimum number of required points is not automatically sufficient to guarantee a recommendation for renewal.

The sections and their assigned point values are:

- Section A, the Performance Review, is worth 100 points total. Up to 50 points may be earned for section A1 (Academic Performance), and up to 25 points each for sections A2 (Financial Performance) and A3 (Organizational Performance). CMSD will provide this section of the application in the form of the final renewal performance report.
- Section B, Context and Clarification, is not scored but affords the applicant an opportunity to provide additional information on the data that were included in the preliminary renewal performance review.

- Section C, A Closer Look, is worth 35 points total. Up to 25 points may be earned from section C1 (Renewal Site Visit), and up to 5 points each may be earned from C2 (Status Update on Financial Performance) and C3 (Status Update on Remedial Action Plans).
- Section D, Future Plans, is worth up to 15 points. The section gives the applicant an opportunity to submit important information that is relevant to the school's next contract term, if any.

## Renewal Application Transmittal Form

School name	
Name of governing authority board chair	
Mailing address and phone number of board chair	
Email address of board chair	
Name and title of school leader	
Mailing address and phone number of school leader	
Email address of school leader	
School's initial opening date	
First year of school's first sponsorship agreement with CMSD	
Current grades enrolled	
Grade levels to be served at full enrollment, as approved by CMSD	
Maximum projected enrollment at full growth, as approved by CMSD	

Signature of school principal/leader:

Date:

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Signature of governing authority chair:

Date:

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## Renewal Application

### **A. Performance Review (100 points)**

The applicant does not need to submit anything for Section A. Section A is an assessment of the school's performance on the Performance Framework (Attachment 4 of the charter contract) during the school's current contract term. CMSD will provide this information at a later time, in the form of the final renewal performance report, which will build upon the preliminary renewal performance report. CMSD may choose to include clarifying information that the applicant submitted under Section B (Context and Clarification) below and will add the school's performance data from the 2018-19 school year.

#### **A1. Academic Performance (50 points)**

CMSD has assessed the school's performance based on the Academic Performance Framework and has provided a preliminary analysis of the school's academic performance over the term of the charter contract in the school's preliminary renewal performance report.

#### **A2. Financial Performance (25 points)**

CMSD has been assessing the school's financial performance monthly, quarterly, and annually in accordance with the Financial Performance Framework and has provided the school with monthly reviews and feedback on the school's latest enrollment and financial records. CMSD also has provided a preliminary analysis of the school's financial performance over the term of the charter in the school's preliminary renewal performance report.

#### **A3. Organizational Performance (25 points)**

CMSD has been assessing the school's performance on the Organizational Performance Framework. CMSD also has provided a preliminary analysis of the school's organizational performance over the term of the charter contract in the school's preliminary renewal performance report.

#### **Scoring for this Section:**

CMSD will calculate the percentage of performance indicators met in each of the three categories over the school's current contract term. Those numbers then will be multiplied by the weight assigned to each category (Academics 50 percent, and Finance and Organization each 25 percent). The resulting numbers will be totaled to determine the points earned in Section A.

To illustrate, if there were three academic performance indicators applicable to the school in 2015-16, and four academic performance indicators for each of the years 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19, that would be a total of 15 academic indicators over the contract term so far. If the school had met 11 of these indicators over those years, that would be 73 percent of the indicators for academics. CMSD would then multiply 73 by the weighting for academics (50 percent, or 0.50) to arrive at 36.5 points earned in Academics. The same process would be applied for Finance and Organization, and the overall score for Section A would be based on the combined score of the three categories.

## **B. Context and Clarification (0 points)**

Section B is unscored but affords the applicant an opportunity to correct what it believes to be any errors in the preliminary renewal performance report and/or to provide additional contextual information that the applicant believes will help CMSD better understand the data from the Performance Review and evaluate the application.

The applicant should use the preliminary renewal performance report (emailed to the school in February and shared with its governing authority) as a guide for its responses and submit only a) proposed corrections to what it believes is erroneous information in the report, or b) evidence of performance related to the Performance Framework that is not already included in the preliminary renewal performance report and/or that CMSD may not have and that the applicant believes will assist CMSD in better understanding, or placing into context, the data contained in the Performance Review. Responses should reference the specific criteria and benchmarks in the Performance Framework to which the supplemental information applies.

Such responses may include, but need not be limited to, information about interim assessments or progress reports; evidence of performance on school- or mission-specific goals; and improvements undertaken at the school, along with evidence of progress for any areas in which the school has not previously met or is not currently meeting the performance standard.

Responses should not include anecdotal information or evidence that is not relevant to the school's academic, financial, or organizational performance and the school's performance expectations as defined by CMSD's Performance Framework and the school's charter contract.

Although this section of the application is not assigned points, it still could prove very significant for the applicant. Again, achieving the minimum threshold of points does not guarantee a recommendation for renewal. In addition, the fullest amount of information on the school may factor into determinations about what length of contract term a renewed school will receive, as well as about what the other terms of the subsequent charter contract may include.

### **Scoring for this Section:**

This section is not worth any points and will not be scored.

## **C. A Closer Look (35 points)**

Section C comprises three components: the Renewal Site Visit, the Status Update on Financial Performance, and the Status Update on Remedial Action Plans.

### **C1. Renewal Site Visit (25 points)**

As part of the charter renewal process, CMSD conducts renewal site visits aligned to the standards to augment evidence collected through the Performance Framework. The renewal site visit is designed to help evaluate objectively the success of the school, whether it is meeting its mission to provide a high-quality public education to its students, and what the outlook for the school's performance may be if it is granted a new contract. The site visits are conducted to

ensure a thorough review of each school and to provide an opportunity to see the school in action. For this reason, site visits will be planned with reference to each school's preliminary renewal performance report and may differ in length, scope, and depth based on the school's past performance and current standing with CMSD. Areas explored may include, but need not be limited to, school and school community culture, leadership, instruction, support for all learners, professional development, and organizational reflection and planning.

**Scoring for this Section:**

Site visits will utilize a rubric, to be shared with the schools prior to the visit, and schools will receive ratings across different components, as well as an overall numerical rating, based on how much the site visit inspires confidence that the school currently is engaging in, and/or is likely to engage in, a range of effective practices that are likely to accomplish the school's mission and fulfill the terms of a future charter contract, including the Performance Framework. The points awarded for this section will range from 0 to 25, based on the renewal site visit rubric.

**C2. Status Update on Financial Performance (5 points)**

This section will be based on CMSD's review of the school's most recent financial reports and records as are available from the current school year. CMSD will seek assurance that the school still is on solid financial footing since the preliminary renewal performance review and is current in meeting its liabilities, including but not limited to payroll taxes, debt service payments, and employee benefits. In order to make this determination, CMSD may request additional information from the school to supplement the records it already possesses.

**Scoring for this Section:**

A school with either no areas of concern or only one area of concern, as defined in the Financial Performance Framework, will receive five points. A school with more than one area of concern will receive zero points. In addition, note that under the Performance Framework, in order for the school to be considered for contract renewal, any area of concern must be addressed with sufficient documentation, as determined by CMSD, demonstrating short- and long-term financial viability.

**C3. Status Update on Remedial Action Plans (5 points)**

In this section, the school submits an update on its implementation of any still incomplete remedial action plan that was required of the school by CMSD under the Intervention Protocol in the school's contract. If you are unsure whether your school is, or should be, on a remedial action plan, please contact CMSD Executive Director of Charter Schools Matthew Rado at [Matthew.Rado@clevelandmetroschools.org](mailto:Matthew.Rado@clevelandmetroschools.org). Please explain:

1. The circumstances that gave rise to the notice of breach and the remedial action plan;
2. The school's progress so far in implementing the remedial action plan;
3. The outlook and timeline for completion of the plan; and

4. What measures the school has taken to prevent the circumstances that gave rise to the remedial action plan, including specifically any actions or measures taken by the governing authority board.

**Scoring for this Section:**

CMSD will assign five points if the school has either no pending remedial action plan or is on at least one remedial action plan, but in CMSD's estimation, based on the applicant's update and on CMSD's own information, the school is making acceptable progress on the completing the plan(s); or 0 points if the school has received a notice of breach and either is not yet in remedial action or, in CMSD's estimation, is making inadequate progress toward completing the remedial action plan. In addition, note that under the Performance Framework, in order for the school to be considered for contract renewal, it is expected to have no outstanding notice of breach or concern for which it has failed to submit a remedial action plan that has been approved by CMSD.

If the school enters into a new remedial action plan during the renewal process, CMSD will factor this into the renewal decision.

**D. Future Plans (15 points)**

Section D provides the school an opportunity to discuss its proposed plans for the term of the next charter contract. In particular, this section gives the applicant an opportunity to identify any significant changes it envisions for the school during the new contract term, as well as its plans for addressing any significant performance and operational challenges it has faced during the current contract term.

Schools should identify any anticipated changes to the school's educational program, governance model, and financial outlook and should include any other proposed changes that would require modification of a material provision in the school's charter contract and/or that are likely to impact the school's academic or organizational success or its financial sustainability. As a general rule, the school should identify any changes that are relevant or significant with respect to the performance outcomes that the school has agreed to meet or are otherwise relevant to the school's renewal and continued authorization and operation as a public charter school.

Examples of significant changes could include changes in the ages and grades of students the school proposes to serve or the characteristics of the students the school expects to attract; a shift in the focus of the curriculum; changes to delivery by in-person, virtual, or blended instruction; anticipated changes to the school's financial position or the financial impact of any significant proposed modifications to school's education program and operations; changes to the school governance, leadership, or staffing model, or any proposed changes to the management of the school, including the school's relationship with a third-party charter management organization or other education service provider; or changes to the school's facility needs, status, or location.

CMSD may request additional information to sufficiently assess the impact of, and plan for, such proposed changes. Even if the school's proposed changes would not occur until several years into the next charter contract term, the applicant should outline them here. Contractual provisions are subject to approval by CMSD consistent with CMSD policy and state law. Failure to provide requested or otherwise relevant information, or failure to identify a material modification that is likely to raise contractual issues and/or to impact the school's academic or organizational success or its financial sustainability, may be grounds for non-renewal and termination of the school's charter. If the school has any questions about whether particular information or a proposed change should be included, please contact CMSD's Charter Schools Office prior to submitting of this application.

Regardless of whether a school anticipates or proposes any changes significant enough to potentially impact the school's performance success and/or to warrant consideration of contract terms, the applicant should use this section to reflect upon its current contract term and identify any significant performance and operational challenges the school has faced and continues to face. Looking forward, the applicant should identify any new challenges it anticipates in the coming contract term. For each challenge identified, the applicant should indicate what strategies it proposes to employ during the next contract term to address the challenge and what degree of success it anticipates in overcoming the challenge.

If the school's application for renewal is approved, the plans presented in this response will inform the drafting of relevant sections of the charter contract for the new term.

***Scoring for this Section:***

The school will receive a rating of exceeds, meets, partially meets, or does not meet expectations, based on how much the applicant's response inspires confidence that the school has thoughtfully and candidly identified, and proposed well thought-out and credible strategies for addressing, current and anticipated performance and operational challenges. If applicable, this would include the applicant's identification of significant changes to important aspects of the school's operation and/or charter contract provisions in new contract term. A school that exceeds expectations will earn 15 points, one that meets expectations will earn 10 points, one that meets expectations will earn five points, and one that does not meet expectations will earn no points on this section.