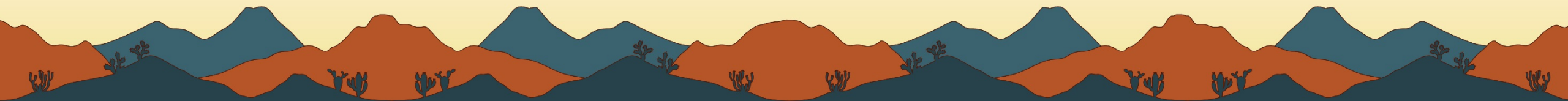


2017 NACSA LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

OUR CHOICES MATTER





SEATING INSTRUCTIONS:

Sit at a table displaying the element of your application process that is the most challenging for your office.

(Or the element you would most like to improve.)

CREATING A QUALITY APPLICATION PROCESS

MARIAN SCHUTTE (Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board)

MORGAN FELTS (State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia)

ALYSSA HOPKINS (Massachusetts Dept. of Elementary & Secondary Education)

OLIVIA ROSER (NACSA)



“IF YOU DON’T WANT TO CLOSE A
BAD CHARTER SCHOOL, DON’T
OPEN IT IN THE FIRST PLACE.”

-Gerard Robinson

Former Florida Commissioner of Education

APPLICATION DECISION-MAKING AS A ‘GATEWAY’

- Route by which charter schools enter the sector.
- Applications approved through rigorous, selective processes have a greater likelihood of being successful schools.
- As hard as it might be to complete a charter school application, it’s the easiest part of opening a school.

A HEALTHY APPLICATION PROCESS

Efficient Application Submission

Rigorous Application Evaluation

Comprehensive Applicant Interviews

Merit-Based Application Decisions

CORE ELEMENTS OF A QUALITY APPLICATION PROCESS

Rigorous Approval
Criteria

Charter
Application

External
Evaluators

Due Diligence

Capacity
Interviews

Sound Evidence-
Based
Recommendations

OPPORTUNITY TO APPLY ELEMENTS TO YOUR PROCESS

Today's discussion will culminate in a 'process timeline' workshop that will facilitate your efforts to incorporate or further refine your use of a specific element within your own charter application process.



CORE ELEMENT #1: RIGOROUS APPROVAL CRITERIA

WHY ARE A RIGOROUS APPLICATION & APPROVAL CRITERIA IMPORTANT?



RIGOROUS APPROVAL CRITERIA: LOGISTICS

- In order for applicants to submit a high-quality application, they must know what the Authorizer is looking for.
- Criteria for approval should be released with application materials months before the application deadline.
- Workshops and trainings should emphasize returning to the criteria when drafting applications.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM DESIGN & CAPACITY

A strong response will...

- Describe a curriculum and instructional strategies that **align with the mission, target population, and state standards**.
- Explain the **evidence base** for the plan.
- Articulate **sound rationale** for selection.
- Include plans for **meeting all student needs**, including accelerated, remediation, special education, and ELL.
- Demonstrate **internal alignment** including with the schedule and calendar.
- Include a sound plan for **family engagement**.
- Describe a **school culture** that is aligned to the school's mission and goals.

OPERATIONAL PLAN & CAPACITY

A strong response will:

- Include a sound and reasonable plan for staffing that is likely to **attract and retain top talent**.
- Present a thorough and reasonable plan for **start-up**.
- Provide compelling detail on the school's plan for **performance management**.
- Present an organizational chart aligned with the **leadership and staffing structure**.
- Have a viable plan for developing **employment policies**.
- Document **proper legal structure**.
- Articulate clear roles and appropriate responsibilities for **governance and management**.
- Identify founding **Board members with diverse skills** needed to govern effectively.

FINANCIAL PLAN & CAPACITY

A high quality response will have...

- Realistic projections with **clear assumptions** – start up through full enrollment.
- **Spending priorities that align** with the school's mission, educational program, management structure, PD needs, and growth plan.
- **Realistic cash flow projections** aligned with overall budget.
- Start-up plan and budget with **reasonable revenue and cost assumptions**.
- **Sound financial controls** to ensure proper use of public funds and long-term viability.
- Demonstrated financial planning and management **capacity**.

RIGOROUS APPROVAL CRITERIA: KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Criteria offer a transparent and equitable standard of quality that all applicants can follow.
- Rigorous criteria reduce the likelihood that bias will affect the outcome of your process.
- Criteria should be aligned with accountability systems used once the school is up and running.



CORE ELEMENT #2: CHARTER APPLICATION

KEY AREAS OF A CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION



RIGOROUS APPLICATIONS: LOGISTICS

- Local context will decide how prescriptive your application should be.
 - Newer applicants and authorizers favor a more detailed application.
- New Operators vs. Experienced Operators
 - Different criteria for these two groups means that applications should feature different components (i.e. Track record of success for Experienced Operators)
- Strategic application processes can help meet the needs of your authorizing environment.
 - Applications focused on specific needs (turnaround schools, alternative schools, etc.)



CORE ELEMENT #3: EXTERNAL EVALUATORS

WHY ARE RIGOROUS EXTERNAL EVALUATORS IMPORTANT?

Objectivity

Expertise

Integrity

Feedback

WHO ARE EXTERNAL EVALUATORS?

- Individuals independent of your authorizing organization
- Individuals with specific expertise associated with application criteria
- Individuals with professional experience related to the unique design elements of the proposed school

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN REVIEWERS

- ✓ Professional experience
- ✓ Eye for detail
- ✓ Strong writing skills
- ✓ No conflict of interest
- ✓ Interpersonal skills
- ✓ Sensitivity to perspective

Areas of Expertise	Specific Models
Curriculum Instruction Student Assessment School Leadership Board Governance Law Financial Management Special Education English as a Second Language	Language Immersion Competency-Based Montessori Alternative Education STEM/STEAM Performing Arts Grade Level Expertise Expeditionary Learning Blended/Virtual Charter Schools

ROLE OF EXTERNAL REVIEWERS VARIES

Reviewers may be deployed differently by authorizers based on their process. Both approaches benefit from the additional capacity provided by reviewers.

Reviewers may play an ADVISORY role.

- ☐ Support gathering of evidence relative to the application criteria.
- ☐ Propose questions for the capacity interview.

Reviewers may make RECOMMENDATIONS.

- ☐ Synthesize and report on body of evidence.
- ☐ Participate in the capacity interviews.

MAXIMIZING REVIEWER CONTRIBUTIONS

- Reviewers must be provided with adequate and appropriate training to complete the task effectively.
- Design your training to address your expectations of reviewers.
 - Use norming activities and application exemplars to ensure consistent understanding of criteria and rubrics.
- Solicit feedback from reviewers after participation to identify areas for improvement or clarification.



CORE ELEMENT #4: DUE DILIGENCE

WHY IS RIGOROUS DUE DILIGENCE IMPORTANT?



DUE DILIGENCE

Due diligence must be part of any rigorous evaluation process. There are few specific guidelines for due diligence but it should be employed to **verify assertions** made in the application.

Examples of Due Diligence:

- Verify background of applicant team and board members
- Research/verify track records of other schools or entities with which applicants have been involved or managed
- Facilities

THE BEST
PREDICTOR OF
FUTURE SUCCESS
IS
PAST ACHIEVEMENT

QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD ALWAYS ASK

- Outcomes for prior charter applications and charter schools?
- Nature of the relationships amongst individuals?
- Potential financial interests of participants and their immediate family members?
- Prior employment? Prospective employment?
- Status of succession planning for school and board leadership?
- Are actions solely in the best interest of the school(s)?

TRACK RECORDS ARE TANGIBLE EVIDENCE

- Growth of an existing operator in your portfolio
 - You often have already collected what you need to determine capacity to grow.
 - Evidence of academic success, organizational viability, and effective management.
- An operator coming to town
 - Your determination is reliant on the same type of information that an operator in your portfolio would be required to provide.
 - How do you gather the same type of evidence to make a similar determination of capacity? Other authorizers and state departments of education.

APPLIES TO NEW OPERATORS, TOO!

- Source of application content
 - Was content developed by the applicant group or a third party? Possible plagiarism?
- Follow up on cited evidence
 - Does the cited research back up statements being made about the school model?
- Ask for more than applicant resumes – use individual questionnaires.
 - Identify prior submissions to authorizers or roles in other applications or charters.
 - Identify disclosures of financial interests, current connections to the targeted community, and the specific motivation for involvement in the proposal.



CORE ELEMENT #5: CAPACITY INTERVIEWS

WHY IS THE CAPACITY INTERVIEW IMPORTANT?



PLANNING FOR CAPACITY INTERVIEWS

Determine:

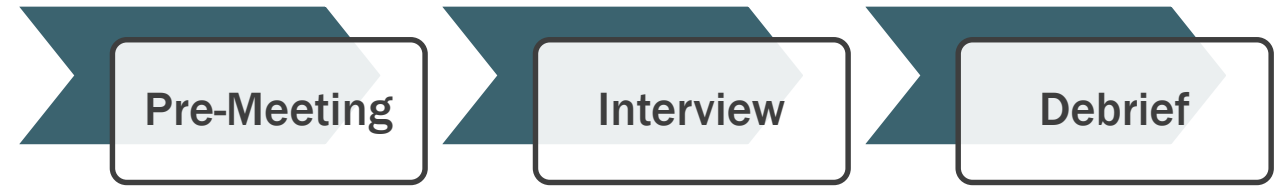
- Dates and scheduling
- Panelists
- Training and Feedback
- Pre-Interview Documentation
- Other Key Decisions

WHO'S IN THE ROOM?

Interviewers	Applicants	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Team Lead• Panelists/Evaluators<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internal• External• Experience represented	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Board member(s)• School leader candidate (if identified)• Members of the leadership team with expertise on curriculum instruction and special programs• Finance lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Members of the public?• Other stakeholders?• Vendors/Partners

ANATOMY OF AN INTERVIEW

- Pre-meeting – First 30 minutes
- Interview – Next ~90 minutes
 - Introduction (5-10 min)
 - Applicant Opening (5 min)
 - Questions & Discussion (65-75 min)
 - Closing (5-10 minutes)
- Debrief – Final 30 minutes



CAPACITY INTERVIEW: KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Capacity interviews offer an additional data point to ensure your applicants will execute their plan well.
- Capacity interviews should include both Board members as well as school leaders to get a clear sense of the founding team.
- Be clear on the logistics and expectations for your interviews up front.

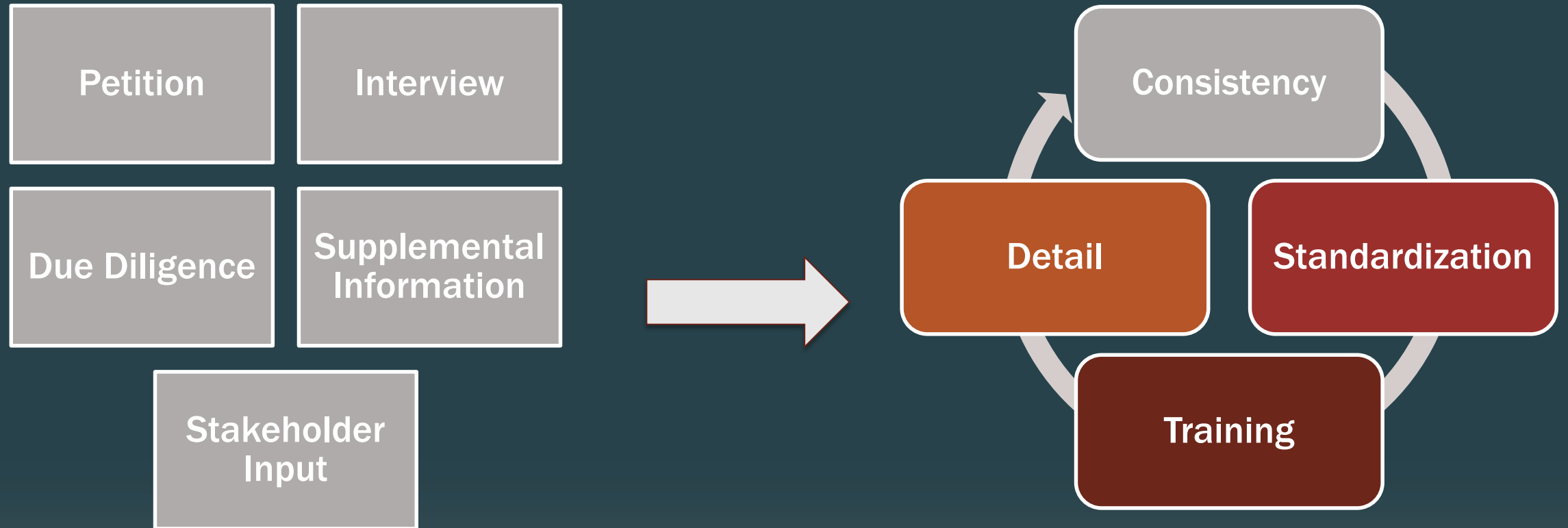


CORE ELEMENT #6: SOUND EVIDENCE-BASED RECOMMENDATIONS

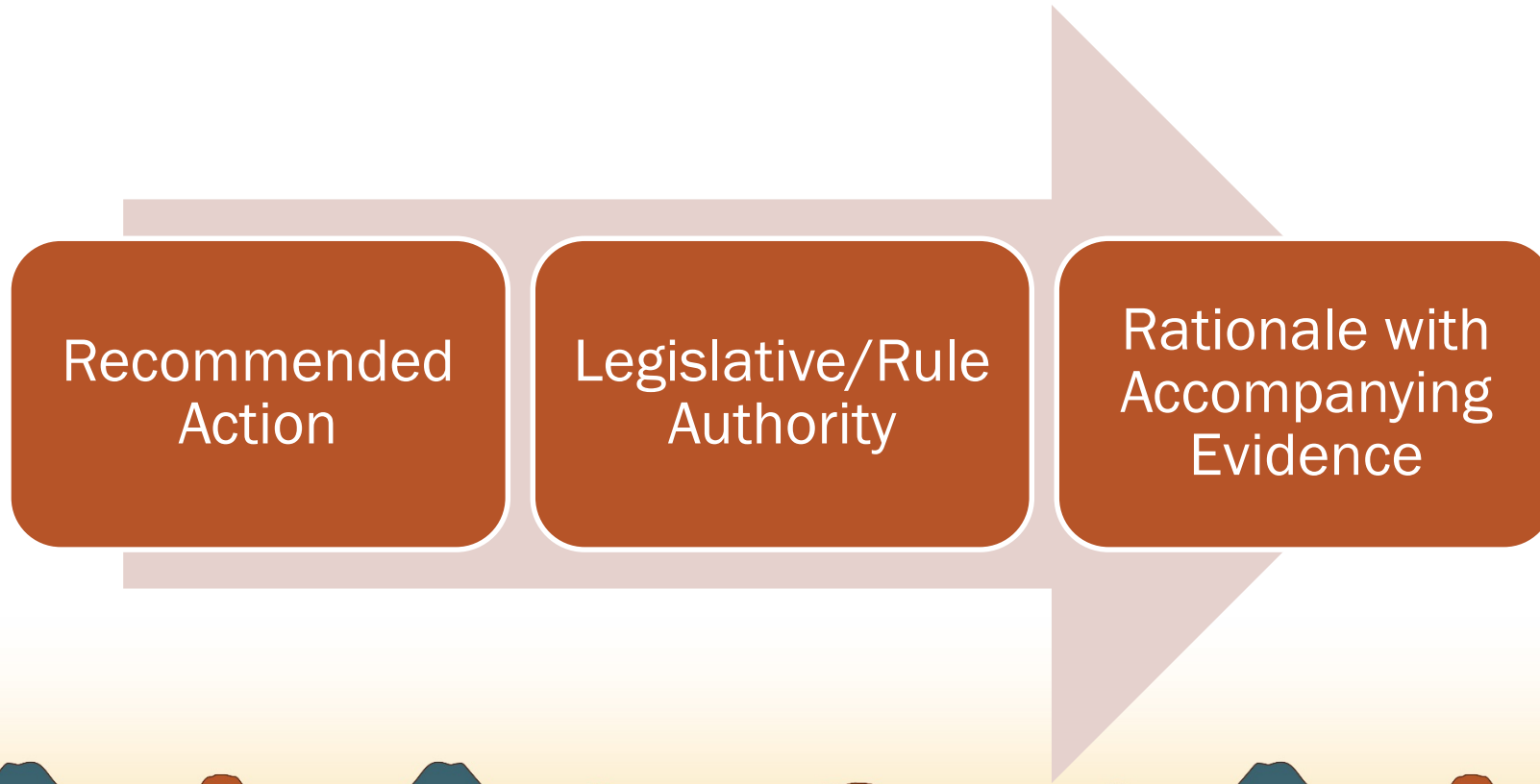
WHY ARE EVIDENCE-BASED RECOMMENDATIONS IMPORTANT?



GETTING QUALITY EVIDENCE



DRAFTING A RECOMMENDATION: A BASIC FORMULA



WORKSHOP ACTIVITY:
*IMPROVE YOUR APPLICATION
PROCESS TIMELINE*

OPPORTUNITY TO APPLY ELEMENTS TO YOUR PROCESS

Let's incorporate or further refine your use of a specific element within your own charter application process.

We'll review the timelines of three authorizers implementing the six core elements and consider how you can incorporate such practices within your application process timeline.

APPLICATION PROCESS TIMELINE TEMPLATE AND EXAMPLES

The timeline template contains FOUR key milestones within the process (called tasks):

- Commission/Board Vote
- Capacity Interviews
- Application Deadline
- Application Release

Consider which of the SIX elements you would like to improve within your process:

- Rigorous approval criteria
- Charter application
- External evaluators
- Due diligence
- Capacity interviews
- Sound evidence-based recommendations

Think about the steps which lead up to these milestones within your process.

What would you change? How would you incorporate or strengthen one of the elements discussed today? What ideas do the example timelines give you?

APPLICATION PROCESS REFLECTION

- Based on the activity, is your process timed appropriately? Do you find that you need more or less time?
- Did you identify an element that is missing from your process or in need of refinement?
- Are you able to identify specific actions that you can take in your office to address any issues identified?
 - Note – you may not be able to remedy an identified issue 100% immediately. Sometimes you'll need to phase in a solution and that's okay!
- Any last questions or comments?



KNOWLEDGE CORE

WORK YOUR CORE

Visit NACSA's Knowledge Core to access a rich array of authorizing resources, practical tools, and guidance, all designed to help authorizers advance practices, work smarter, and help bring better educational opportunities to our nation's children.



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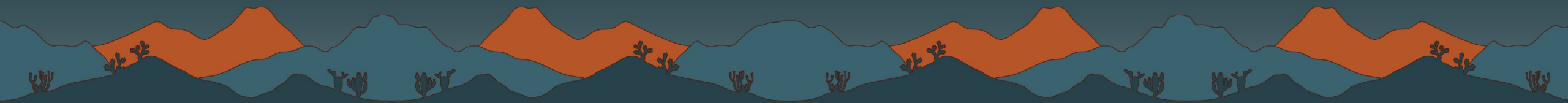
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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZERS

