

AUTHORIZER'S QUICK GUIDE TO CAPACITY INTERVIEWS 101

No matter how thorough your paper process is, nothing takes the place of looking applicants in the eye and asking detailed questions about their plans and capacities.



IDENTIFY (QUALIFIED) INTERVIEW CANDIDATES

- » Depending on applicable charter school law, some authorizers are required to interview all applicants who apply, while others have the flexibility to interview only qualified applicants.
- » The latter should invite only those applicants who have met all material requirements and could potentially be recommended for approval for a capacity interview. To avoid missing out on the next great school, maintain a sense of possibility during the invitation process, but incomplete, plagiarized, or applications completely lacking in merit do not warrant a face-to-face interview.
- » Establishing and enforcing this rule maintains high expectations and allows you to focus on groups with a greater likelihood of success.



KNOW WHAT YOU NEED TO LEARN AND PROVE

- » Use application review feedback to identify your primary lines of inquiry—and to eliminate the extraneous.
- » Proceed with a clear idea of what you still need to learn about the applicants and a plan for getting information sufficient to make key findings, such as:
 - Are the applicants' academic, organizational, and financial plans for the proposed school reasonable, feasible, and achievable?
 - Do applicant group members demonstrate the diverse and necessary capabilities to execute its plans successfully?
- » Design a variety of questions to clarify and verify information presented in the application.



SET GROUND RULES FOR PARTICIPATION

- » **Authorizers:**
 - Your interview team should include internal staff and external reviewers with sufficient expertise to question the applicants regarding all major areas of the application and critically assess the responses.
 - Your interview team should be small enough that all members can participate and work together in a coordinated and efficient manner.
- » **Applicants:**
 - Proposed board members and the proposed school leader (if identified) are critical participants.
 - Encourage applicants to include others who intend to play a central role in the school's development and operation, but all should be prepared to actively contribute during the interview.
 - For the interview to truly assess the skills and expertise of the applicant team, authorizers should discourage or bar consultants and vendors from attending.



INCORPORATE RESULTS INTO RECOMMENDATIONS

- » An interview will often reinforce impressions and conclusions about the application, but may also change your assessment dramatically by:
 - revealing significant weaknesses that were not apparent on paper; or,
 - clarifying ambiguities and filling in gaps in the application that increase your confidence in the group's likelihood of success.
- » Data collected during the interview should be reflected in written findings to provide clarity to the applicant group about its strengths and deficiencies, and inform the basis for your overall recommendation regarding each application before your governing board.



For additional guidance on maximizing the impact of capacity interviews, please refer to *Fine Tuning Your Capacity Interviews*.