



Charter Cluster Application

New or Renewal

HIGH SCHOOL NAME

HIGH SCHOOL CONTACT ADDRESS

Dr. John D. Barge
State School Superintendent

MARCH 2013



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INTRODUCTION

Charter Cluster Applications are proposals to create new or renew existing high school cluster. A high school cluster is a high school and all the middle and elementary schools which contain students who matriculated to such high school under one charter contract. The evaluation of your Application will focus on whether implementing the proposals in your Application will lead to the improved academic, organizational, and financial performance you are promising in exchange for freedom from much of Georgia's education law, rules and guidelines. It will also determine whether the proposed charter cluster would comply with all applicable laws, rules, regulations, policies and procedures (including the Charter Schools Act of 1998, as amended [O.C.G.A. §§ 20-2-2060 through 20-2-2071], State Board of Education Rule 160-4-9-.04 et. seq., and Department of Education Guidelines accompanying the Charter School Rules); whether the academic, organizational and financial plans are viable; and whether the charter cluster is in the public interest.

Filing an application for a charter cluster does not guarantee that a charter will be granted.

DEADLINE AND SUBMISSION PROCEDURES

Your Charter Cluster Application must be approved by your local Board of Education in accordance with the rules and regulations of your local board. After local submission, review and approval, applications must be received at the address below by November 1 of the year prior to the start of the July-June fiscal year in which the charter cluster contract would go into effect to guarantee consideration by the State Board in time for your proposed opening or renewal. Applications received after November 1 will still be reviewed but will not be guaranteed to be completed in time for opening or renewal the following school year.

Applications should be sent to:

Georgia Department of Education
Charter Schools Division
2053 Twin Towers East
205 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive, SE
Atlanta, Georgia 30334



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APPLICATION PACKAGE CHECKLIST

Your Charter Cluster Application Package must comply with the following submission procedures.

- An Application Package includes an original and two copies of the following items:
 - CLUSTER APPLICATION COVER SHEET** (Use the form on page 3; the form may not be altered in any way).
 - CHARTER CLUSTER APPLICATION** (Your answers to the questions posed on pages 4-9).
 - The Charter Cluster Application is limited to 75 double-spaced pages using an 11-point Times New Roman font and one-inch margins with a header showing the cluster's name and a footer showing consecutive page numbers.
 - The original must be signed in blue ink. Stamped signatures will not be accepted.
 - ASSURANCES FORM AND SIGNATURE SHEET** (Use the Assurances Form and Signature Sheet below on pages 10-12; the Form and the Sheet may not be altered in any way).
 - The original must be signed in blue ink; stamped signatures will not be accepted.
 - EXHIBITS** (See list of required Exhibits below on page 13).
 - Required Exhibits should be as limited in size as possible.
 - All Exhibits must be tabbed.
- Your Application Package must be bound by a binder clip; do not enclose your Application Package in a notebook, binder, or folder.
- Your Application Package must also include a single CD or USB drive that includes a:
 - Microsoft Word version of your Charter Cluster Application Cover Sheet
 - Microsoft Word version of your Charter Cluster Application
 - PDF Version of your signed Assurances Form
 - Microsoft Word (if available) or PDF version of your Exhibits
 - Excel version of your completed Budget Templates*

**Completed Budget Templates are not required for charter clusters, but may be used to demonstrate financial autonomy.*

- Renewals only – an Excel version of your completed Accountability Spreadsheet

Faxed or emailed copies will not be accepted. Only complete petitions that comply with these guidelines will be evaluated. Applications will not be returned; please keep a copy for your records.



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CHARTER CLUSTER APPLICATION COVER PAGES

Check one: New Petition Renewal Petition (If renewal, when was the original charter term start date? _____)

Name of Charter Cluster (High School): _____

Local school system in which charter cluster will be physically located:

Contact person: _____

Name

Title

Contact address: _____

Telephone number of contact: _____

Fax number of contact: _____

E-mail address of contact: _____



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Charter Cluster Name _____

Approved by the _____ **Board of Education on** _____

Grade Levels Served _____

Ages Served _____

Proposed Opening/Renewal Date _____

Proposed Charter Term _____ (If this is a renewal petition with a term other than 5 years requested, please give the rationale for the requested term length)

Mission Statement _____

For each year of the proposed charter term, please indicate the number of pupils the charter cluster plans to serve.

	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Yr 1														
Yr 2														
Yr 3														
Yr 4														
Yr 5														
Yr 6														
Yr 7														
Yr 8														
Yr 9														
Yr 10														



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CHARTER CLUSTER APPLICATION

The Charter Cluster Application includes 14 questions grouped into six sections.

Please note that the italicized bullet points after each question are included to clarify the question being asked and to provide guidance regarding what we will be looking for in your answers.

THE CASE

1. Why do you want a charter?
 - *What is your motivation for applying to be a charter cluster?*
 - *What will you be able to do with a charter that you can't do without a charter?*
 - *Describe any innovations that will materially distinguish the charter cluster from the cluster's pre-conversion model and that require the flexibility offered through the charter model.*
 - *Describe how parents, community members, and other interested parties were involved in developing the petition and will be involved with the cluster.*

ACADEMIC OBJECTIVES, PLANS, AND WAIVERS

2. Complete the Accountability Template form for a charter cluster (located on website). Important notes:

Student performance objectives should:

 - *Indicate the expected rate of student performance growth in each year of the proposed charter term.*
 - *Exceed the rate of growth mandated by the State.*
 - *Demonstrate compliance with Georgia's ESEA waiver and State Performance Targets (SPTs) and their successors.*
 - *You should include all or some of the components of the current draft of the Georgia Department of Education's College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI).*
 - *You are urged to include cohort measures that show the progress over time of a single cohort of students.*
 - *You are also urged to include national norm-referenced test results among your performance measures.*
 - *Be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-based (SMART).*



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3. How will the charter cluster governing board, management, instructional leadership, faculty and staff know that students are on track to meet these academic goals?
 - *What assessments will the cluster administer to obtain performance data for each student?*
 - *Describe how the cluster will obtain baseline achievement data.*
 - *Describe how the cluster will benchmark student growth.*
 - *Explain how the charter cluster will work with the local school system to participate in all state-mandated assessments.*
4. What specific actions will the cluster's management, instructional leadership, faculty and staff take to ensure student performance objectives are met during the proposed charter term?
 - *Describe the focus of the curriculum.*
 - *Describe the educational innovations that will be implemented.*
 - *Provide a clear explanation of how the innovations will increase student achievement.*
 - *Describe the anticipated teacher-to-student ratios and the rationale for maintaining these ratios.*
 - *Describe how the cluster will determine that a student has satisfied the requirements for high school graduation, including the credits or units to be earned and the completion credentials to be awarded.*
5. What are the cluster's plans for educating special populations?
 - *Describe how the charter cluster will meet the needs of students identified as gifted and talented.*
 - *Describe how the charter cluster will provide state and federally mandated services for students with disabilities.*
 - *Describe how the charter cluster will provide state and federally mandated services for English Language Learners (ESOL).*
6. Which of the specific actions in the academic plan require a waiver of state law, rule, or guidelines?
 - *Although you will be granted a broad flexibility waiver if you are granted a charter, please provide examples of a significant component of your academic*



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plan for which you need a waiver – and the waivers that are required to allow the implementation of that component.

ORGANIZATIONAL OBJECTIVES, PLANS, AND WAIVERS

7. State the cluster's Organizational Goals and Measures.
 - *Cluster organizational performance objectives should reflect where the cluster envisions itself organizationally at the end of the charter term.*
 - *Objectives should include areas such as: governing board training, student and teacher retention, and student, parent and teacher satisfaction.*
8. What specific actions will the cluster take to achieve its organizational performance objectives?
 - *Describe the organizational innovations that will be implemented during the proposed charter term.*
 - *Provide a clear explanation of how the innovations will increase organizational effectiveness.*
 - *Describe why the innovations are appropriate for this unique cluster.*
9. Which of the specific actions in the organizational plan require a waiver of state law, rule, or guidelines?
 - *Although you will be granted a broad flexibility waiver if you are granted a charter, please provide examples of a significant component of your organizational plan for which you need a waiver – and the waivers that are required to allow the implementation of that component.*

GOVERNANCE

A key characteristic of a charter cluster is that an autonomous governing board makes decisions on behalf of the cluster. It is imperative that all governing boards demonstrate substantial autonomy, decision-making authority and capacity.

10. Describe how an autonomous governing board will make decisions for the cluster.
 - *Describe the composition of the governing board. How and when will board members be selected? What are the terms of members?*
 - *Describe how and why governing board members may be removed.*
 - *Describe the autonomy that the charter cluster shall have from the local school system, which may include, among other things, a description of how financial*



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resources will be managed; how human resources will be managed and personnel evaluated; cluster governance and the extent to which parents, community members, and other stakeholders will participate in the governance of the cluster.

- *Describe the governing board's function, duties and role in the areas of budget, resource allocation, personnel decisions (primarily principal selection, evaluation, and termination), establishing and monitoring the achievement of cluster and school improvement goals, curriculum and cluster operations.*
 - *Presenting this responsibility description in the form of a chart or a grid would be helpful to ensure you've captured everything.*
- *Provide a plan and timeline for ongoing governance training to be provided in order to build the capacity needed to make decisions in the above-mentioned areas.*
- *Disclose any potential conflicts of interest and describe how the governing board will ensure that current and future board members avoid conflicts of interest.*

FINANCIAL OBJECTIVES, PLANS, AND WAIVERS

11. State the cluster's Financial Goals and Measures

- *Cluster financial performance objectives should reflect where the cluster envisions itself financially at the end of the charter term.*

12. What specific actions will the cluster take to achieve the financial performance objectives?

- *Describe the financial innovations that will be implemented during the proposed charter term.*
- *Provide a clear explanation of how the innovations will increase financial effectiveness.*
- *Describe why the innovations are appropriate for this unique cluster.*

13. Which of the specific actions in the financial plan require a waiver of state law, rule, or guidelines?

- *Although you will be granted a broad flexibility waiver if you are granted a charter, please provide examples of a significant component of your financial plan for which you need a waiver – and the waivers that are required to allow the implementation of that component.*



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STUDENT ADMISSIONS

14. How will students be admitted to the charter cluster?

- *What is the cluster's attendance zone?*
- *Please check any of the following enrollment priorities pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2066(a)(1)(B) that the charter cluster will utilize. Please note, selecting a priority means that each school within the cluster would utilize that priority. If the cluster will not utilize any enrollment priorities, please leave this section blank.*
 - A sibling of a student enrolled in the charter school or in any school in the high school cluster
 - Students whose parent or guardian is a member of the governing board of the charter cluster or is a full-time teacher, professional, or other employee at the charter cluster
 - Students who were enrolled in the local school cluster prior to its becoming a charter cluster
 - Students who reside in the charter attendance zone specified in the charter
- *Describe the rules and procedures that will govern admission. Please note that to avoid confusion when communicating about admission processes, the Department recommends that clusters use the term "admission" to describe pre-lottery processes and forms, the term "enrollment" when describing "enrollment priorities", and the term "registration" to describe post-lottery processes and forms after the student has been guaranteed a seat in the cluster.*
- *How will the charter cluster reach students representative of the racial and socioeconomic diversity in the school system?*
- *How does the cluster plan to recruit students and maintain/increase enrollment?*



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ASSURANCES FORM AND SIGNATURE SHEET

The law requires your cluster provide assurances that it will do certain things and comply with certain laws. This Assurance Form enumerates all of these requirements and, when you submit this signed Signature Sheet with this Assurance Form as part of your Charter Cluster Application Package, you are providing the legal assurance that your charter cluster understands and will do these things. This form must be signed by a duly authorized representative of the cluster.

As the authorized representative of the applicant, I hereby certify that the information submitted in this application for a charter for *(name of cluster)* located in _____ County is true to the best of my knowledge and belief; I also certify that if awarded a charter the cluster:

1. Shall be nonsectarian in its programs, admissions policies, employment practices, and all other operations;
2. Shall be subject to the control and management of the local board of the local school system in which the charter cluster is located, as provided in the charter and in a manner consistent with the Constitution;
3. Shall not discriminate against any student or employee on the basis of race, color, ethnic background, national origin, gender, disability or age;
4. Shall be subject to all federal, state, and local rules, regulations, court orders, and statutes relating to civil rights; insurance; the protection of the physical health and safety of cluster students, employees, and visitors; conflicting interest transactions; and the prevention of unlawful conduct;
5. Shall be subject to the provisions of O.C.G.A § 20-2-1050 requiring a brief period of quiet reflection;
6. Shall ensure that the charter cluster and its governing board are subject to the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1 et seq. and O.C.G.A. § 50-18-70 et seq.;
7. Shall ensure that the charter cluster's governance board members may only receive compensation for their reasonable and actual expenses incurred in connection with performance of their duties;
8. Shall ensure that the charter cluster's governing board adopts and abides by a conflicts of interest policy;
9. Shall ensure that all teachers will be certified or highly qualified in compliance with No Child Left Behind;
10. Shall comply with the accountability provisions of O.C.G.A. § 20-14-30 through § 20-14-41 and federal accountability requirements, and participate in statewide assessments;



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11. Shall adhere to all provisions of federal law relating to students with disabilities, including the IDEA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1974, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as applicable;
12. Shall provide state and federally mandated services for English Language Learners, as applicable;
13. Shall provide for supplemental educational services as required by federal law and pursuant to SBOE Rule 160-4-5-.03, and for remediation in required cases pursuant to SBOE Rule 160-4-5-.01;
14. Shall notify the state of any intent to contract with a for-profit entity for education management services;
15. Shall be subject to the requirement that it shall not charge tuition or fees to its students except as may be authorized by local boards by O.C.G.A. § 20-2-133;
16. Shall comply with federal due process procedures regarding student discipline and dismissal;
17. Shall be subject to all laws relating to unlawful conduct in or near a public school;
18. Shall have a written grievance procedure to resolve student, parent, and teacher complaints;
19. Shall have a written procedure for resolving conflicts between the charter cluster and the local board of education;
20. Shall comply with the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-211.1 relating to fingerprinting and criminal background checks;
21. Shall remit payments to TRS on behalf of employees and shall employ teachers in accordance with TRS;
22. Shall ensure that if transportation is provided for its students, the cluster shall comply with all applicable state and federal laws;
23. Shall ensure that if the charter cluster participates in federal school meals programs, then it shall comply with all applicable state and federal laws;
24. Shall prepare a safety plan in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-1185 and submit and obtain approval from the Georgia Emergency Management Agency;
25. Shall comply with the state facility requirements regarding site codes, facility codes, the submission of architectural plans for any new facility that the cluster may build or occupy during the charter term and all other facility requirements as established by the Department;
26. Shall be subject to all reporting requirements of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-160, subsection (e) of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-161, O.C.G.A. § 20-2-320, and O.C.G.A. § 20-2-740;



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- 27. Shall be subject to an annual financial audit conducted by the state auditor or, if specified in the charter, by an independent certified public accountant licensed in this state;
- 28. Shall designate a Chief Financial Officer that meets all requirements as established by the Charter Schools Rule and Guidelines;
- 29. Shall secure adequate insurance coverage prior to opening and shall maintain such coverage throughout the charter term in accordance with the laws of the State of Georgia;
- 30. Shall acknowledge that all criteria used to calculate QBE funding may not be waived; and
- 31. Shall follow any and all other federal, state, and local laws and regulations that pertain to the applicant or the operation of the charter cluster.

This Charter Cluster Application, Assurance Form, and attached Exhibits were approved by the Board of Education on the _____ day of _____, 201_.

Authorized Representative, Charter Cluster

Date

Chair, Local Board of Education

Date

If a Charter is granted, Petitioners assure that the proposed charter cluster's programs, services, and activities will operate in accordance with the terms of the Charter and all applicable federal, state, and local laws, rules, and regulations.

Authorized Representative, Charter Cluster

Date

Chair, Local Board of Education

Date



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This petition has approved by a majority of the school councils in the high school cluster.

Date of Vote _____

Total Number of School Councils in Cluster _____

Number Approving _____ Percent Approving _____

Number Disapproving _____ Percent Disapproving _____

Authorized Representative, Charter Cluster Date

This petition has been agreed to, by secret ballot, by at least 60% of the combined vote of the faculty and instructional staff members of the high school cluster and the parents or guardians of the students who reside in the attendance zone of the high school cluster who were present at a meeting called for the purpose of deciding whether to submit the petition. Two weeks' advance notice of the meeting was published during which time a complete petition draft was available for review.

Date of Meeting _____

Total Number of Parents Attending Meeting _____

Total Number of Faculty/Instructional Staff Attending Meeting _____

Number Approving _____ Percent Approving _____

Number Disapproving _____ Percent Disapproving _____

Authorized Representative, Charter Cluster Date



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EXHIBITS

The following Exhibits are required to complete your Charter School Application Package. Please tab the Exhibits to match the item numbers below. Exhibits should be as limited in size as possible.

1. A list of all schools to be included in the charter cluster. Please indicate what grades each school serves, the enrollment of each school and whether the school is currently or has been in Needs Improvement status.
2. Attach a copy of any admissions (pre-lottery) application the charter cluster proposes to use.
3. Attach the charter cluster's proposed annual calendar.
4. Attach a copy of any intended contracts for the provision of education management services. Such contracts shall describe the specific services for which the contracting organization is responsible. Such contracts should clearly delineate the respective roles and responsibilities of the management organization and the governing board in the management and operation of the charter school.
5. Attach a copy of any agreements with the local district or the local Board of Education.