External Reviewer FAQs

What is the purpose of external reviewers? To support charter schools in adopting the recommended practice of incorporating experts in the review of charter applications who are external to the authorizing office. According to *Florida Principles and Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing*, "authorizers should evaluate each application through a review of the written proposal, a substantive interview with the applicant group, and when possible, engage highly competent teams of internal and external reviewers with relevant educational, organizational, financial, and legal expertise, as well as a thorough understanding of the essential principles of charter school autonomy and accountability (p. 10)." NACSA's *The Essential Practices: Why They Matter*, states the reason for partnering with an external reviewer is "to minimize the likelihood of bias and limit any perception of undue influence—the evaluation team should also have at least some members who are independent of the authorizer." In addition, it points out that "well-qualified independent reviewers bolster the integrity of the application process and help ensure it remains focused on the quality of each application, independent of political connections or factors unrelated to the merit of the proposals."

How does the grant support this project? Goal 1, Objective 1.3 requires FACSA to show a 5% increase in the number of districts in our states that comply with 10 or more of NACSA's 12 essential practices. Using an external reviewer is considered an essential practice. It is our intention is reach out to each of those 11 districts that responded to an earlier survey indicating they do not engage in this practice and invite them to take advantage of partnering with our expert reviewers for additional support as they begin the application review process.

Are external reviewers compensated? Yes. External reviewers will be compensated directly by the Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI), at a flat rate of $1000 for a single charter application review. The compensation for the stipend does not include travel expenses paid for by the project. The district may compensate for travel separately, and at FACSA's discretion, FACSA may use funding from the project. If overnight stay is required, the reviewer must submit a travel request to FACSA ED at least 31 days prior to travel. All external reviewers must complete the necessary steps to set oneself up as a vendor for payment in the State of Colorado accounting system. CSI cannot begin any billable work until your vendor record has been cleared by the State Controller's Office. (Vendor Set-Up Instructions will be sent when FACSA receives your intent to apply.)

What is the external reviewer's time commitment and process timeline? Approximately 10-15 hours should be estimated to participate.

- Early January – Reviewer and FACSA ED to convene a call with requesting districts and paired reviewer (1 hour)
- Mid January – Reviewer should plan to participate in any district training or calls in preparation for the review process (2 hours)*
- February – May – Review Process (5-10 hours)*
- May – Debrief call with Reviewer, ED, and District (1 hour)

*In the event the reviewer must travel and grant travel funds are being requested, travel requests must be submitted to ED for approval not later than 31 days prior to an overnight stay and 15 days prior to day travel.

What is the application process and documentation required? Each expert will provide a resume and brief bio, including areas of expertise to the FACSA ED. The FACSA ED will make a recommendation for reviewers to participating districts, based on district needs and reviewer's area of expertise. The district will make the final decision regarding whom they would like to work with. Reviewers and districts will be matched in December.

Disclosure of any conflict of interest and recusal from an evaluation: External reviewer must follow the district's non-conflict policy and may be asked to sign a non-conflict of interest statement.

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