

**SELECTING YOUR  
GOVERNANCE BOARD, LEADER AND  
MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION AND/OR  
CONSULTANT**

**SCSC Petitioner Boot Camp  
December 15, 2016**

Elisa A. Falco  
Vice President of School Services

Waynica Staples  
Director of Education & Training



*Your advocate for better schools.*

# Governance Board Development

2



**GOSA**  
Georgia Charter Schools Association

*Your advocate for better schools.*

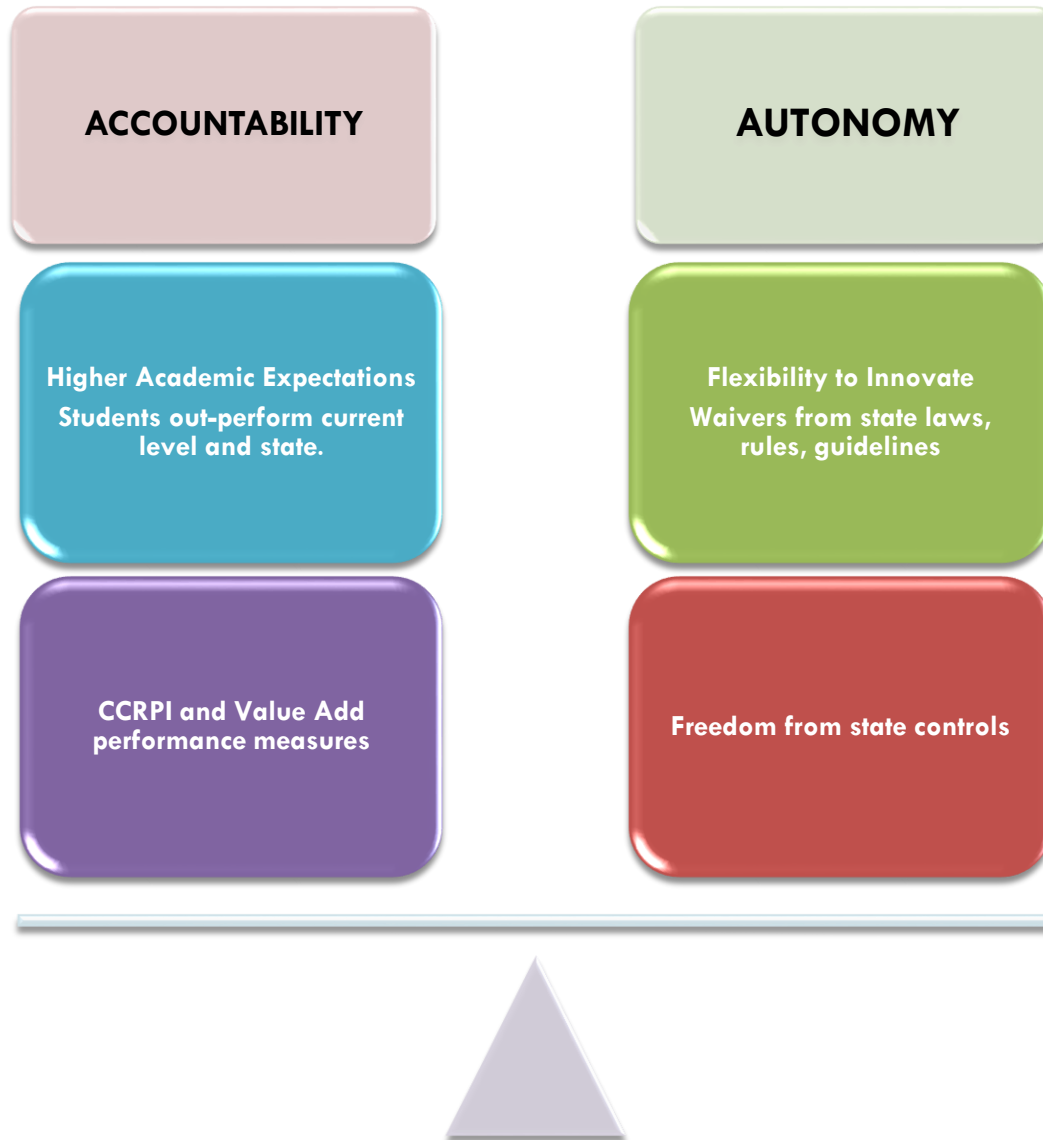
*“Much of the ultimate success of a charter school hinges on the board’s ability to govern effectively. In fact, it can be argued that no other single factor is more important to the health and sustainability of a charter school than its board.”*

Marci Cornell-Feist



*Your advocate for better schools.*

# The Flexibility Bargain



# Core Governance Responsibilities



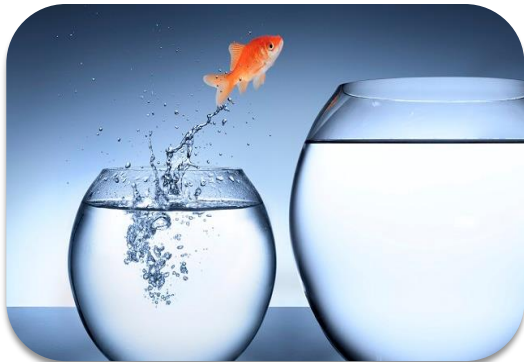
Keeper of the Vision  
& Strategy



Board Self-  
Management



Remove Obstacles



Leadership Oversight  
& Development



Provide Resources



Risk Management

# Core Governance Responsibilities

## Strategic Plan and Policy-Making

- Adopt a three to five-year strategic plan
- Adopt policies that ensure the charter is implemented with fidelity and promotes student achievement

## Budget

- Adopt a budget to fund the implement the charter
- On-going fiscal health monitoring and resource development

## CEO/Principal

- Hire a leader to implement the strategic plan within budget
- Ratify hiring decisions
- Adopt and keep updated a succession plan

## Accountability

- Monitor through committees to ensure charter promises and compliance requirements are met
- Hold the leader accountable for implementing the strategic plan within budget
- Conduct an annual self-evaluation
- Meet statutory training requirements
- Education Service Provider / vendor oversight

# Selecting a High Capacity Governance Board



*Your advocate for better schools.*

# Building the Capacity to Govern (1)

## Academic Achievement

- Experienced Educators for the grade span(s) you are serving
- School Administration
- SPED
- Higher Education/TCSG
- Local Industry/Content Experts
- Curriculum Development

## Fiscal Health

- Accounting
- Resource development
- Grant proposal Writing
- Recruiting/Marketing

## Compliance & Policy Development

- Legal & regulatory
- Governance
- School operations and compliance
- Insurance & risk management
- Negotiating skills
- Political savvy



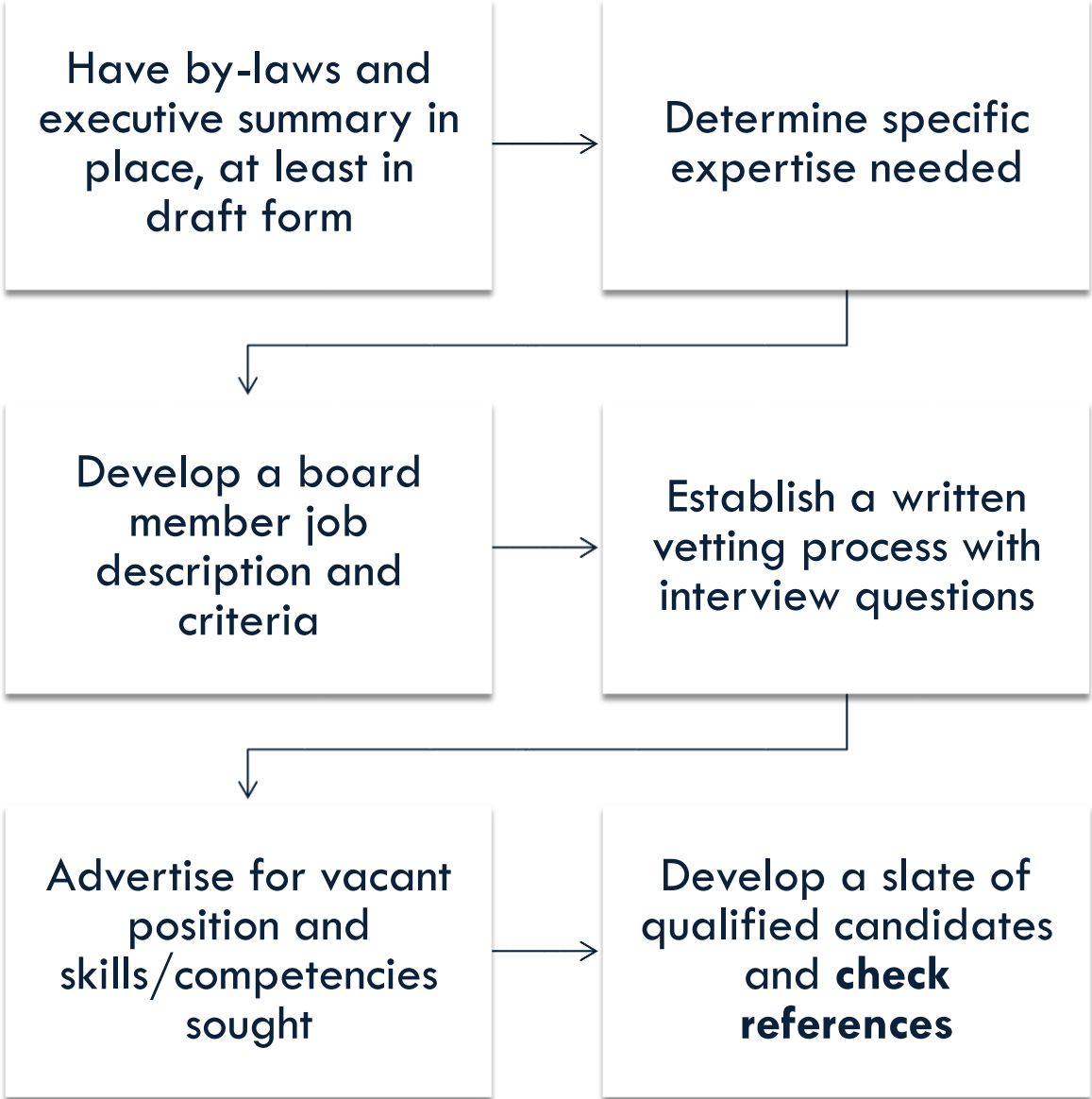
# Building the Capacity to Govern (2)

9

## Additional Considerations:

- Facilities experience
- **Time**
- Parents, set up mechanisms to protect against COI
- Ex-officio members
- No related parties
- Independent of future vendors to the school
- **Future employees, caution!**
- Board members cannot be compensated for their service

# Governance Board Selection Process



# Suggestions for Finding Qualified Candidates..

**Join your local  
Chamber of  
Commerce**

**Technical Colleges &  
Universities**

**Accounting Firms**

**Law Firms**

**Civic/Community  
Organizations**

**Educator Networks  
and Professional  
Organizations**

**Insurance Companies**

**Rotary Club**

# Mission-Aligned Board Composition

12

6-12<sup>th</sup> Grade

Expeditionary Learning Model

- **Legal**
- **Accounting**
- **What other skills/competencies are needed for this governance board**

# Red Flags

- Board members may have “agendas”
- Lack of time
- Divisive behavior
- Work is not evenly distributed
- Lack of balance in decision making
- More passion than capacity/substance
- Board members close friends of founder

# Leadership Selection

“What chance gathers she easily scatters. A great person attracts great people and knows how to hold them together.” -

*Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe*



*Your advocate for better schools.*

# Leadership Selection



# Considerations for Hiring, Monitoring, Evaluating and Supporting a Highly Effective Charter School Leader





# More things to consider....

Instructional vs.  
Business Leader

Experience

Proven Results

Ability to work  
with various  
stakeholders

Pioneering  
Spirit

Shared  
leadership

Instructional  
coaching

Cast a wide  
net

Contingency  
plans

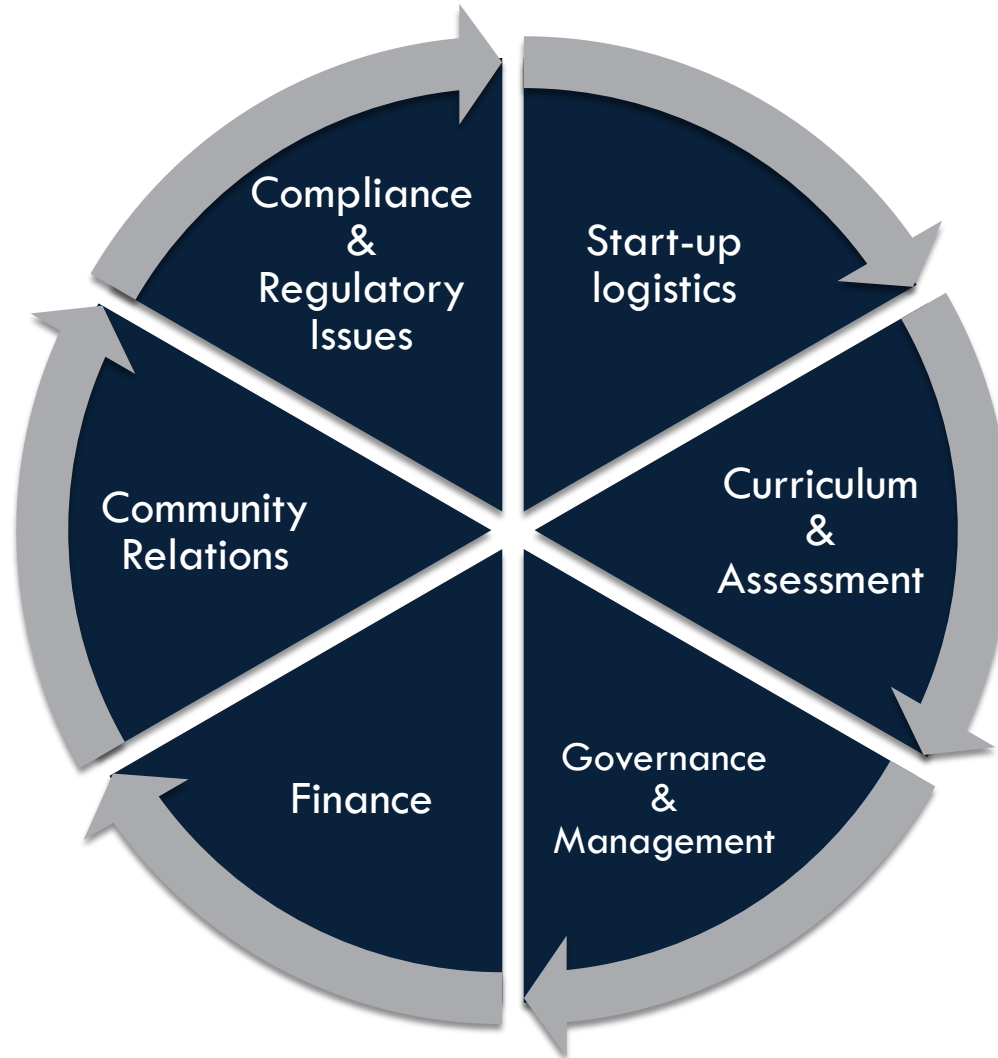
Understand  
strengths and  
weaknesses

Mission-aligned  
leadership  
development

Disposition

# Core Competencies of Effective Charter School Leaders

18



*Your advocate for better schools.*

# Red Flags

- Lead founder insists he/she is the only option for leadership position
- Prospective leader cannot demonstrate results or capacity to develop teachers
- Prospective leader's core motivation is to work in a smaller school
- Prospective leader is passionate about education, but lacks results
- Prospective leader does not understand chartering
- **Prospective leader has not worked in a “start-up” environment**

# Common Mistakes

20

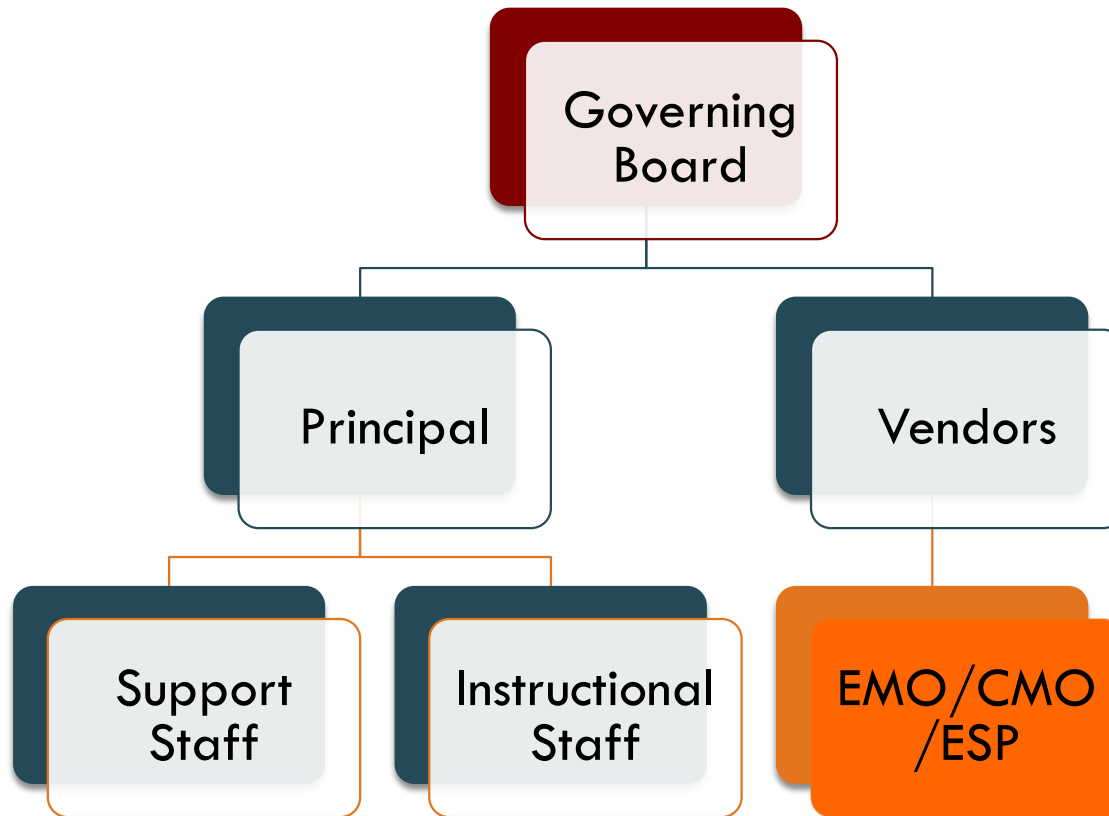
- ❑ Lack of training on effective interview practices
- ❑ Lack of HR expertise on board
- ❑ Board is sold on credentials / resume and doesn't fully vet / check references for candidate
- ❑ Board is unaware of high turn over, shortage of effective leaders
- ❑ Enough thought is not given to the type of leader needed to execute the program



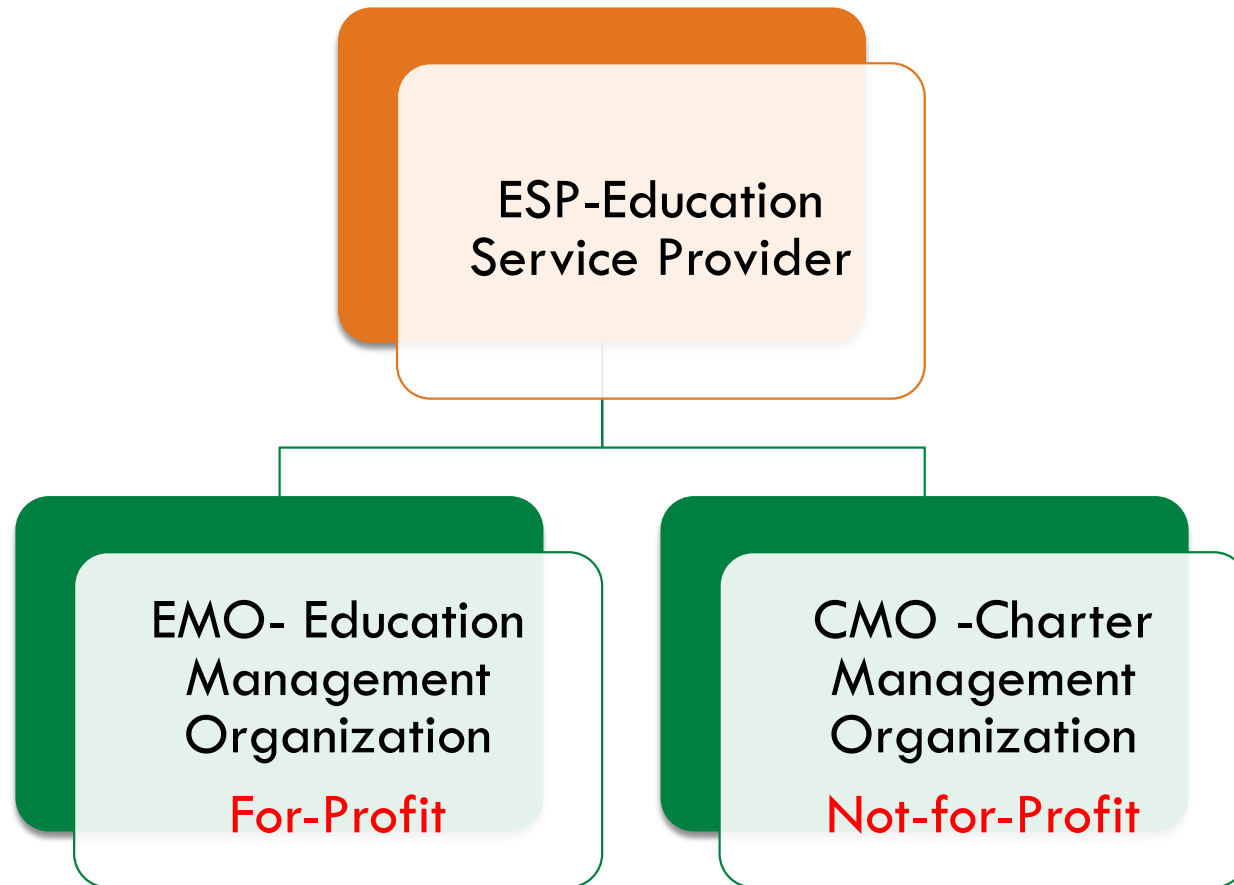
*Your advocate for better schools.*

# Selecting a Management Organization

21

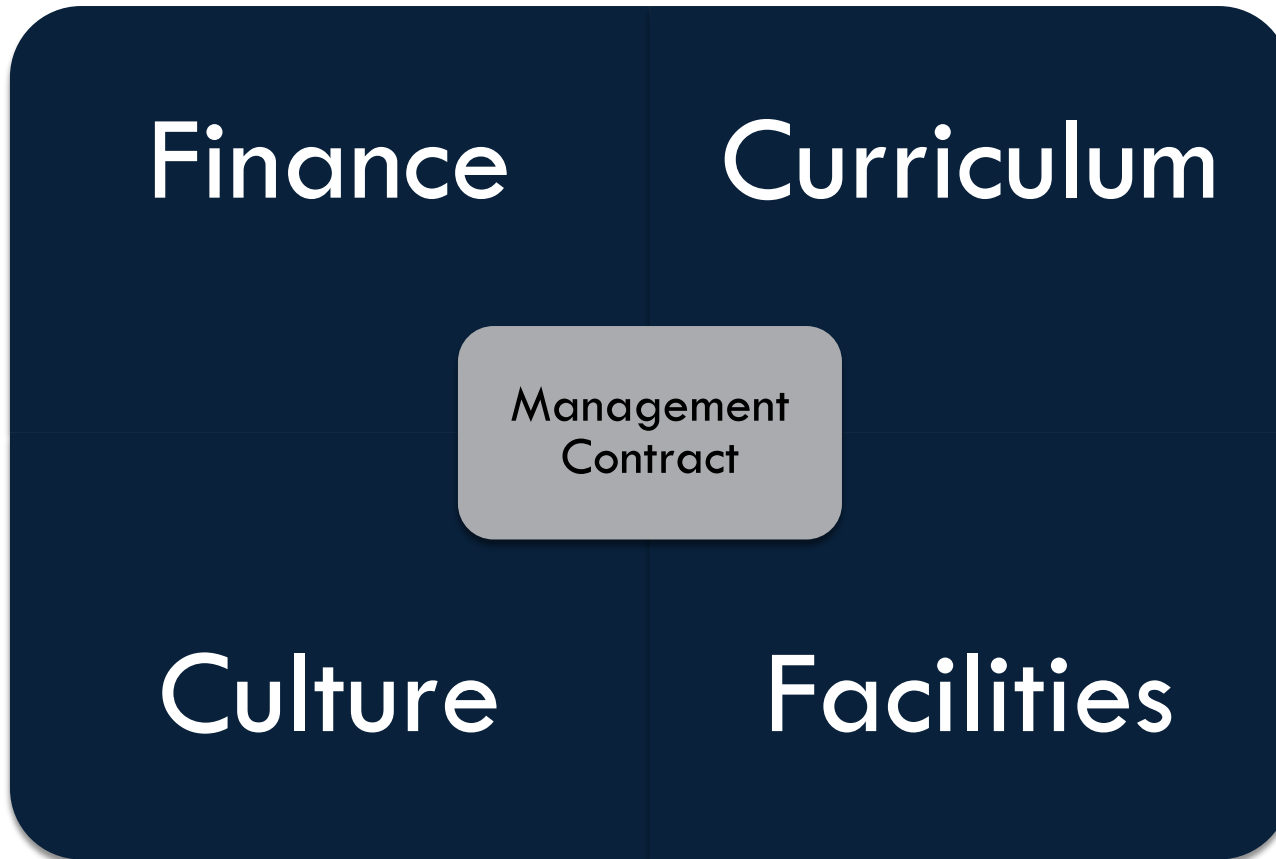


# Glossary of Terms



# Management Organizations Provide...

23



*Your advocate for better schools.*

## Finance

- CFO
- Financial Management Personnel
- Understand Management Organization Fiscal Health
- Financial Management System
- Beware of “sweeps” contracts
- Grant proposal writing and management
- Fee should not exceed 15% of total operating budget

## Key Questions

- Have any schools in the EMO/ESP/CMO network closed due to financial reasons? What role did the ESP play in the closure?
- Are the business practices aligned with your governance board/mission/philosophy?
- How will start-up financing be paid back? How many charters in the network are sustainable?
- What are the long-range strategic goals of the management company?
- What is the company’s track record for securing grant funds for network charter schools?
- How many charters in the network have cash reserves?
- Does the ESP assert intellectual property rights over curriculum and materials tied to the contract?



## Curriculum

- If the management organization requires you use their curricular model, is it aligned with Georgia Standards? How do you know?
- Management organization academic achievement results – *look for trends...beyond the flagship school*
- Benchmark tool – is it a good predictor for GA mandated exams? What proof do you have?
- Student information. Is the management organization responsible for purchasing the student information system?

## Key Questions

- Does the management company have a good track record with the demographic you will be serving?
- **Is the SIS compatible with Georgia's SLDS (Statewide Longitudinal Data System)? If not, who is responsible for paying to make the system compatible?**
- Is the management company's approach to teaching and learning philosophically aligned?

## Culture

- School-wide discipline
- Mission/philosophical alignment
- Standard operating procedures

## Key Questions

- Is there a discipline model required? Does it ensure due process for all students?
- Is the charter school required to use services that establish school culture? How successful are such services at other charter schools?
- Does the management company provide a standard operating procedures manual? How can the school customize these procedures to ensure mission alignment?

## Facilities

- Facility financing
- Market rates/value
- Debt management
- Maintenance and repairs
- Maintenance and facilities personnel

## Key Questions

- Does the management company provide assistance with facilities financing? What about furnishings, fixtures and equipment?
- Does the company charge fair market rates? How do you know?
- How many charters in the network own, or are under contract to purchase their facilities?
- Does the management company derive its sustainability from facilities services?

## More to consider...

- Employees must be employees of the board
- Check **references and results**, (not just the flagship school)
- If the company is not currently operating in Georgia, why not?
- Review the history of EMO/CMOs in Georgia
- Have an attorney review your contract and assist with negotiations
- Board support and development, not best practice to receive from ESP
- Policy development, how do you ensure alignment with GA
- You will have to justify your selection
- Ask to see the annual report & strategic plan
- What happens “contractually” if there is a falling out?
- What is the process for amending the contract?

## More to consider...

- Does the ESP handle human resources on behalf of the board?
- What are the potential problems with this particular service?

# Red Flags

- Board should not delegate authority to ESP.
- ESP should not develop policies for the board/school. Why?
- Beware of balloon payments/fee structures.
- Beware of ESP managing all recruiting / hiring.
- ESP should not set calendar and schedule.
- No ESP “appointee” on board
- No “evergreen” contracts
- Be sure that termination clause(s) are balanced for both parties
- ESP contract should not conflict with local, state, federal laws or SCSC policies

# TRANSITION FROM A FOUNDING TO A GOVERNING BOARD

31

## What to consider...

- Who is willing to stay on the board after approval, during year 1, 2, etc..
- Do your by-laws stagger term limits?
- Consider skill sets needed for pre-opening, opening and sustaining phases of the school.
- Strategic needs for board composition change over time
- Include transition plan as an addendum to your petition

# Capacity Interview Tips...

32



*Your advocate for better schools.*



# Purpose of the Interview?

- Capacity interviews, in addition to the charter petition, help authorizers identify strong applicant teams with the potential for success.
- Gives applicants an opportunity to demonstrate their familiarity with the petition.
- Provide clarification and/or elaboration around components of the petition that are unclear or not fully developed.



*Your advocate for better schools.*

# Key Questions

- Can this applicant team implement the proposed program successfully?
- Is the school model comprehensive and cohesive?
- What is the Founding Board's motivation for starting a charter school?
- Does the applicant team understand accountability?
- Do they understand how to oversee administration/school operations from a policy position?



*Your advocate for better schools.*

# The Interview Panel

- Includes SCSC Staff, Commissioners, and External Reviewers
- Approximately 7-10 people
- External Reviewers may have expertise in finance, charter schools, governance, curriculum/instruction, operations, etc.



*Your advocate for better schools.*

# The Interview Format

- One hour in length
  - ▣ Start and end on time
- Interview Panel
- Open to the public
- Brief Introductions
- Q & A
- Next Steps
- Applicant group questions



*Your advocate for better schools.*

# Applicant Team Responsibilities

- Be punctual (At least 20 minutes early)
- Dress professionally
- All members must attend (Core group)
- Prepare
  - Question/Answer Dynamic
  - Mock Interview (All members should attend)
  - Review Sample Questions



*Your advocate for better schools.*

# Common Mistakes

- ❑ The response does not answer the question that was asked
- ❑ One person answers all of the questions
- ❑ Defensive (“You can find it in the petition”)
- ❑ Can’t clearly explain how all the program elements fit together
- ❑ Budget
- ❑ Lack of preparation
- ❑ Disagreement among respondents



*Your advocate for better schools.*

# Common Mistakes continued

- Responses do not reflect what's written in the petition
- Lack of Board capacity
- Low energy



*Your advocate for better schools.*

# Let's practice

- Work with your team and answer the following questions:
  - What are the roles of school administration and the governing board?
  - What will you do if enrollment is 30% below expectations?
  - How will teachers be recruited and supported in a complex model? (IB, STEM, PBL, Chinese and Spanish Language Immersion)
  - How was your educational service provider selected?



# Questions?

41

## Elisa A. Falco

- Vice President of School Services
- [efalco@gacharters.org](mailto:efalco@gacharters.org)
- (404) 550-9401

## Waynica Staples

- Director of Education & Training
- [wstaples@gacharters.org](mailto:wstaples@gacharters.org)



*Your advocate for better schools.*