

Petition Review Process

State Charter Schools
Commission of Georgia



Morgan Felts
Associate General
Counsel
and Petitions
Manager

Overview

- What to Expect
- Basics and Terminology
- Attendance Zone
- Local Board of Education Submission Requirements
- Submission to the SCSC
- Petition Contents
- SCSC Review
 - Legal Compliance Review
 - Substantive Review
 - Interview
 - Post-Interview Actions
 - SCSC Staff Recommendation
 - SCSC Vote

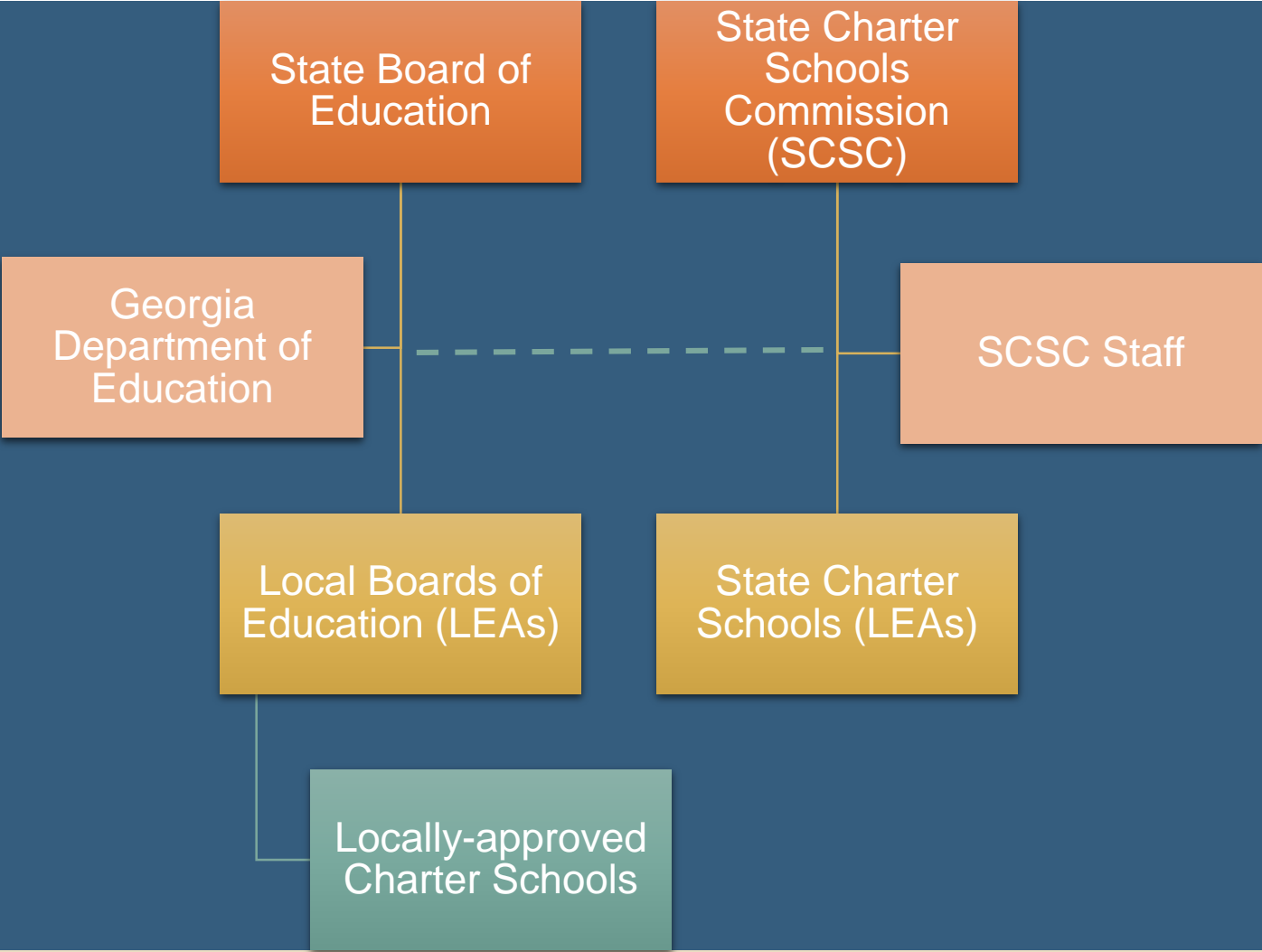
SCSC Mission

The mission of the State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia is to improve public education throughout the state by approving high quality charter schools that provide students with better educational opportunities than they would otherwise receive in traditional schools.

SCSC Petitioners Are Expected To...

- Prepare for a time-consuming and stringent process;
- Demonstrate the capacity to build a start-up multi-million dollar business from scratch and have it ready to open in 6-9 months;
- Describe how the proposed school will provide a better educational option than what's already available in the selected attendance zone;
- Use the petition application and interview opportunity wisely to present a compelling case for the school's approval; and
- Prepare themselves for the real possibility of disappointment.

Basics and Terminology



Attendance Zone

Statewide Attendance Zone

OR

Defined Attendance Zone

The petition application and submission requirements depend on the school's identified attendance zone.

Attendance Zone

Understanding the difference between the two types of submission:

Submission for Informational Purposes

VS

Submission for Action

Schools with Statewide Attendance Zones

- A charter school that has a statewide attendance zone that is petitioning for authorization by the SCSC must submit its petition to the local board of education in which the school is proposed to be located.
- The submission of the charter petition to the local board of education is for informational purposes only.
- If the charter school will have a statewide attendance zone and only provides virtual instruction, the school does not need to submit a charter petition to a local board of education.

Schools with Defined Attendance Zones

- A charter school that has a defined attendance zone must submit its **petition** to the local board of education in which the school is proposed to be located (for action) and to each local school system from which the proposed school plans to enroll students (for informational purposes).
- The charter school must submit the petition to the local boards of education in accordance with the deadlines established by those local boards of education.

Schools with Defined Attendance Zones

- It is incumbent on the charter petitioner to identify the appropriate deadlines.
- Local Boards of Education (LBOE) may have deadlines to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) as well as a petition.
- While LBOE deadlines vary, many LOIs must be submitted by February 1st.
- For schools authorized by the State Board of Education (i.e. locally-approved schools) the school must submit an LOI to the Georgia Department of Education and LBOE by February 1st.
- Bottom Line – Though the SCSC does not require an LOI, you must submit an LOI to the LBOE if required by the LBOE and you must submit an LOI to both the LBOE and GaDOE to be locally-approved.

Schools with Defined Attendance Zones

- When you submit a petition to the local board of education, you must do so in the application package (form) required by the local board of education.
- Often (but not always) the application package will be the same as the Georgia Department of Education.
 - <http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Charter-Schools/Pages/Charter-Petition-Application.aspx>
- The SCSC cannot act on a charter school petition until the local board of education in which the school is proposed to be located denies the petition or fails to approve or deny the petition within the time allotted by O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2064.

Attendance Zone

Statewide Attendance Zone - Bricks & Mortar

- Submit to the LBOE where the school will be **located**
- Informational Only
- No LBOE action required

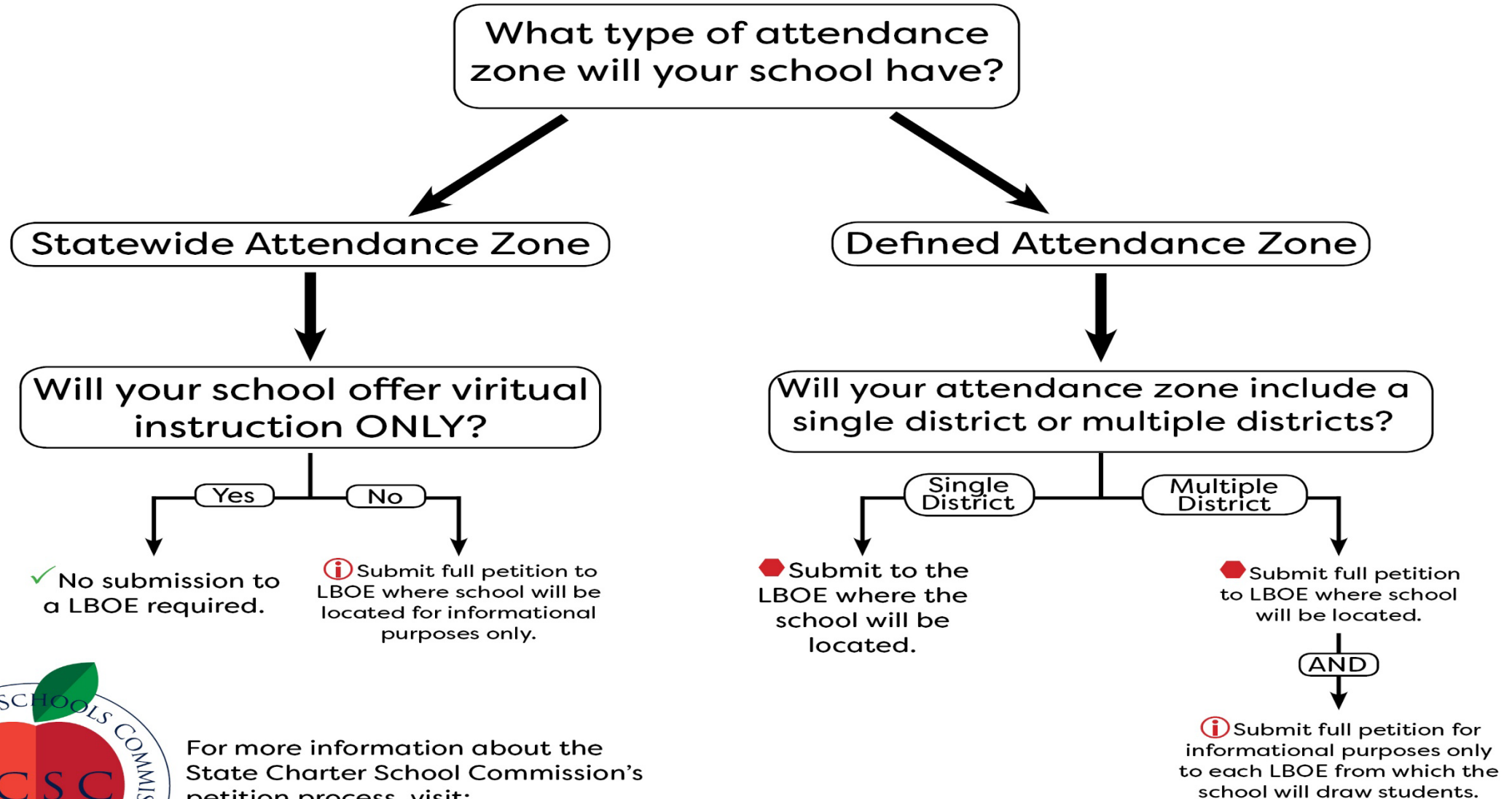
Statewide Attendance Zone - Virtual Only

- Do not need to submit to any LBOE
- No LBOE action required

Defined Attendance Zone

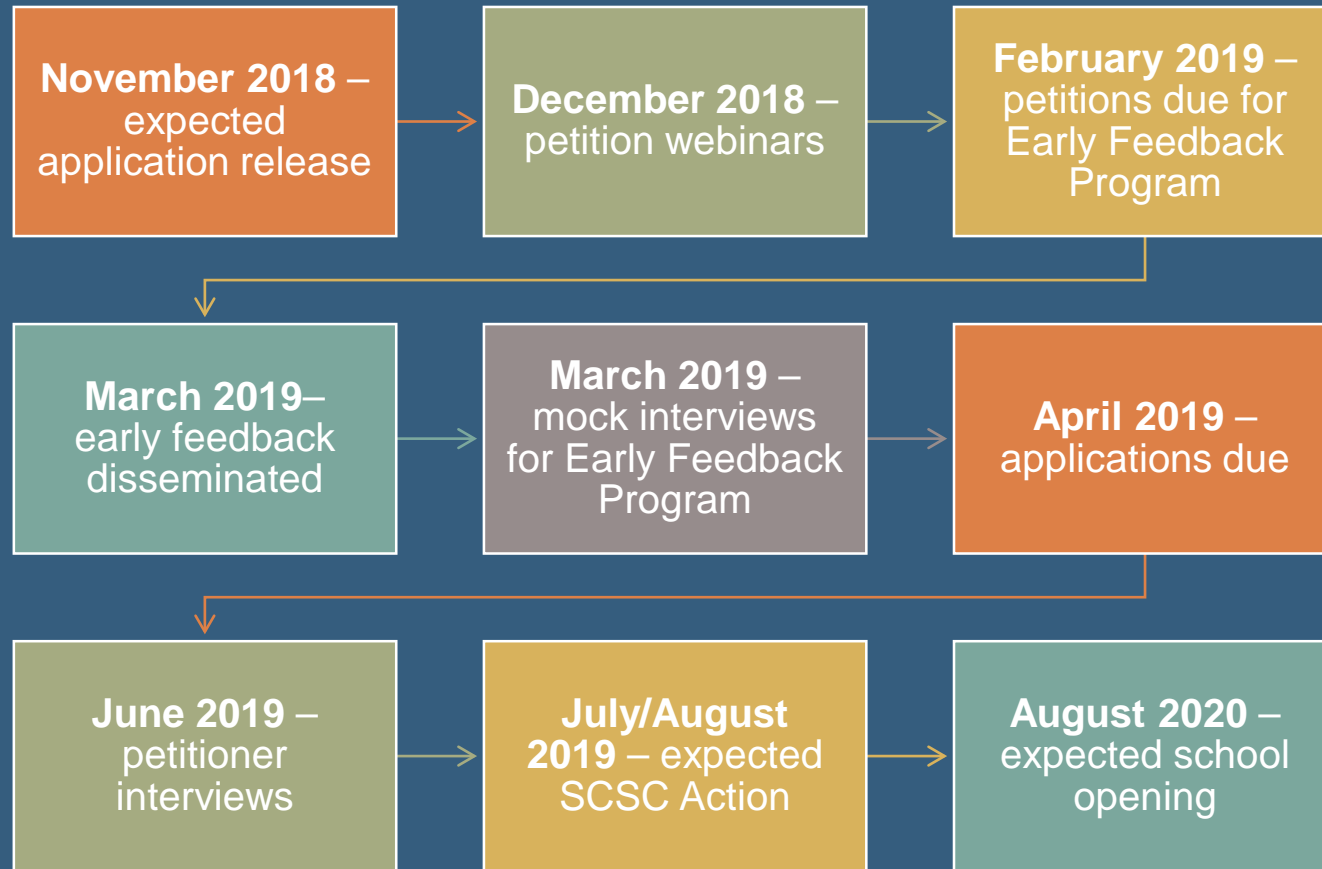
- Submit to LBOE where the school will be **located**
- Also submit to each local school system *from which the proposed school plans to enroll students*
- LBOE Action Required

Do I need to submit my petition to a Local Board of Education (LBOE)?



For more information about the State Charter School Commission's petition process, visit: www.scsc.georgia.gov.

Submitting to the SCSC



Submitting to the SCSC

- If you submitted your petition to the LBOE and have yet to receive an approval or denial, and you wish to be considered by the SCSC, you should submit your petition to the SCSC by the SCSC deadline.
- Part of the petition application requires you to acknowledge that you will notify the SCSC of the LBOE action regarding your petition.
- If, at the time of the SCSC deadline, you have not submitted your petition to the LBOE – either because they did not have deadlines for doing so or you have a statewide attendance zone, you should submit the application to the LBOE at the same time or prior to submission to the SCSC.

The SCSC Application – Submitting Through FluidReview

- For the 2019 cycle, applications will be submitted using an online system – FluidReview.
- Our hope is that this system will streamline the process for both applicants and reviewers by standardizing application submission.
- Additionally, we hope it will help applicants avoid common errors with regard to submission.
 - Examples: use of the current petition/budget, signing assurances, format of budgets, skipping or not responding to narrative questions
- The online platform is currently under construction for the 2019 cycle, but the SCSC will offer a webinar following the release of the application to help familiarize applicants with the FluidReview system, including any changes from 2018.

Petition Contents

- The petition submitted to the SCSC must be substantively the same as the petition submitted to the LBOE.
 - The form of the petition may differ and the petition to the SCSC should address the school's plan to operate as an LEA, but the substance of the petition, such as mission, organization, and governance should remain the same.
- The petition will consist of:
 - Narrative
 - Budget Template (SCSC FY 17 budget template)
 - **Staffing Plan template**
 - Required Appendices
 - Certificate of Incorporation
 - Board member resumes and conflict of interest forms
 - Agreements with EMO/CMOs

Introducing: the SCSC Early Feedback Program

- This program was new last year and will continue for this cycle.
- Objective: to make applicants aware of SCSC Petition and Interview expectations.
- What: applicants will have the opportunity to submit an early application for SCSC feedback. Those applicants electing to participate will also be eligible to participate in a mock interview.
- When: applicants must download and submit an enrollment form by January 18, 2018. More information and the form is available on the SCSC website.
- How: email a completed enrollment form (available on the SCSC website) to Morgan Felts (morgan.felts@scsc.georgia.gov).

Introducing: the SCSC Early Feedback Program

- Eligibility: to participate in the Early Feedback Program, applicants must:
 - Attend at least 1 SCSC Petitioner Bootcamp within the last 3 years;
 - Have an established governing board of at least 5 members; and
 - Must be an eligible applicant with a Georgia non-profit
- Disclaimer: Participation in the SCSC Early Feedback Program is not required and will not guarantee a positive recommendation of your charter petition. Feedback from the program should not be construed to guarantee a specific recommendation of your application. Further, applicants should understand that early feedback will not be inclusive of all potential feedback they would receive following the formal submission of an application and the official petitioner interview.

SCSC Review

There are six stages of SCSC review:

1. Legal Compliance Review
2. Substantive Review
3. Interview
4. Post-Interview Actions
5. SCSC Staff Recommendation
6. SCSC Vote

SCSC Review: Legal Compliance Review

- SCSC staff reviews each petition for its adherence to all state and federal laws applicable to the petition and the charter school.
- This includes laws related to the submission of the petition and laws related to the operation of school if opened.
 - Ex: local submission requirements and operation as a non-private, non-sectarian school
- SCSC staff will notify any petitioner of the legal deficiencies in the petition.
- The petitioner may remedy the identified legal deficiencies and submit a revised state charter school petition to the SCSC for review in a subsequent petition cycle.

SCSC Review: Substantive Review

- SCSC staff conducts an in-depth evaluation of the charter school's mission, educational program, and proposed innovation as well as an examination of the charter school's business operations.
- SCSC staff also evaluates the charter petition to ensure that it is consistent with state education goals, including enhancing public educational opportunities to meet the growing and diverse needs of students and to provide the highest academic quality to increase student achievement and positive outcomes.
- Additionally, SCSC staff examines the charter school's proposed budget, funding sources, business partnerships, facilities, and any other operational aspect of the school.

SCSC Review: Substantive Review

Examples of what the SCSC looks for:

- Does the proposed charter school present an academic program (curriculum, learning model, etc.) that will enable the charter school to meet rigorous performance expectations?
- Does the petitioner articulate a plan for addressing identified student weakness to encourage constant student growth and achievement?
- Does the proposed charter school present a plan that will ensure the school will be fiscally sound?
- Has the petitioner provided evidence that the community will support the school with student enrollment?
- Does the proposed charter school leverage partnerships, including building relationships with other schools, universities, or nonprofit entities?

SCSC Review: Substantive Review – Prior Applicants

New for 2020

If you've applied to the SCSC previously:

- You must participate in the Early Feedback Program
- SCSC staff will specifically evaluate your submitted application for the changes you were notified needed to be made in your recommendation letter and Early Feedback summary.
- If SCSC staff does not see substantive changes to your application in those areas, you will not be granted an interview.

SCSC Review: Interview

- SCSC staff will conduct interviews with the governing board and school leader of each charter school for which the legal compliance and substantive petition reviews did not reveal legal or significant deficiencies.
- The interview focuses on the governing board's capacity to operate a charter school in a manner that is:
 1. aligned with the SCSC's mission,
 2. consistent with state education goals, and
 3. fiscally responsible.
- Each interview panel is comprised of SCSC staff, SCSC Commissioners, and 2-3 state and national experts with backgrounds in education, finance, and policy.

SCSC Review: Interviews and the Position of LBOE

- As part of its review SCSC staff seeks feedback from the LBOE regarding each proposed state charter school. This is typically done when a school has passed both the legal and substantive review as part of the interview stage.
- LBOEs are invited to express support or opposition of a proposed state charter school.
- The LBOE may express its position in writing, by addressing the interview panel, or both.

SCSC Review: Post-Interview Actions

- Following interviews SCSC staff may determine that additional information, documentation, or action by the petitioner is needed to clarify certain technical and/or non-substantive aspects of the charter school's petition or operations.
- Examples:
 - Please clarify the relationship between your school's governing board and the proposed charter school network.
 - Please revise your proposed budget to reflect a recent reduction in state funding.

SCSC Review: Post-Interview Actions

- If you are asked for clarifications or complete specific actions:
 - SCSC staff will notify you in writing of what is needed.
 - You will be provided a deadline by which to provide the clarification or evidence that the requested action is complete.
 - It is highly unlikely that SCSC staff will extend deadlines.
- If you decline to provide requested clarification or complete specific actions, your petition will be considered as it was originally submitted.
- SCSC staff may request clarifications or actions as often as necessary to make a recommendation to the SCSC.

SCSC Review: SCSC Staff Recommendations

- SCSC staff will recommend that the SCSC approve or deny each petition.
- SCSC staff will base its recommendation on all available information regarding the charter petition including:
 - The charter petition;
 - The petition interview;
 - Input from the LBOE;
 - Supplemental information requested by SCSC Staff
 - Information submitted by other stakeholders
 - Publically available information that would affect the school (e.g. news reports, public complaints, court documents).
- Petitioners may withdraw from the petition process at any time prior to SCSC action.

SCSC Review: SCSC Votes

- The SCSC will vote on SCSC staff recommendations to approve or deny each petition.
- The vote will occur at a public meeting in mid-to-late summer.
- Petitioners that are not approved are encouraged to revise the petition and reapply in the next petition cycle.
- The State Board of Education may overrule the approval of a school within 60 days of the SCSC decision.
- Absent SBOE action, an approved school will work closely with the SCSC, Georgia Department of Education, and other stakeholders to begin operation.

Post-Approval

Once a state charter school is approved, governing board members must:

- ✓ participate in the [New School Orientation webinar](#),
- ✓ review [SCSC guidance](#) documents,
- ✓ familiarize themselves with the SCSC's [Starting Strong](#) study,
- ✓ attend a new school orientation with SCSC staff, and
- ✓ meet the requirements of the SCSC's [pre-opening checklist](#).

Final Takeaways

- Follow LBOE submission procedures.
- Meet all local and state deadlines.
- Prepare for all authorizing avenues – prepare to be a locally approved school and SCSC school.
- Be as complete and ready-to-open as possible.
- Use the petition and process as a demonstration of the school's potential.
- Treat the petition like a grant application – you have one chance to prove your case that your school would be a needed high-quality charter.
- As an authorizer, the SCSC evaluates petition viability and school capacity. As such, the SCSC must:
 - Refrain from providing substantive information and support (We will help you understand the petition process, but we cannot provide advice as to the contents of the petition.)
 - Treat all petitioners equally.

Questions

