


# SPCSA New Charter Applicant Training #5: Clarifying Questions & Capacity Interview



February 24, 2025

# Agenda



	Brief Orientation on our Application & Trainings
	The Evaluation Process
	The Clarifying Questions
	The Capacity Interview



# Introductions

- Melissa Mackedon, Executive Director
- Katie Broughton, Director of Authorizing
- Danny Peltier, Management Analyst III



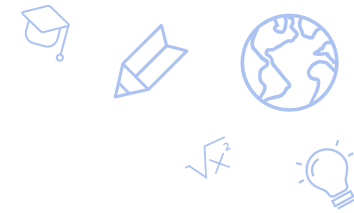
- ☑ Authorizing and board experience
- ☑ Teaching/school leadership experience
- ☑ Institutional knowledge w/the Authority



# Application Training Components

Component	Training Date
Application Overview	December 16, 2024
Cover Sheet, Meeting the Need, & Academic Plan	January 8, 2025
Operations Plan & Addendum	January 21, 2025
Financial Plan	February 6, 2025
Clarifying Questions & Capacity Interview	February 24, 2025

All trainings will be virtual. Additionally, each module will be recorded and posted to the SPCSA website.



# Application Materials

- The **Guidance** includes background and information regarding the application process, specific requirements for the application, application submission, and the application process.
- The **Application** template includes all of the questions that should be answered by the applicant. If an applicant does not answer all applicable questions, the application may be deemed incomplete.
- The **Rubric** describes the characteristics of a strong response that would meet standards.

# Application Timeline

Date	Activity	Responsible Party
January 30, 2025	Notice of Intent	Applicant
April 30, 2025	Application Deadline	Applicant
<b>May 1-15, 2025</b>	<b>Completeness Check (see section 7)</b>	<b>SPCSA Staff</b>
<b>May 1-15, 2025</b>	<b>Response to Completeness Findings</b>	<b>Applicant</b>
	<i>(Applicants are provided with approximately 48 hours to respond)</i>	
<b>May 15-June 20, 2025</b>	<b>Application Evaluation</b>	<b>SPCSA Staff &amp; Review Panel</b>
<b>June 24-July 5, 2025</b>	<b>Send Clarifying Questions</b>	<b>SPCSA Staff</b>
<b>June 23-July 11, 2025</b>	<b>Response to Clarifying Questions</b>	<b>Applicant</b>
	<i>(Applicants are provided with 4 business days to respond)</i>	
<b>July 1-July 18, 2025</b>	<b>Capacity Interview</b>	<b>Applicant, SPCSA Staff, &amp; Review Panel</b>
	<i>(Date and time for each Applicant will be scheduled based on availability of Applicant and Review Panel)</i>	
August 15, 2025	Recommendation Published	SPCSA Staff
August 22, 2025	Consideration of Approval/Denial	SPCSA Board
August 25-August 29, 2025	Notice of Denial, if applicable	SPCSA Staff
September 1-19, 2025	Meet and Confer on Deficiencies of Denied Application	Denied Applicants who wish to resubmit, SPCSA Staff
September 30-October 3, 2025 <i>(30 days from receipt of Notice of Denial)</i>	Resubmission Deadline	Denied Applicants
November 7 or December 5, 2025 <i>(Applicants will be provided with a specific date during the resubmission process)</i>	Resubmission Recommendation Published	SPCSA Staff
November 14 or December 12, 2025 <i>(Applicants will be provided with a specific date during the resubmission process)</i>	Consideration of Approval/Denial of Resubmitted Applications	SPCSA Board





# Application Guidance

## Part I

- Introduction
- Glossary
- Resources
- Application Overview
  - Applicant Types
  - Timeline
  - Submission Directions
  - Application Contents
  - Application Review Process

## Part II

For each section of the Application

- The **application questions** which are identical to the questions found in the Application Template Document;
- The **rubric criteria** which are identical to the criteria defined in the Evaluation Rubric Document; and
- **Guidance** regarding the section or subsection, such as important information and resources to consider when drafting an application.

Refer to the corresponding section of this document while completing the Application Template Document.



# Applicant Types

## Committee to Form

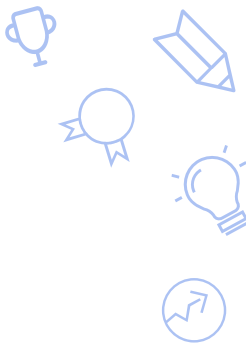
- Must meet membership requirements
  - 1 Teacher
  - 1 Teacher/Administrator
  - One parent/guardian
  - Two members with knowledge and expertise in accounting, financial services, law, or human resources
- Majority of members must be residents of Nevada
- Members cannot include contractors, facility lessors, EMO representatives
- Committees to Form may propose to contract with a CMO or EMO

## Charter Management Organization

- Nonprofit organization that operates or supports charter schools
- May apply with the intent to
  - hold the charter contract
  - establish a new governing to hold the charter contract with the understanding that the new governing board would contract with the CMO for educational and/or operational services
- Whichever entity holds the charter must comply with membership requirements for the governing body of a charter school



# Agenda



	Brief Orientation on our Application & Trainings
	<b>The Evaluation Process</b>
	The Clarifying Questions
	The Capacity Interview



# Application Evaluation

- Completeness check
- What do we mean by “evaluation?”
- Who are the evaluators that make up the “evaluation teams?”
- How do they use the criteria?
- What if they have questions or don’t understand my ideas?



# The Completeness Check

- Conducted by SPCSA staff between May 1 and May 15.
- Uses the checklist provided in section 7 of the Call for Quality Schools, beginning on p. 33 of the Application Template.
- Assesses ONLY completeness (are there words on the page in response to all required prompts for this applicant), NOT quality.
  - If a response is only a few lines long, it is technically complete.
  - If there is a document presented for an attachment, it is technically complete, even if the document does not fully address the requirement.
  - The SPCSA uses a plagiarism check to ensure an original application is submitted.
- Applicants are given 48 hours to cure any portion of the application that is deemed incomplete.

Element	Required?	Complete?	SPCSA Comments
5. Financial Plan – all applicable questions completed	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
6. Addendum – all applicable questions completed	<i>Yes, for CMO applicants and CTF applicants contracting with CMO/EMO</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A	
Did the application pass the plagiarism check?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

**Attachments:**

Element	Required?	Complete?	Comments
1. Completed, signed, Information sheets and resumes		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
<i>CROSS CHECK NAMES WITH CTF/CMO STAFF/BOARD MEMBERS LISTS</i>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
<i>REQUIRED TEMPLATE: Information Sheet for Applicant Team Members</i>			
2. Resume of application preparer	<i>Yes, if someone other than CTF or CMO prepared application</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A	
3. Evidence of community partners	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
4. Discipline Policy	No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No (not required)	



# Defining Evaluation



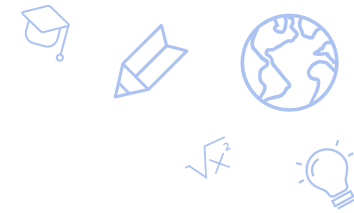
## Evaluators WILL:

- Examine all of the evidence presented (written application, attachments, responses to clarifying questions, observations and information gathered in the capacity interview) against the criteria in the rubric.
- Apply their expertise to assess whether there is evidence that the application meets the evaluation criteria.
- Record the strengths and weaknesses of each section and attachment.



## Evaluators WILL NOT:

- Compare applications in this cycle to each other or to applications they have reviewed in previous cycles.
- Review an application from a Committee to Form or CMO whose submissions they have previously evaluated.
- Discriminate against any school for its model type, location, targeted student population, or any other reason.



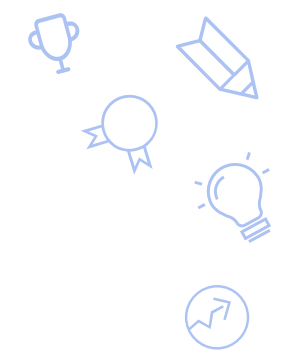
# The Evaluation Team

- SPCSA Staff (generally 1 per application)
- Independent external evaluators contracted by the SPCSA (generally 2 per application)—[NRS 388A.249.2\(a\)](#)
- Receive detailed training from SPCSA staff on the application evaluation process and the evaluation criteria.
- Complete an initial independent review. Then work together to compile and finalize overall ratings.
- Complete conflict of interest forms/disclosures.
- Sign confidentiality agreements.

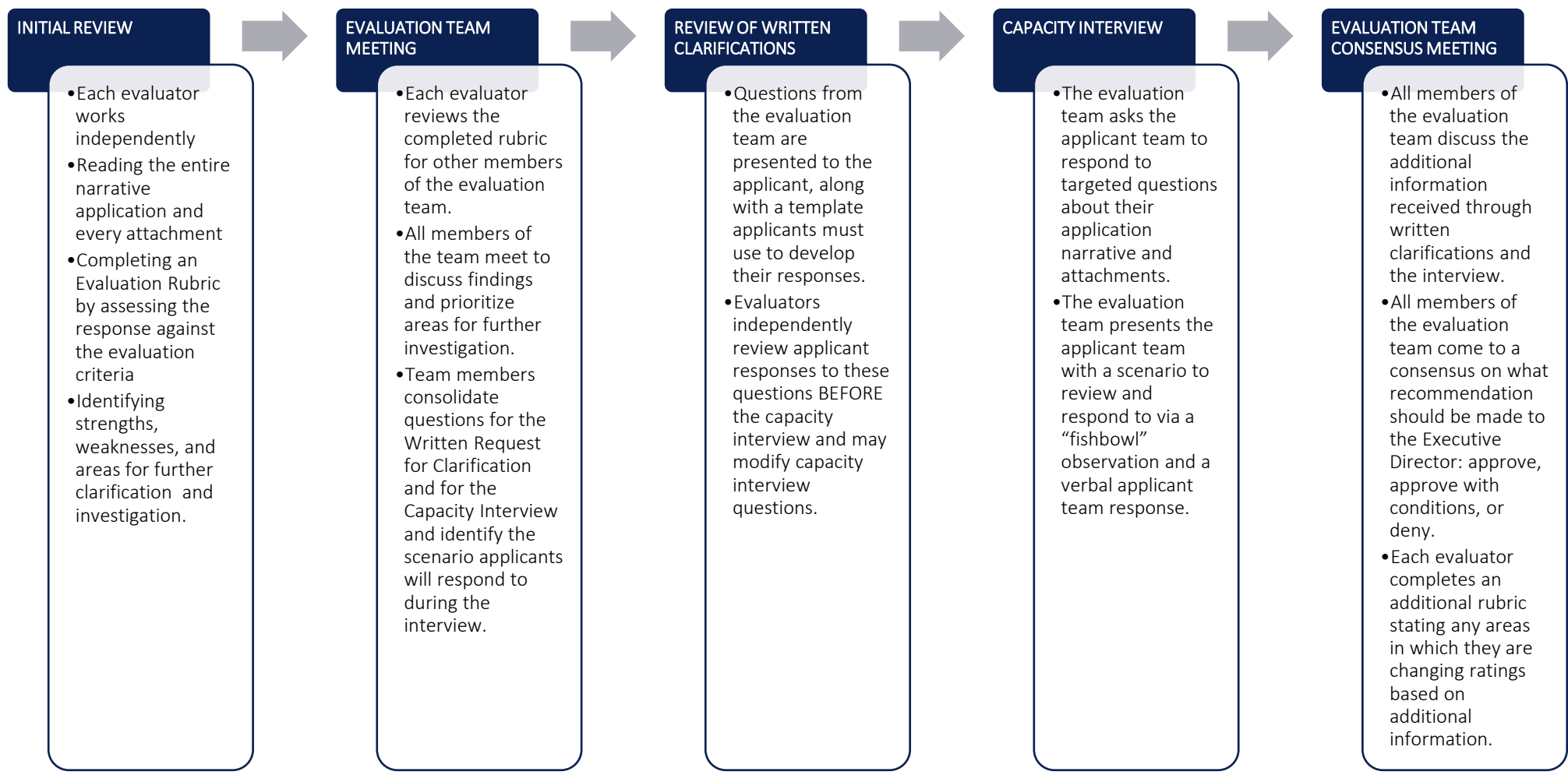


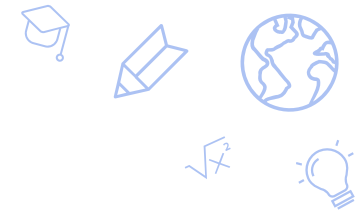
# External Evaluators

Characteristics	Why They Matter
Contractors for the state.	Not affected by local or state politics/personalities.
Deep experience in the charter school sector often including charter school authorizing.	Applicants do not need to explain the concept of a charter school or the autonomy-for-accountability concept.
Work virtually and are often not located in NV.	Not competing with NV schools or new applicants for resources.
Frequently serve as reviewers for new application processes in other states.	Applicants don't need to waste their limited space explaining common educational terms (the evaluators know what MTSS, LRE, UDL, PBIS, block scheduling, FAPE, etc. mean).
Have likely worked on multiple previous SPCSA Application cycles.	Applicants can assume their training and previous experience give them a grounding in best practices in NV charter schools.
Remain anonymous.	Not beholden to the SPCSA or any charter support organization.



# The Evaluation Process



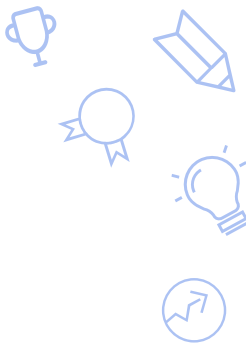


# QUESTIONS

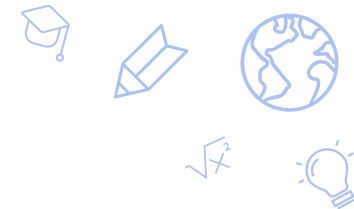




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# Clarifying Questions

- Why do we offer this opportunity for written clarification?
- What is involved?
- How are the questions developed?
- What types of questions are common?
- Developing your responses



# The Purpose of WRITTEN Clarifications

Type of Clarification	Example
Resolve internal contradictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Your application variously refers to the school leader as the principal, the head of school, and superintendent, however, none of these titles appear in the budget, which lists an executive director. Please explain whether these terms are all referring to the same role, and if not, what are the responsibilities and authorities of each of these roles?</li><li>• Your narrative describes embedded PD taking place every Friday during school hours, but the daily and weekly schedules do not include PD time, and the calendar shows no early dismissals. Please explain the Friday PD program in detail and indicate how it will fit into the proposed school week and year.</li></ul>
Address and correct inconsistencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Your demographic projections show ELs as 50% of the anticipated student population in all years, but your staffing chart indicates that you will not have any certified staff for ELs until Y3. Please explain how these students will be equitably served in the absence of designated EL teachers and paraprofessionals in Y1/Y2.</li><li>• Your staffing chart shows a total of 12 teachers in year one; however, the narrative indicates that all classrooms will use a co-teaching model, and the FFE&amp;T worksheet indicates that you will have 12 classrooms in year one. Please clarify the number of teachers in each classroom and confirm the number of classrooms and students per room for Y1.</li></ul>
Request further evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The resume for your proposed school leader, Jane Doe, indicates that she has served as an elementary school teacher for 10 years and assistant principal of a middle school for one year. Please present evidence that she has the training, experience, and expertise to lead a high school program.</li></ul>

# What to Expect



- You will receive two documents, a set of clarifying questions for your specific application (PDF), and a template with detailed instructions that you should use to provide your responses.
- The questions will include section/attachment references.
- A general rule of thumb is that the longer the list of questions, the further the application is from meeting the standard for approval.
- You will have only **FOUR BUSINESS DAYS** to respond, so please review these documents immediately so that if you have questions or concerns you can contact the SPCSA. Material provided after the deadline will not be considered by the Evaluation team.

Applicant Name: Nevada Premiere Public Charter School (NPPCS)  
 Clarifying Responses Due: July 11, 2025 (sent on July 7, 2025)  
 Capacity Interview Date: July 18, 2025

Question #	Clarifying Question	Rubric Section	Page(s) in Application
1	Page 24 – “Students will perform in 1 or more concerts during each school year which will require less than x% of chronic absenteeism” Has NPPCS determined what the rate of chronic absenteeism will be that is listed as x%?	Meeting the Need	24
2	In meeting need 2a of the SPCSA’s Academic and Demographic Needs Assessment, please clarify the index score for the enrollment zone zip codes and identify any public charter school options in the zip codes.	Meeting the Need	Question 2a
3	The school leader appears to have been the main individual engaging with the community. Can the Committee to Form (CTF) provide details on the engagement of the community by other members of the CTF during the application process?	Targeted Plan	
4	The goals listed on page 29 do not align with the goals on page 15 in several areas. Please clarify the goals for the school. (ex. page 29 goal “Students attending NPPCS for two years will show 75% of mastery on internally created math, ELA, writing, social studies, and science grade-level assessments” and page 15 goal “Students will show high levels of growth and achieve 70% of mastery on math, ELA, writing, social studies, and science grade-level assessments”).	Targeted Plan	15 and 29
5	The application cites several organizations that support creativity, community and performance (page 15), though it is stated that the school will develop partnerships with these organizations (page 40). What progress has been made to develop the additional partnerships within the community, or what is the plan for developing partnerships, particularly those that support the arts and arts education?	Targeted Plan	15 and 40

Applicant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Please add or delete rows as needed.

Question #	Response
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	



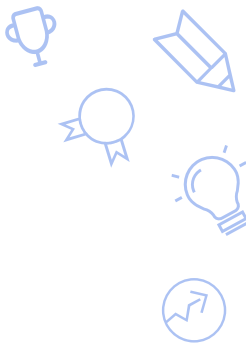
# Question Development

## Individual Evaluators

- As they read the application and attachments, evaluators take down questions that need to be answered in order to determine if the application meets a specific criterion or the standard for approval for a given sections.
- Read the consolidated list of questions from the team in advance of a preparation meeting.

## Evaluation Team Discussion

- Would any of these questions be better in the interview?
- Does an attachment need to be corrected or provided in order to complete the application?
- What are the areas of priority? Which questions can be cut to prevent duplication and lower the total number of questions?



# Types of Questions

## Narrative

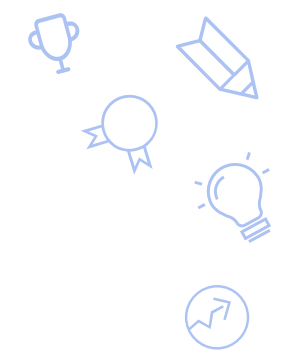
- Provide additional detail or explain the meaning of a phrase in the application.
- Provide concrete examples of a program element or process.
- Provide data or evidence to support a statement or idea.

## Attachments

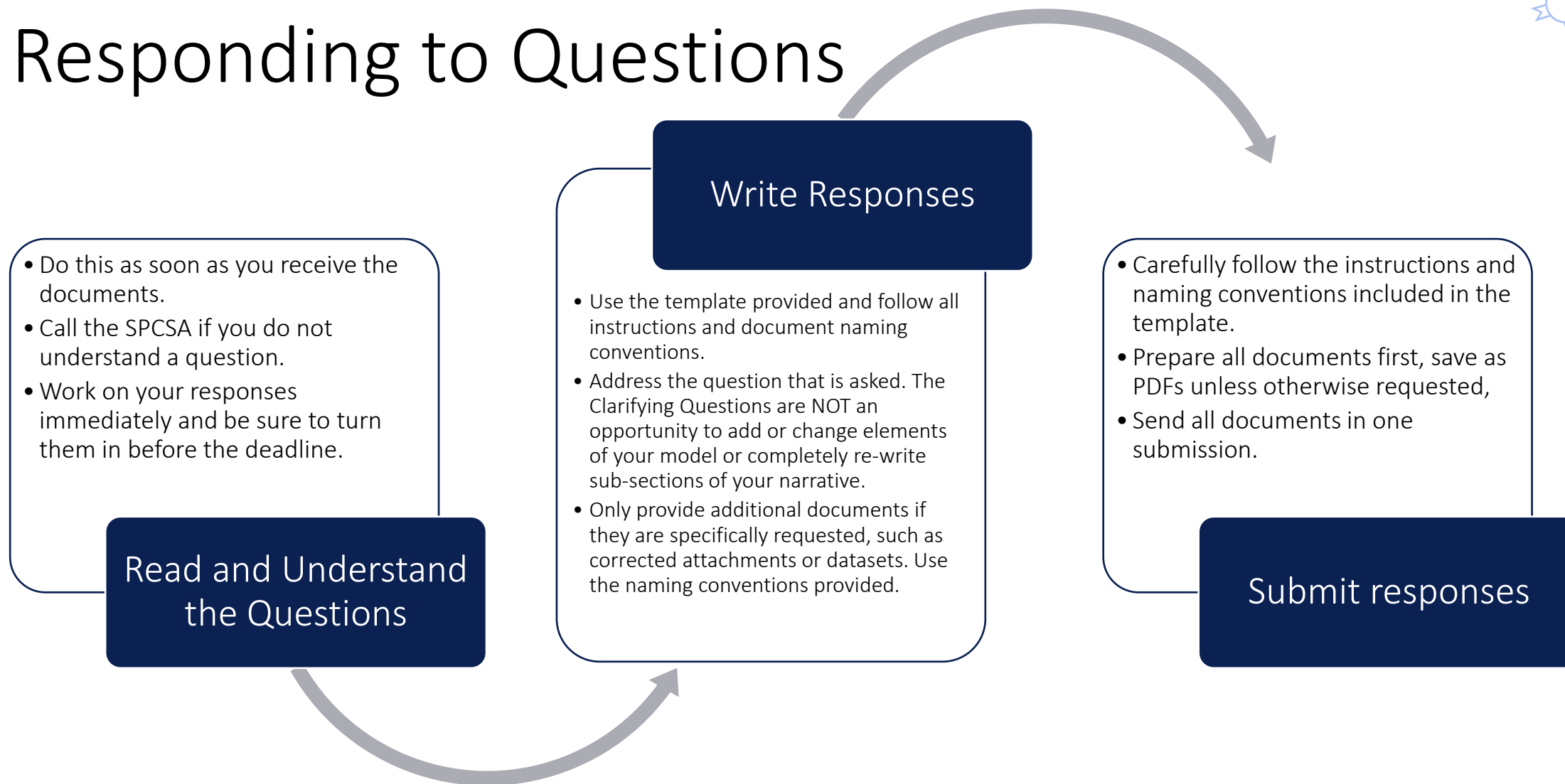
- Correct an incomplete, incorrect, or confusing attachment.
- Respond to inconsistencies or conflicting information in the attachments vs. other application documents.

## Financial Plan Workbook

- Line item questions (with sheet and row/cell references).
- Explain the basis for calculations, source of information, apparent errors or mistakes.
- Clarifications regarding assumptions or categories of expenses.



# Responding to Questions





# Dos & Don'ts



## Applicants SHOULD:

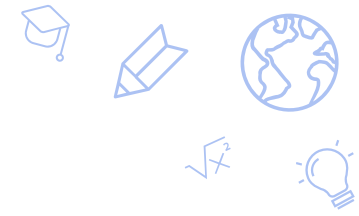
- Remember that evaluators are curious to learn more about your vision and want you to succeed.
- Remember that evaluators are experts in the sector and do this work frequently.
- Remember that the evaluators have ALREADY read every word of your application and attachments. If you are getting a question, it means the evaluators need more information, evidence, specificity, etc., than you provided.
- Understand the implications of the length of the list of questions.



## Applicants should NOT:

- Refer the evaluators to the original documents (“as stated on page...”), without providing additional detail.
- Refuse to answer the questions (“our plan for \_\_\_\_\_ can be found on page...”).
- Provide unrequested or irrelevant information.
- Provide additional documents that are not explicitly requested.
- Re-write larger sections of the application, or address sections other than those referenced in the question.





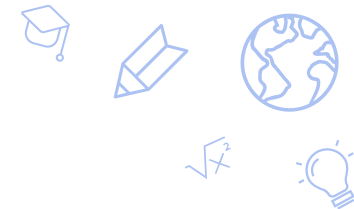
# QUESTIONS



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# The Capacity Interview

- Who are the participants?
- Why is the interview so important?
- Interview structure and timing
- Responding to questions
- Navigating the scenario



# Participants

## Evaluation Team

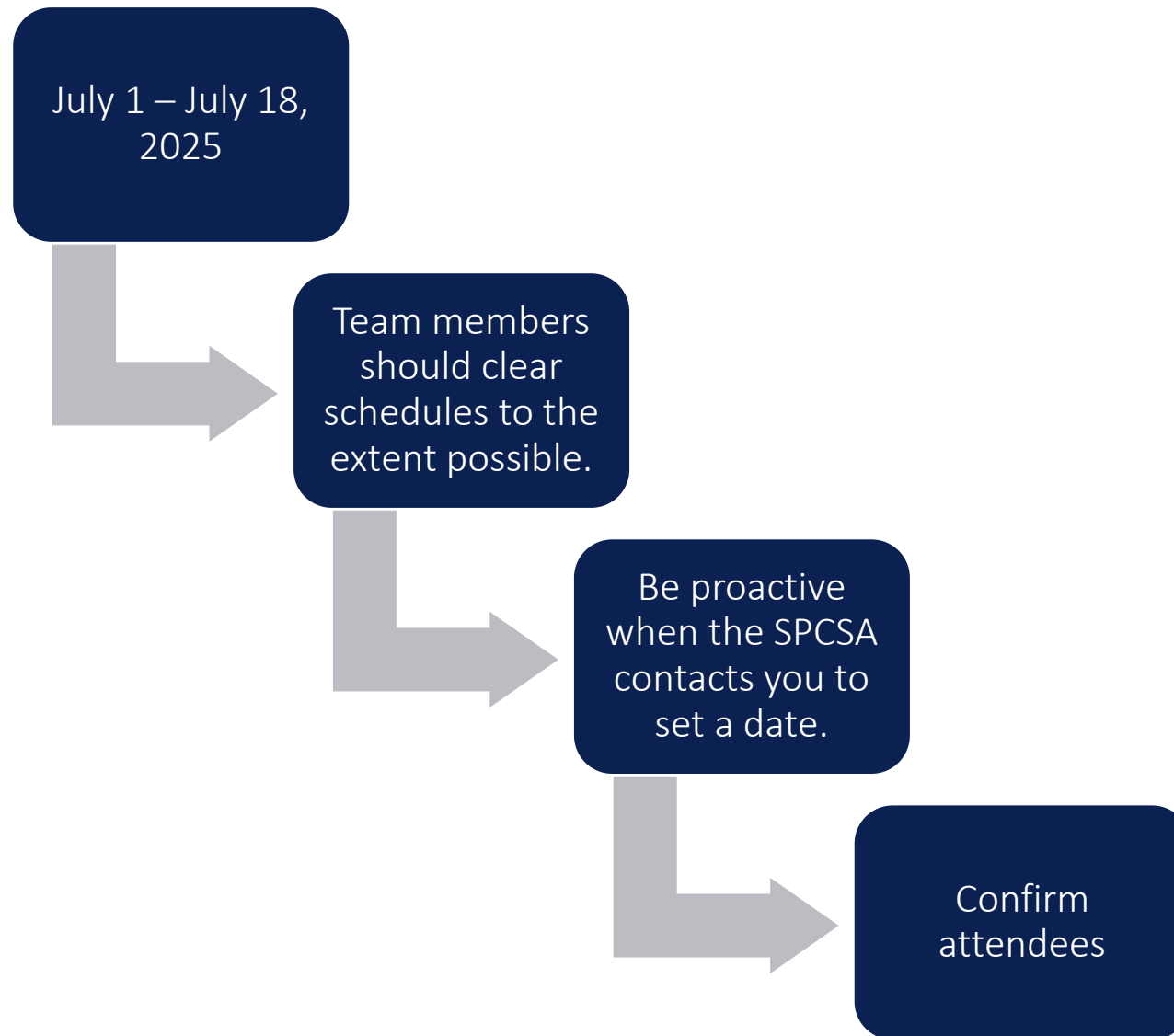
- Member(s) of SPCSA leadership team
- At least two SPCSA staff evaluators
- All external evaluators

## Applicant Team

- The entire CTF **MUST** attend and participate
- The proposed school leader, if identified, must attend and participate
- The members of the proposed Board **MUST** attend and participate
- If you will partner with an EMO/CMO/BOSP, you **MAY** invite a single representative to attend
- May **NOT** include observers or individuals not listed in the application.
- May not include consultants such as an application preparer.



# Interview Date Timeframe





# Purpose of the Interview

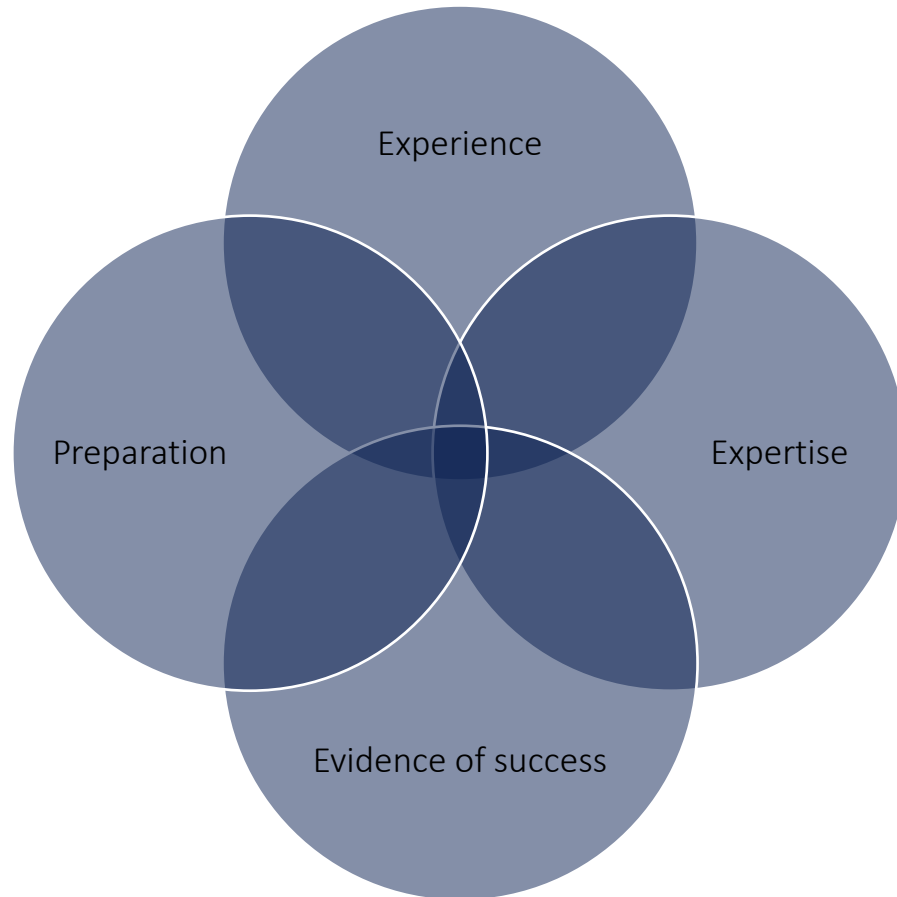
Hear specific team members explain programs or model elements.

Gain deeper understanding of the CTF and board members.

Discuss how the school will add value for the community.

Evaluate the capacity of the applicant team.

# Demonstrating Capacity

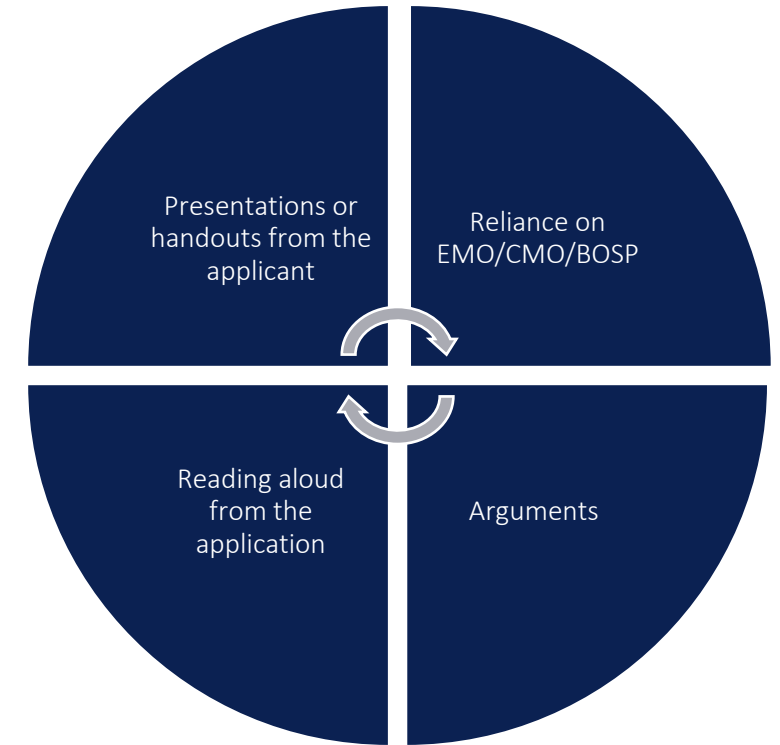
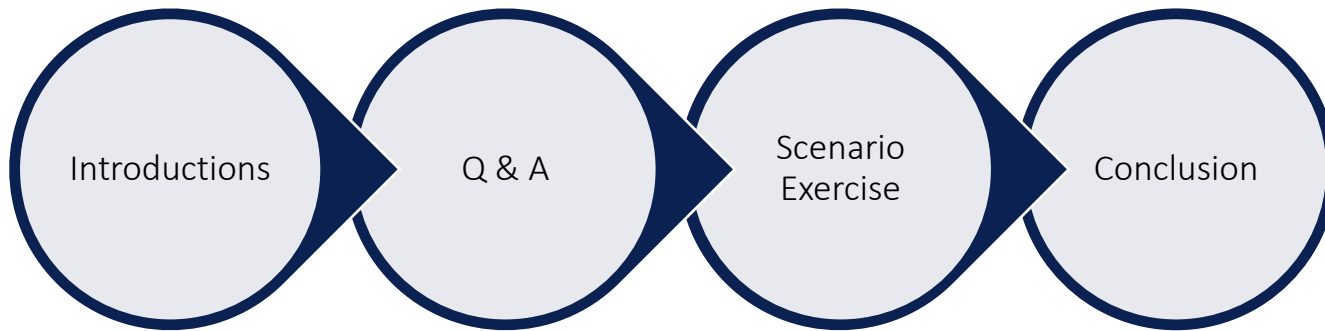


- The applicant team should be able to speak to every part of the application, including attachments and the Financial Plan Workbook.
- Proposed board members should be able to address oversight duties including fiscal responsibilities, academic accountability, and operational function, as well as actively participate in other areas of the discussion and the scenario exercise.
- The applicant team members actively participate in responding to questions and addressing the scenario.
- Individuals focus on their areas of expertise.
- The team has decided which individuals should take the lead on certain topics, and/or are easily able to direct questions to the most expert member.

# Structure



## Interview Flow



## Impermissible Actions





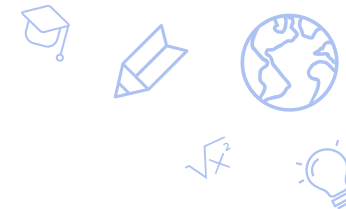
# Preparing for your Interview

## As A Team

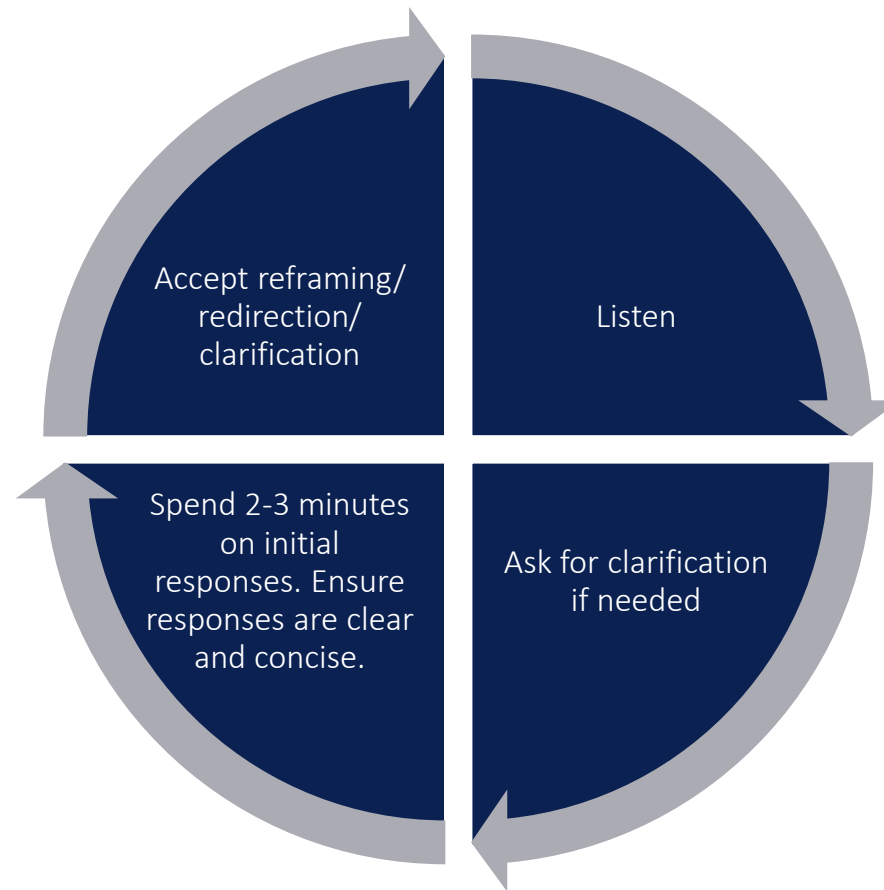
- Strategize primary responders for each application area and agree on any areas where only certain folks should speak.
  - ONLY CTF members may provide initial responses.
  - If an EMO/CMO/BOSP is taking the lead in the interview, questions will be directed to the CTF. Reliance on external individuals reads as lack of capacity on the CTF, board, etc.
- Have a practice interview. A colleague in the sector, application writer, or other partner (Opportunity 180) might be an option.

## Individually

- Re-read the entire application including attachments and FPW.
- Be fully prepared to speak about your sections of the application.
- Proposed board members are expected to address multiple areas of the application such as mission/vision, community, recruitment, accountability, financial plan, etc.



# Responding to Evaluator Questions





# The Scenario Question

## The Data

You will be given a dataset to work with. It might be academic (e.g. test scores), organizational (e.g. enrollment or attendance figures), or financial (e.g. funding assumptions). You will also be provided with a set of questions to help you develop your final response.

## The Observation

While the evaluation team observes, your team will read the dataset and questions and then will discuss what you see in the data and determine your plan to react to it, including concrete actions to be taken.

## The Report Out

A member of your team will present your findings on the data, your reactions to those findings, and your plan for addressing those findings by answering the questions presented with the data.



# Example

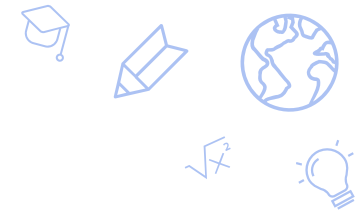
## Young Women's Leadership Academy Scenario

*September 30, 2021*

Nevada laws and regulations require all public schools, including charter schools, to adopt a policy regarding the rights and needs of persons with diverse gender identities or expressions (NRS 388A.133 and NAC 388.880). Additionally, schools are required to provide annual training to employees concerning the requirements and needs of persons with diverse gender identities or expressions.

In this scenario, YWLA has been approved and successfully opens in the fall of 2022. It is November of 2022 and the Young Women's Leadership Academy Board has started work on their Policy regarding the rights and needs of persons with diverse gender identities or expressions. There is a small but vocal group of parents who have been attending board meetings and believe that the school should only serve female students in alignment with the school's mission. Members of this group have also made comments and that transgender and non-binary students should not be part of the school community. At the same time, the school principal has privately notified each board member that there is a student currently enrolled at the school whose parents have emphasized the importance of a supportive and inclusive environment because their child is currently exploring their gender identity.

The board is committed to finalizing the school's policy in the next two months. Please describe the next steps the board will take in order to ensure that it meets the legal requirements to have a policy regarding the rights and needs of persons with diverse gender identities or expressions while working to address the concerns of all members of the school community.



# QUESTIONS





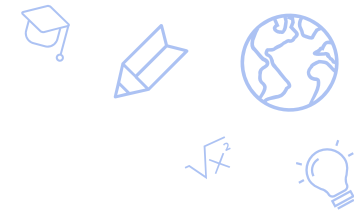
# Capacity Interview Dos

- Let the evaluation team “drive” the interview. They have priority areas that must be covered in order for them to make a recommendation. Again, they are curious and want you to have a good interview.
- Be prepared for interruptions. Because our time is so limited, evaluators want to ensure you are actually answering the questions asked, so they may need to redirect you or rephrase the question. If you’ve given a satisfactory response, they may stop you to preserve time for other topics.
- Focus on answering the questions you are asked, not on any pre-conceived notions of what you want to say or talk about. Do not “revisit” or “add one more thing” about a topic previously covered.
- Mind your tone. Remember, the evaluation team is rating your capacity and will be making a recommendation to the Executive Director. They will treat you and your hard work with respect, and we ask that you extend them the same courtesy.
- Share the spotlight. Remember, your entire team needs to demonstrate capacity to open and operate a school, and all members should be prepared to actively participate.
- Make sure all members of the team have access to your application, attachments, and especially the financial plan workbook. It is often beneficial to applicants to see the specific items referenced.



# Capacity Interview Don'ts

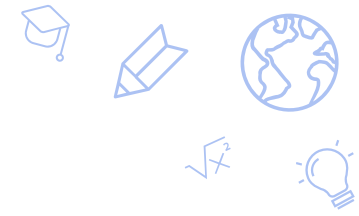
- Do not be distracted or inattentive. Focus on the interview. Make sure your environment is free of distractions, your phone is silenced, etc.
- Do not “piggyback” on responses unless you have new information to add or need to correct a mistake. Generally, no more than three people should “weigh in” on a question.
- Avoid “phoning a friend” or trying to rely on your EMO/CMO/BOSP to provide answers. This is YOUR application, and your vision for a school, you should know the plan best.
- Avoid cutting off the evaluators. You want to make sure you hear their full question and understand it BEFORE answering.



# Managing Your Team in the Scenario

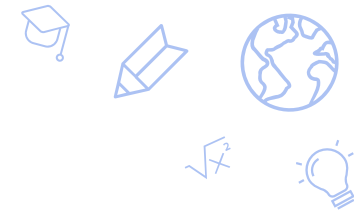
- Some scenarios will ask a specific person to lead the response. If this is not the case, you should have someone leading the discussion and someone specific to give the report-out.
- Take your time in reading and understanding the dataset, and make sure everyone on the team understands it as well.
- Taking notes is recommended.
- Unless otherwise specified, EMO/CMO/BOSP staff may not participate in the scenario question, though they may silently observe.





# QUESTIONS





# Important Upcoming Dates

- The window for Letters of Intent has closed. SPCSA staff should have confirmed receipt of your LOI to you and may have already reached out with clarifying questions.
- SPCSA staff will be reaching out to schedule 1:1 meetings to provide more targeted technical support in the next week or so.
- Applications are due via Epicenter between April 15 –30.
  - Questions regarding Epicenter should be directed to Danny Peltier ([dpeltier@spsca.nv.gov](mailto:dpeltier@spsca.nv.gov)). Note that you will receive an invitation to setup your school's profile for the application submission in the weeks ahead.
  - Details regarding the specifics of uploading your application can be found within the [Guidance document](#) under *Submission Directions* (pages 13-15).
- INTERVIEWS WILL BE HELD BETWEEN JULY 1 and JULY 18. Your ENTIRE CTF should be blocking out as much time as possible in that date range, as they are all expected to participate.