*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

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| Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.  *Commissioner* |  |

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#### Virtual Schools Application Review Process

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) conducts a thorough review of virtual school applications.

## **Objective of Process**

The objective of the virtual school application review process is to award certificates to applicants that show the greatest probability of creating virtual public schools of the highest quality. The Department conducts a process with multiple phases that includes participation by internal and external reviewers, opportunities for public comment, and interviews with the founding groups.

**Application Panel Review**

The Department utilizes multiple reviewers for applications, including school leaders and teachers, education consultants, representatives from non-profits, higher education administrators, and members of the Department’s staff. A team of reviewers reads the applications thoroughly, with reference to the questions in the Request for Proposals.

Panels of reviewers discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each application and identify areas where clarification from the applicant is needed. This process helps to generate questions for the interview with the founding group.

## **Public Comment**

In order to solicit comments on the virtual school application from the public during the application cycle, the Department holds a public hearing. All oral or written comments are reviewed and any substantial issues raised are added to the list of questions for the applicant interview.

## **Interview**

Department staff interview each applicant group. Each interview lasts approximately two hours. The interview allows the applicant to respond to questions about the primary weaknesses or issues of capacity identified in the review of the application or to clarify aspects of the application. Interviewers note the degree to which the applicant group successfully addresses these areas of the application and evaluate, in person, the capacity of the founding group. Department staff then present all of the information to the Commissioner and, based upon the information presented, the Commissioner determines which recommendations, if any, to make for the February meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

**Review of Learning Management System (LMS)**

The Department examines features of the applicant’s LMS that will enhance learning, communication, and efficiency, as well as its overall performance, security, data-handling, interoperability, and accessibility. To carry out the review, the applicant must provide the Department with access to its LMS or provide a live demonstration of its LMS.

**II. Criteria for Review**

The criteria used to evaluate the application are contained in the Request for Proposals (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/cmvs/>). A brief outline of the criteria is included below.

I. HOW WILL THE SCHOOL DEMONSTRATE ACADEMIC SUCCESS?

1. Mission Statement, Guiding Principles, and Core Values
2. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
3. Student Services and Supports (including those for special student populations)

II. HOW WILL THE SCHOOL DEMONSTRATE ITS CAPACITY TO DELIVER PROPOSED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES?

1. Governance
2. Partnerships
3. Management and Staff
4. School Finances

III. HOW WILL THE SCHOOL MANAGE OPERATIONS?

1. School Characteristics
2. School Operations

IV. HOW WILL THE SCHOOL DEMONSTRATE FAITHFULNESS TO ITS MISSION AND TERMS OF ITS CERTIFICATE?

1. Process
2. Accountability Plan Objectives