

Executive Summary

Somerset Academy, Inc. Somerset Academy Sable Palms

Questions and Answers

- Who can apply for a charter?

Pursuant to Section 1002.33, Florida Statutes, a charter application may be made by an individual, teachers, parents, a group of individuals, a municipality, or a legal entity organized under the laws of this state.

- Who reviews charter applications and when are they due?

Charter school applications are due on or before February 1 of each calendar year for charter schools to be opened at the beginning of the school district's next academic year. Applications received in a timely manner are evaluated by the Superintendent's Charter School Review Committee which is comprised of representatives from Academics/Curriculum, Budget, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Exceptional Student Learning Support (ESLS), Facilities, District Administration, and other areas of the organization.

- What requirements must a charter applicant meet for approval?

Charter school applications are subject to the following requirements:

(a) A person or entity wishing to open a charter school shall prepare and submit an application on a model application form prepared by the Department of Education which:

1. Demonstrates how the school will use the guiding principles and meet the statutorily defined purpose of a charter school.
2. Provides a detailed curriculum plan in accordance with Section 1002.33(6)(a)(2), Florida Statutes.
3. Contains goals and objectives for improving student learning and measuring that improvement. These goals and objectives must indicate how much academic improvement students are expected to show each year, how success will be evaluated, and the specific results to be attained through instruction.
4. Describes the reading curriculum and differentiated strategies that will be used for students reading at grade level or higher and a separate curriculum and strategies for students who are reading below grade level. A sponsor shall deny a charter if the school does not propose a reading curriculum that is consistent with effective teaching strategies that are grounded in scientifically based reading research.
5. Contains an annual financial plan for each year requested by the charter for the operation of the school for up to 5 years. This plan must contain anticipated fund balances based on revenue projections, a spending plan based on projected revenues and expenses, and a description of controls that will safeguard finances and projected enrollment trends.

- Can a for-profit organization operate a charter school?

Pursuant to Section 1002.33(12)(i), Florida Statutes, A charter school shall organize as, or be operated by, a nonprofit organization. A charter school may be operated by a municipality or by other public entity as provided for by law. As such, the charter school may be either a public or private employer. As a public employer, a charter may participate in the Florida Retirement System (FRS), upon application and approval as a “covered group” under Section 121.021(34), Florida Statutes. If a charter school participates in the FRS, the charter school employees shall be compulsory members of the FRS. As either a private or a public employer, a charter school may contract for services with an individual or group of individuals who are organized as a partnership or a cooperative. Individuals or groups of individuals who contract their services to the charter school are not public employees.

Special Note: Contracted services can be from a for-profit or a not-for-profit company.

- Are charter schools required to disclose their status as a public or private employer at the time of application?

Charter applicants are not required to disclose the governance structure of the school, including the status of the charter school as a public or private employer until contract approval.

- Are charter schools required to identify facilities or location of the charter school at the time of application?

Charter applicants are not required to identify the facilities or location of the charter school at the time of application, however this information is required at the time of contract approval and will be presented to The School Board of Broward County, Florida, as an upcoming Board Item between March and June of 2021.

Staff Recommendation:

The charter school application for Somerset Academy, Inc., Somerset Academy Sable Palms was reviewed by the Superintendent’s Charter School Review Committee and, having met statutory requirements, is recommended for approval.

It is requested that The School Board of Broward County, Florida, authorize the Superintendent of Schools to notify Somerset Academy, Inc., - Somerset Academy Sable Palms of the approval of the charter application. A draft letter notifying the applicant of this decision is attached (Exhibit 4).

The governing board members of Somerset Academy, Inc., reside in Broward County, Florida.