

## Community School Sponsor Application

The sponsor application process is designed to determine an applicant's eligibility to sponsor community schools in Ohio, its commitment to develop a portfolio of high-quality community schools, and its capacity to monitor, oversee and provide technical assistance to those schools. Applicants will be evaluated based on their past and future projections for success in meeting statutory obligations as defined by [Ohio Revised Code \(ORC\) 3314](#) and [Ohio Administrative Code \(OAC\) 3301-102-03](#).

A successful applicant will:

- Demonstrate its eligibility to become an Ohio community school sponsor; and
- Submit a completed application with supporting documentation.

The application for community school sponsoring includes the following sections:

- A. Application Cover Sheet
- B. Sponsoring Capability
- C. Performance of Sponsored and/or Operated School(s)
- D. Oversight, Technical Assistance and Compliance
- E. Willingness to Comply
- F. Applicant Assurances
- G. Supporting Documentation

### Sponsor Eligibility

To be eligible to sponsor community schools in Ohio, applicants must meet the following requirements:

**1. Applicants must be one of the following organization types:**

- a) The board of education of the district in which the school is proposed to be located;
- b) The board of education of any joint vocational school district with territory in the county in which is located the majority of the territory of the district in which the school is proposed to be located;
- c) The board of education of any other city, local, or exempted village school district having territory in the same county where the district in which the school is proposed to be located has the major portion of its territory;
- d) The governing board of any educational service center, as long as the proposed school will be located in a county within the territory of the educational service center or in a county contiguous to such county;
- e) The board of trustees of any of the 13 state universities listed in [ORC 3345.011](#) [University of Akron, Bowling Green State University, Central State University, University of Cincinnati, Cleveland State University, Kent State University, Miami University, Ohio University, the Ohio State University, Shawnee State University, University of Toledo, Wright State University, and Youngstown State University] or a sponsoring authority designated by any such board of trustees, as long as a contractually specified mission of the proposed community school will be the practical demonstration of teaching methods, educational technology, or other teaching practices that are included in the university's teacher preparation program approved by the state board;
- f) Any qualified tax-exempt applicant under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, 26 U.S.C. 501(c)(3) (January 2009), if all the following conditions are satisfied:
  - i. The applicant has been in operation for at least five years prior to the application date;
  - ii. The applicant has net assets of at least \$500,000 that are owned by the applicant and verifiable by an audited financial statement provided by a certified public accountant and has demonstrated a record of financial responsibility;
  - iii. The state board has determined that the applicant is an education-oriented entity.

Per [OAC 3301-102-02 \(I\)\(6\)\(c\)](#), an “education-oriented entity” is one that has been:

- Granted tax-exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.
  - Note: An applicant may meet the requirement regarding its status as a tax-exempt entity by successfully showing that it falls under a parent organization that has obtained tax-exempt status under section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code for itself and its affiliated entities; however, all other eligibility criteria in [OAC 3301-102](#) must be met by the applicant itself and not the parent organization.
- Organized for one or more of the following purposes:
  - Supporting and/or directly providing educational services and/or programs aimed at the ultimate goal of obtaining a diploma or GED; or
  - Promoting career and college readiness among persons eligible to attend a K-12 program.
- The determination of whether the applicant is organized for one of the purposes above will be based upon the following criteria:
  - Applicant's mission, organizational goals and strategic plan, in the event the applicant has a strategic plan;
  - Activities that the applicant routinely engages in and/or that routinely take place during a typical business day;
  - Applicant's historical record of providing or supporting academic and/or vocational programs;
  - Applicant's agreements with third-party service providers regarding the provision of academic and/or vocational programs;
  - Applicant has a demonstrated record of successfully implementing educational programs;
  - Demonstration of the applicant's successful implementation of educational programs shall be supported by outcome data related to the goals of the applicant's educational programs and may include process measures, financial measures and other indicators of added value to the program participants and others; and
  - The applicant is not a community school.

**2. Applicants must have a fully completed application that has been reviewed and approved by the Department.** Applicants must complete all sections of the application and provide all required documentation. The applications will be reviewed and scored by Department staff members. The Department will notify applicants that reach the qualifying score that they have been approved for sponsorship.

**3. Applicants must reach qualifying scores on their applications to enter into sponsorship agreements with the Department.** An applicant that receives a qualifying score on its application will be given a sponsorship agreement to be reviewed by the applicant and signed by the applicant's designated representative. The sponsorship agreement will specify the type of community schools to be sponsored, how many community schools the applicant can sponsor, where the community schools must be located and other provisions to which the applicant must abide. Sponsorship authority is not granted until the sponsorship agreement is entered by both parties.

## Application Timeline and Process

Sponsor applicants must complete this application. All applicants are strongly encouraged to schedule a meeting with staff from the Office of Community Schools and/or to speak with a staff member prior to submitting their application. **Sponsor applications must be submitted during an application submission period.** There is an extensive application review process following the application submission.

The sponsor application process takes approximately four months to complete. An approved applicant may begin sponsoring following the full execution of its sponsorship agreement with the Department and pursuant to the stipulations of the sponsorship agreement. Please note, the stipulations of the sponsorship agreement may affect an approved sponsor from immediately taking on the sponsoring responsibilities of a new school or of a school seeking to change sponsor. Sponsor applicants should be aware that they may have to wait an additional school year beyond the year in which they are approved to become sponsors to take on the sponsoring responsibilities of one or more interested schools. Such conditions, if deemed necessary by the Department, will be included in the sponsorship agreement.

## Community School Sponsor Application Timeline

Stage	Actions	Time
Pre-Application	The potential applicant contacts the Office of Community Schools regarding its interest in applying for sponsorship.	Up to five months prior to application submission
	The potential applicant may opt to participate in a technical assistance session with the Office of Community Schools to discuss the application process. <i>[Note: The technical assistance session is optional. Applicants can submit applications without participating in technical assistance.]</i>	
	Prior to completing the application, the potential applicant contacts the Office of Community Schools to request access to Epicenter so that it can submit its application once it is completed.	At least three weeks prior to application submission
Application Submission	The applicant submits a sponsor application by the designated deadline by uploading it into Epicenter using its Epicenter account.	Applications are accepted once a year
Eligibility Review	The Office of Community Schools reviews the eligibility requirements for each sponsor applicant to make sure the applicant is eligible to become a sponsor.	Within 45 days of receipt of application
Application Review	The Office of Community Schools reviews the sponsor application.	Within 60 days of receipt of application
Department Reviews	The Office of Community Schools provides reviewed results to the Department's Sponsor Application Review Team, which makes the final determination regarding whether the applicant is qualified to receive approval for a sponsorship agreement.	Within four weeks after the application review
Department Approval/Denial	The Office of Community Schools notifies the applicant by letter whether the application is approved or denied.	Within 10 business days of receiving final determination from Sponsor Application Review Team
Approved Applicants	Once the applicant is approved, the Department will finalize the sponsorship agreement and send it to the applicant.	Within 30 business days of application approval
	The applicant signs the agreement and returns it to the Department. The Department signs the agreement and sends the final signed version to the <b>new sponsor</b> .	Within three weeks of receiving the agreement
	The <b>new sponsor</b> may begin accepting school applications for the first school year for which it is eligible to do so pursuant to its sponsorship agreement with the Department.	Ongoing once the sponsorship agreement is fully executed and pursuant to any stipulations included in the agreement
Denied Applicants	Applicants denied sponsorship may appeal the decision in accordance with ORC 119.12.	Applicants have 15 days after the mailing of the denial letter to file an appeal

## Application Scoring

The Ohio Department of Education will review and score the application of each eligible applicant using the *Sponsor Application Review Instrument*. Section A is not scored but will be used to determine whether the applicant is eligible to apply for sponsorship. For all eligible applicants, the Department will score sections B through E. Each section includes the minimum standards, practices and requirements the applicant must have in place to be considered for a sponsorship agreement. Scores from the written application will determine whether the applicant is approved for sponsorship.

Please note that if the Department determines the applicant does not meet the eligibility requirements to apply for sponsorship, the Department will send the applicant a letter of denial and will not review or score the other sections of the application. In addition, if the applicant fails to provide all required documentation, including a response to each question on the application, the application will not be scored, and the Department will send the applicant a letter of denial. Applicants denied sponsorship may appeal the decision in accordance with [ORC 119.12](#).

## Application Approval/Denial and Sponsorship Agreements

Applicants should refer to the *Community School Sponsor Application Timeline* and the *2022 – 2023 Sponsor Application Process Cycle* for specific dates and time frames regarding application review and notification. Approved applicants will receive notification regarding approval to enter into a sponsorship agreement with the Department. Denied applicants will receive a letter of denial regarding the areas of deficiency. Denied applicants may appeal the denial of sponsorship in accordance with [ORC 119.12](#).

The sponsorship agreement will specify the conditions under which the applicant can serve as a sponsor and include information regarding the number of community schools the applicant is permitted to sponsor. It also will specify the expiration date of the agreement. The Department may include territory parameters in the sponsorship agreement. The applicant must agree to abide by all terms of the sponsorship agreement.

New start-up community schools must be located in “challenged” school districts as defined by [ORC 3314.02](#). The current list of [challenged](#) school districts is available on the Department’s website. Conversion community schools are those in which part or all of an existing traditional public school building or a building operated by a joint vocational school district or educational service center is transformed into a community school. Conversion community schools can open in any public school district in the state. Please note that sponsors planning to sponsor community schools in the Cleveland Municipal School District must request a recommendation from the Cleveland Transformation Alliance.

## Application Formatting and Submission Instructions

Completed applications must maintain the sequence of information as it is exhibited on the sponsor application form:

- A. Application Cover Sheet
- B. Sponsoring Capability
- C. Performance of Sponsored and/or Operated School(s)
- D. Oversight, Technical Assistance and Compliance
- E. Willingness to Comply
- F. Applicant Assurances
- G. Supporting Documentation

Each supporting document should clearly indicate the section to which it pertains and a file name that references the content. Only one copy of each document (for example, “B - Mission Statement,” “Section B - Budget,”) is needed. In cases in which the same supporting document is needed for multiple sections and questions, applicants should indicate this on the front page of that document (for example, “For C, Question 15 and D, Question 23”).

Applicants are required to submit their applications and supporting documentation electronically to the Office of Community Schools through Epicenter, an online data collection system. Applicants must contact the Office of Community Schools at (877) 644-6338 or [community.schools@education.ohio.gov](mailto:community.schools@education.ohio.gov) at least three weeks prior to submitting their application for information on how to set up their Epicenter account. The Office of Community Schools will provide each applicant with information on how to set up an Epicenter account and how to use Epicenter.

For electronic files, applicants must use the following naming conventions:

- If the applicant has one file that includes all information (such as responses to all questions and supporting documentation), the file name should include the organization's name followed by the words "Sponsor Application" The following is an example:
  - Porter Institute-Sponsor Application.
- If the applicant has a separate file for each section, the file name for each file should indicate the applicant's name and section. See the following examples:
  - InfoWorks-Part B or InfoWorks-Sponsoring Capability
  - Glaser Local SD-Supporting Documentation

Applicants must include their organization name and the page number in the upper or lower corner of each page of the application, including all supporting documentation. The application must be completed on white, 8.5" x 11" paper. In addition, applicants must use a font size of 11 or 12 point for all question responses.

## Completing the Community School Sponsor Application

**Applicants must complete all sections and questions included in the application.** If there is a question that does not apply to the applicant, the applicant may enter "NA" or "Not Applicable" in response. Any questions left blank with no response will receive a score of zero.

Applicants can either enter their question responses in the fillable fields provided for each question or enter their responses on other paper, making sure the response for each question is clearly indicated. Responses on which the font is too small or the entire response is not visible will receive a lower score. Supporting documents should clearly indicate the documentation type (organization chart, budget, etc.) and the question(s) to which they are attached (for example, "For Section B, Question 18").

After completing Sections A through E of the application, the applicant must complete Section F—Applicant Assurances, and provide the supporting documentation listed in Section G. The applicant should then review the application to make sure all questions have been answered and compile all the supporting documents. The applicant should refer to Application Checklist that follows the application below. Once the applicant has all required application materials, the applicant must log in to Epicenter and upload the application under the designated submission type. The application and all supporting materials must be uploaded into Epicenter by the designated deadline.

**Note: For the 2022 – 2023 sponsor application cycle, the completed application and all supporting materials must be uploaded into Epicenter by 11:59pm on December 31, 2022.**

## A. Application Cover Sheet

<b>Organization Name</b>
<b>Contact Information</b>  Address:  Phone:  Email:
<b>Primary Contact</b>  Name:  Phone:  Email:
<b>Has the applicant ever sponsored community schools before (in Ohio or anywhere else)?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No  <i>[Note: If "Yes," please provide the school name(s) and documented evidence of the performance of those schools (currently or previously sponsored) and the sponsoring duties carried out for those schools.]</i>
<b>Organization Type (check appropriate box)</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> <b>State University</b> (as listed in ORC <a href="#">3345.011</a> ): University of Akron, Bowling Green State University, Central State University, University of Cincinnati, Cleveland State University, Kent State University, Miami University, Ohio University, The Ohio State University, Shawnee State University, University of Toledo, Wright State University and Youngstown State University.  <i>[Note: Per ORC 3314.02(C)(1)(e), a state university interested in serving as a sponsor can do so if the mission of the proposed school will be the practical demonstration of teaching methods, educational technology, or other teaching practices that are included in the curriculum of the university's teacher preparation program approved by the State Board of Education.]</i>  <input type="checkbox"/> <b>School District Board of Education</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Joint Vocational School District Board of Education</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Educational Service Center Governing Board</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Federal Nonprofit [501(c)(3)] Organization</b> – Has a federal nonprofit designation and will be determined by the Department to be an education-oriented entity. This includes any institution of higher education not designated as a "state university."  <i>[Note: For federal nonprofit organizations, the Department will conduct an eligibility review to confirm the organization meets the criteria for an education-oriented entity, has been in operation for at least five years prior to the application date and has at least \$500,000 in net assets prior to a full review of the sponsor application.]</i>

**Note:** Applicants can either enter their responses to the questions in Sections B through E in the fields provided below or provide the responses on paper, making sure that each question is clearly indicated. Response font size must be 11 or 12.

## **B. Sponsoring Capability**

***The applicant must demonstrate it is an eligible entity capable of sponsoring a new start-up school(s) to be located in a challenged school district(s).***

1. Please provide your organization's mission, vision, core values and strategic plan. If these items were to be modified to include sponsoring, how would they look?
2. How would sponsoring align with or support your organization's mission, vision, core values and strategic plan?
3. What are your sponsoring priorities?
4. Does your organization have a process for evaluating its work and making improvements if needed? If so, please explain that process and how sponsoring would fit into it.
5. What has been the role of your organization's board of directors (or the equivalent) regarding pursuing sponsoring? Did the board officially vote or pass a resolution to have the organization pursue becoming a sponsor? If so, please provide the resolution (or equivalent) showing that.
6. What types of community schools (site-based, e-school, blended, dropout prevention and recovery) do you plan to sponsor? Where are (or will) they be located? Are they located in challenged school districts?
7. Compare a sponsor's roles and responsibilities with those of a community school. Include in your description examples of specific staff members' job duties.

8. Does your organization have a conflict of interest policy? Does it include (or has it been modified to include) this issue in regarding to sponsoring community schools? What policies and practices will your organization implement to avoid potential conflicts of interest?
  
9. What is your current staff capacity to fulfill sponsorship obligations? What plans, if any, do you have for ensuring you have the staff capacity necessary to carry out all sponsoring responsibilities (application process and decision-making, oversight, technical assistance, etc.)? Please provide a current organizational chart and/or a proposed organizational chart that shows which staff positions would be involved with carrying out sponsoring responsibilities.
  
10. What experience and expertise, if any, does your organization's staff members have with sponsoring? If your staff has no sponsoring experience or expertise, how do you plan to obtain the staff experience and expertise needed (or to prepare your staff) to carry out sponsoring obligations?
  
11. What professional development activities do you plan for your staff to complete in preparation for your role as a community school sponsor? What is the role of ongoing professional development?
  
12. How will your organization make use of the planning period expected of new sponsors? Describe the type of activities your organization will be engaged in during this time.
  
13. What is your budget for sponsoring activities (estimated revenue and expenditures)? How will your organization allocate funding for sponsorship activities?
  
14. What is your understanding of community school autonomy? How will you ensure autonomy for your schools?



## C. Performance of Sponsored and/or Operated School(s)

***If the applicant sponsors or operates schools in another state, it must demonstrate that at least one of its sponsored or operated schools has a rating that is comparable to or better than the performance of Ohio schools rated in continuous improvement or its successor equivalent rating under [ORC 3302.03](#).***

15. Do you currently sponsor schools in other states? If yes, please provide the name, address and most recent performance rating of each school. Also provide information on how the performance ratings are calculated in other states.
  
16. Do you currently operate schools in other states? If yes, please provide the name, address and most recent performance rating of each school. Also provide information on how the performance ratings are calculated.
  
17. If you currently sponsor or operate schools in other states, please discuss how the current performance ratings of those schools compare to Ohio schools rated in Continuous Improvement (or its equivalent rating).
  
18. Do you currently have a community school application (or a draft of one)? What are the general criteria you will consider in reviewing applications for new community schools? For replicating a community school?
  
19. Do you currently have a contract (or contract draft) that would be used for community schools whose applications are approved? Describe how you will assess and evaluate a school's performance, including any measures that could be included in your organization's contracts with schools.
  
20. How will your organization ensure that its decisions as a sponsor are transparent and based upon merit?
  
21. Describe the process and the frequency for reviewing school performance against measures included in the contract.

## D. Oversight, Technical Assistance and Compliance

***The applicant or its representative(s) must demonstrate that it possesses the requisite skills, professional knowledge and expertise to provide technical assistance and monitor, oversee and hold accountable for compliance with all applicable laws, rules and terms of the community school contract for each community school that it proposes to sponsor.***

22. Describe the level of expertise of your anticipated application review team, including existing staff and external sources, in regard to the following four areas of school planning and operations: education plan, governance, finance and accountability.
  
23. Describe the level of skill, professional knowledge and expertise of your anticipated sponsor staff, including existing staff and external sources.
  
24. Describe the type(s) of technical assistance that your organization expects to provide to its schools. How will your organization determine the types of technical assistance needed?
  
25. Describe your organization's plan to implement a system for monitoring your organization's compliance with all applicable laws and rules, as well as monitoring your schools' compliance with all applicable laws and rules.
  
26. Describe how your organization will ensure that its sponsored schools are held accountable for compliance with all applicable laws, rules and contract terms.
  
27. Describe how your organization will ensure that its evaluation of schools is transparent and clearly communicated to schools.
  
28. Describe the circumstances that would lead your organization to intervene in a school's operations. How will you communicate this to your schools?

## E. Willingness to Comply

***The applicant must demonstrate its specific willingness to comply with all other sections of the Ohio Revised Code and all rules of the Ohio Administrative Code that are applicable to sponsors and community schools.***

29. Is your organization willing to comply with all applicable sections of the Ohio Revised Code and the Ohio Administrative Code that are applicable to sponsors and community schools?

30. Describe how your organization will ensure that it builds a positive working relationship with the school governing authority while upholding distinct roles and responsibilities.

31. As part of technical assistance, your sponsored schools may request or need professional development in one or more areas. Discuss how your organization will help the schools obtain any requested or needed professional development. How will your organization determine the school's needs?

32. Describe how you will ensure that your sponsored schools remain updated on any changes to law, rule and/or policy that impact community school operations.

## F. Applicant Assurances

By signing this form, I/we acknowledge that I/we am/are aware of sponsor responsibilities in their entirety as stated within the application materials and guidance document and shall comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws, rules, regulations and provisions stated therein should the organization be approved to sponsor community schools in Ohio. I/we hereby assure and agree to comply with all conditions of the approved application and submit required documents and certifications as required should the organization be approved as a sponsor.

### NAME OF ORGANIZATION

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### IDENTIFIED OFFICIAL WITH AUTHORITY

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Printed Name and Title

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Signature (*person with authority to sign documents on behalf of the organization*)

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Date

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### ORGANIZATION'S PRIMARY CONTACT FOR THIS APPLICATION (*if different from above*)

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Printed Name and Title

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Signature

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Date

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## G. Supporting Documentation

**Prior to submission of this application, please ensure that the following items are included:**

1. Responses to all sections and questions;
2. Most recent financial audit;
3. Signed Applicant Assurances document; and
4. The following supporting documentation:
  - Mission statement (may include a link to the applicant's website);
  - Strategic plan (if the applicant has one);
  - Board structure;
  - Annual report (examples related to the board's review of its performance; continuous improvement plan);
  - Financial and independent audits;
  - Organizational chart;
  - Staff resumes/biographies with current roles indicated;
  - Job descriptions;
  - Budget of the organization's yearly revenue and expenditures;
  - Conflict of interest policy;
  - List of any schools ever sponsored, their current status and performance data (if applicable);
  - Professional development opportunities.

**Federal nonprofit [501(c)(3)] organizations must also include:**

1. An audited financial statement with current evidence of \$500,000 in net assets (if different from the most recent audit submitted for #2 above);
2. The most recent IRS Form 990;
3. A copy of the current federal nonprofit certificate;
4. A copy of the articles of incorporation; and
5. The evidence listed in OAC 3301-102-02(1)(6)(c) that is used to determine whether the applicant is an "education-oriented entity" (see page 2 for details).

**Optional Documentation: Applicants that already have developed any of the following items also may submit them with their applications:**

- School application for sponsorship;
- Application process timeline;
- Application review instrument;
- Application interview guide;
- School renewal application;
- Guidance documents and policies (contract renewal policy, contract termination policy, school closure policy, policy on conditions triggering sponsor intervention, etc.);
- Examples of signed conflict of interest statements;
- School contract template (if available);
- Performance framework, if different from that in the community school's contract (if available);
- Site visit review template;
- Current five-year financial plan;
- Any additional documents regarding proposed sponsoring practices, policies and processes.

**Please submit the application and supporting documentation electronically to the Office of Community Schools through your Epicenter account by December 31, 2022.**

## Application Submission Checklist

For all applicants:

- The applicant provided its organization name.
- The applicant provided its contact information.
- The applicant provided its organization type.
- The applicant's organization type is one that is allowed to sponsor community schools in Ohio.
- The applicant indicated whether it has ever sponsored schools (in Ohio or another state) before.
- If applicant indicated "Yes" to current or previous sponsoring experience, then applicant also provided the names of those sponsored schools and their performance data.

For federal nonprofit [501(c)(3)] applicants only:

- The applicant provided evidence of its tax-exempt status.
- The applicant provided evidence of its articles of incorporation.
- The applicant provided evidence that it has been in operation for at least five years.
- The applicant provided its most current audited financial statement with evidence of \$500,000 in net assets.
- The applicant provided its most recent IRS Form 990.
- The applicant provided evidence of having a demonstrated record of financial responsibility.
- The applicant is not a community school.
- The applicant is aware that the Department must determine if it is an "education-oriented entity" [per OAC 3301-102-02 (1)(6)(c)] and has provided the needed evidence to help in that determination (see page 2 of this document for details).

For state university applicants (per ORC 3345.011) only:

- The applicant provided evidence that a contractually specified mission of the proposed community school will be the practical demonstration of teaching methods, educational technology or other teaching practices that are included in the university's teacher preparation program approved by the State Board.

The applicant has provided the following documents:

- Responses to all application sections and questions.
- Mission statement (may include a link to applicant's website).
- Strategic plan.
- Board structure.
- Annual report (examples related to the board's review of its performance; continuous improvement plan).
- Financial and independent audits.
- Organizational chart.

- Staff resumes/biographies with current roles indicated.
- Job descriptions.
- Budget of the organization's yearly revenue and expenditures.
- Conflict of interest policy.
- List of any schools ever sponsored and their status (if applicable).
- Professional development opportunities.

The applicant has provided the following *optional* documents:

- School application for sponsorship.
- Application timeline.
- Application review instrument.
- Application interview guide.
- School renewal application.
- Guidance documents and policies (contract renewal policy, contract termination policy, school closure policy, policy on conditions triggering sponsor intervention, etc.).
- Examples of signed conflict of interest statements.
- School contract template (if available).
- Performance framework, if different from that in the community school's contract (if available).
- Site visit report template.
- Current five-year financial plan.
- Additional documents regarding sponsoring practices, policies and processes.