



## 2016 NACSA LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

### Quality Out of the Gate: Critical Thinking About Your Application Process

How rigorous is your application process? This session will help you think critically about your current practices and determine simple, yet critical, steps you can take to improve your application and evaluation processes. Discover the basic elements of a rigorous evaluation process, such as review team composition and capacity interviews, while learning more about NACSA's Essential Practices, resources, and model documents. Running a high-quality process garners informed, evidence- and merit-based decisions, and this session will help you get there!

**Session Title:** Quality Out of the Gate: Critical Thinking About Your Application Process

**Session speakers:** Chris DeWitt (Denver Public Schools)  
Morgan Felts (State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia)  
Erin Reddy (NACSA)

**Context:** The goals of this panel discussion were to:

1. Provide a clear strategy for how to view the quality of an authorizer's own application process.
2. Explain why the **people**, the **budget**, the **rubric/evidence**, and the **start-up plan** are important areas in which to measure quality.
3. Discover practical guidance and tools to enhance the quality of an application process in the above-mentioned areas.

**Key Takeaways:**

1. It is important to assess the quality of the **people** who are internal and external to your process. External reviewers on application review teams add objectivity, expertise, integrity, and valuable feedback. Conducting capacity interviews with qualified applicants provides an authorizer with a format to vet, probe, follow-up, and reevaluate information provided in the written application.
2. It is critical to assess the quality of the **evaluation rubric/evidence**. A published rubric adds fairness, transparency, alignment, and rigor to an application process. Quality, comprehensive, evidence gleaned from a charter school application, capacity interview, and a public hearing (as applicable) drives recommendations toward merit-based decisions.



3. It is important to assess the quality of the application **budget** and to have application reviews with financial expertise. A sound budget provides viability, sustainability, transparency, and ensures honoring of public obligations.
4. It is critical to assess the quality of an application **start-up plan** and to have application reviewers with operational and business expertise. A strong start-up plan demonstrates compliance, planning, viability, and capacity of the applicant team.

**Additional Resources:**

1. NACSA Core Charter School Application
2. NACSA Core Charter School Application Evaluation Criteria
3. NACSA Core Charter School Application Process Guidance
4. NACSA Core Charter School Applicant Interview Guidance
5. Example Charter School Budget Template: Denver Public Schools