Louisiana Believes

Course Choice Request for Applications (RFA):

Louisiana Course Choice Application Guide

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Timetable for RFA Processes

Process Step	Details
Course Provider Application	Applications accepted on a rolling basis; course providers may amend and resubmit rejected applications
Course Provider Interview	Course providers that submit accepted applications proceed to In-person or virtual interviews for a more detailed review of provider capabilities
Independent Review Panels Period	Course providers that complete successful interviews are then reviewed by an independent panel as required by Course Choice policy
BESE Approval: Course Providers	The Superintendent proposes course providers successful on these three steps to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) for approval

DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION
Louisiana Believes

Section 1: Course Choice Objectives

Course Choice is an integral component of *Louisiana Believes,* helping Louisiana students achieve ambitious academic and job readiness goals, while contributing to the state's policy goal of preparing our students to obtain post-secondary degrees and high-quality, high-wage 21st Century careers.

The primary goals of Course Choice as envisioned in Act 2 remain the same as previously:

- provide course opportunities not available at a student's school;
- develop innovative career and technical education courses and internship opportunities that prepare students for the types of jobs Louisiana needs filled by Louisiana graduates in order for the state to prosper;
- motivate academically-focused students to graduate high school on time or early, many with college credits to prepare them for post-secondary academic and career success; and
- help students who are behind their class level catch up and graduate on time.

Louisiana's Course Choice program will continue to recruit traditional and non-traditional course providers to offer a comprehensive selection of rigorous academic and career course offerings.

In its first years of implementation Course Choice has:

Louisiana Course Choice Program Goals

- Students have unprecedented choice in developing personal educational pathways
- Students successfully complete industry-based certification courses, internships and/or apprenticeships
- Students graduate with the skills to enter post-secondary programs and workforce-ready
- Students in grades K – 8 have access to high quality course offerings
- Students graduate on time or early

- completed an application / selection process that resulted in BESE approval of a cohort of high-quality course providers;
- developed and deployed a registration system scalable to accommodate a growing Course Choice program; and
- launched a Course Choice Counselor Assistance Center, staffed by experienced professional school counselors, to support parents, students and their school counselors in selecting Course Choice course offerings.

Course Choice will continue to expand the course offerings available to Louisiana students.

Section 3: RFA Application / Selection Processes

The table below outlines the parallel RFA processes for course providers and course incubators.

	Course Provider RFA Process
Step 1	Course provider applicants submit an electronic application to coursechoice@la.gov Rejected applicants receive feedback, one opportunity to resubmit application
Step 2	Accepted applicants participate in a multi-phase interview (pre-interview submission, interview, follow-up Q&A)
Step 3	LDE schedules and convenes third party independent review panels to review applicants designated "Proceed" based on their interview
Step 4	BESE considers course providers recommended for approval by LDE
Year 1, 2 and 3 course provider applicants that were not BESE-approved will be allowed to re-enter the RFA process where they were eliminated (e.g. an applicant designated *Do Not Proceed* after its prior interview will be allowed to update its application and immediately enter the Interview process)	

The three-phase course provider RFA process will be:

- **Step 1: Applications** – course provider applications will be submitted online. Rejected applicants will be allowed to revise and resubmit their application based on the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) input they receive;
- **Step 2: Interviews** – course provider applicants with Accepted applications will proceed to a multi-phase interview process;
- **Step 3: Independent interview panels** – course provider applicants that receive a Proceed designation from their Interviews will have their candidacies reviewed by an independent review panel; and
- **Step 4: BESE review and approval.**

Section 3: Required Application Components / Required Application Format

Course Choice application packages (Word application and Excel spreadsheets) can be obtained from CourseChoice@la.gov or downloaded from the www.LouisianaBelieves.com website.

No cover letters, executive summaries or organizational marketing materials will be accepted. Instructor resumes will be requested from course providers invited to participate in the interview stage.

Course Choice Course Provider Application Template: Required Components Description			
Section	**Application Section**	**Page Limit ***	**Template Section Components**
1	Application Summary Sheet	1	Contact information, firmographic information
2	Provider Vision, Background and Capabilities	7	• Provider Vision / Strategy • Provider Background (history, leadership, strengths) • Overview of Proposed Course Offerings • Format / Technologies Used to Deliver Courses
3	Overview of Proposed Curriculum	8	• Curriculum Sources • Proposed Instructional Materials • Delivery Methods / Course Modalities • Addressing Special Need Students
4	Instruction Quality	4	• History / Examples of Instructional Quality • Instructor Qualifications (resumes exempt from page limit) • Data Supporting Instructional Effectiveness
5	Accountability	3	• Specific Course Goals / Metrics • Progress Monitoring • Assessment / Accountability Systems
6	Proposed Tuitions	3	Tuition price bids, supporting documentation
7	Provider Financial Structure / Strength	1	Completion of a financial strength and structure check-off questionnaire
8	References	3	One page reference formats
9	Signature Page	Not part of application package page limit	
10	Course Offerings Spreadsheet	No page limit	

Please email your completed Word document application and Course Offerings spreadsheet to CourseChoice@la.gov

1. **Application Timeframe**
   1.1. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. It is solely the responsibility of all applicants to make sure their application is completed and emailed to CourseChoice@la.gov.

2. **Applicant Code of Conduct**
   2.1. Applicants are responsible for determining that there will be no conflict or violation of the Ethics Code if the company is awarded the contract. Ethics issues are interpreted by the Louisiana Board of Ethics.

3. **Public Disclosure**
   3.1. All materials submitted in response to this request become the property of State. Selection or rejection of an application does not affect this right.

   3.2. Only information that is in the nature of legitimate trade secrets or non-published financial data may be deemed proprietary or confidential. Any material within an application identified as such must be clearly marked in the applications and will be handled in accordance with the Louisiana Public Record Act, R.S. 44: 1-44 and applicable rules and regulations. Any application marked as confidential or proprietary in its entirety may be rejected without further consideration or recourse.

   3.3. By submitting, the applicant grants the State of Louisiana- Department of Education the right and license to republish its application, if the Department so chooses, as an example or sample application for the edification of other applicants.

4. **Determination of Responsibility**
   4.1. Determination of the applicant's responsibility relating to this RFA shall be made according to the standards set forth in LAC 34: 136. The State must find that the applicant:

   4.1.1. Has adequate financial resources for performance, or has the ability to obtain such resources as required during performance.

   4.1.2. Has the necessary experience, organization, technical qualifications, skills, and facilities, or has the ability to obtain them.

   4.1.3. Is able to comply with the proposed or required time of delivery or performance schedule.

   4.1.4. Has a satisfactory record of integrity, judgment, and performance

   4.1.5. Is otherwise qualified and eligible to receive an award under applicable laws and regulations.

   Applicants should ensure that their application contains sufficient information for the State to make its determination by presenting acceptable evidence of the ability to perform the services called for by this RFA.

5. **Right to Prohibit Award**
   5.1. In accordance with the provisions of R.S. 39:2192, in awarding contracts after August 15, 2010, any public entity is authorized to reject an application from, or not award the contract to, a business in which any individual with an ownership interest of five percent or more has been convicted of or has entered a plea of guilty or *nolo contendere* to any state felony or equivalent federal felony crime committed in the solicitation or execution of a contract or bid awarded under the laws governing public contracts under the provisions of Chapter 10 of Title 38 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, professional, personal, consulting, and social services

procurement under the provisions of Chapter 16 of this Title, or the Louisiana Procurement Code under the provisions of Chapter 17 of this Title.

6. RFA Addenda

6.1. The State reserves the right to change the calendar of events or revise any part of the RFA by issuing an addendum to the RFA at any time.

7. Waiver of Administrative Informalities

7.1. The State reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to waive administrative informalities contained in any applications.

8. Application Rejection

8.1. Issuance of this RFA in no way constitutes a commitment by the State to award a contract. The State reserves the right to accept or reject, in whole or part, all applications submitted and/or cancel this announcement if it is determined to be in the State's best interest.

9. Withdrawal and Re-submission of Applications

9.1. An applicant may withdraw an application that has been submitted at any time up to the date and time the application is due. To accomplish this, a written request signed by the authorized representative of the applicant must be submitted to the RFA Coordinator.

10. Subcontracting Information

10.1. The State shall have a single prime contractor as the result of any contract negotiation, and that prime contractor shall be responsible for all deliverables referenced in its application. This general requirement notwithstanding, applicants may enter into subcontractor arrangements; however, they should acknowledge their total responsibility for the entire contract.

If the applicant intends to subcontract for portions of the work, the applicant should include specific designations of the tasks to be performed by the subcontractor. Information required of the applicant under the terms of this RFA may be required for each subcontractor.

10.2. Unless provided for in the contract with the State, the prime contractor shall not contract with any other party for furnishing any of the work and professional services herein contracted for without the express written approval of the State.

11. Cost of Preparing Applications

11.1. The State is not liable for any costs incurred by prospective applicants prior to issuance of or entering into a contract. Costs associated with developing an application, preparing for oral presentations and interviews, and any other expenses incurred by the applicants in responding to this RFA are entirely the responsibility of the applicants, and shall not be reimbursed in any manner by the State of Louisiana.

12. Errors and Omissions in Applications

12.1. The State will not be liable for any errors in applications. The State reserves the right to make corrections or amendments due to errors identified in applications by the State or the applicant. The State, at its option, has the right to request clarification or additional information from the applicants.

13. Corporation Requirements

13.1. If the contractor is a corporation not incorporated under the laws of the State of Louisiana, the contractor shall have obtained a certificate of authority pursuant to R. S. 12:301-302 from the Secretary of State of Louisiana.

If the contractor is a for-profit corporation whose stock is not publicly traded, the contractor shall ensure that a disclosure of ownership form has been properly filed with the Secretary of State of Louisiana.

Section 4: Application Eligibility Standards / Application Evaluation Criteria

Eligibility Standards – the enabling legislation for Course Choice established basic eligibility standards that all course providers *must* meet. Successfully addressing these eligibility standards is a requirement for all applications, but not sufficient for an application to be accepted into the interview stage.

These eligibility standards as articulated in the enabling legislation are:

"Ticket to Play" Application Eligibility Standards
(established in enabling legislation)

1) Course provider complies with law and rules
2) Proposal is valid, complete, financially well-structured, educationally sound
3) Proposal provides a plan for collecting data in accordance with R.S. 17:3911 (course evaluation / accountability). See ***Section 5: List of Appendices*** for links that provide details on the required components for this data collection
4) Course offers potential for increased learning opportunities and access to quality education for all Louisiana students

For the purposes of evaluating the course provider applications submitted, the LDE will interpret these eligibility standards as indicated in the table below.

Eligibility Standard	How the Eligibility Standard will be Assessed
See page 3 above for table: "Course Choice Application Template: Required Components Description"	
1) Course provider complies . . .	Applicant submits a complete application with all required components
2) Proposal is valid . . .	Applicant's Sections 3 and 4 of Course Choice Required Application Components confirm the applicant's proposal is educationally sound; Section 7 confirms the applicant is financially well-structured
3) Proposal provides plan . . .	Applicant's Sections 5 of Course Choice Required Application Components confirms the applicant has an acceptable plan for accountability data collection
4) Course offers potential . . .	Applicant's Sections 2, 3, 4 and 6 indicate: a) an understanding of Louisiana's standards for course materials; b) acceptance of Louisiana's commitment to educate all our children; c) the vision and ability to offer high-quality courses that will help Louisiana students succeed academically and prepare them for the workforce; and d) an ability to offer courses at a competitive, cost-effective tuition

All prospective Course Choice course providers *must* submit an application package that successfully addresses *every one* of these application eligibility standards.

All determinations of whether or not a application meets these eligibility standards will be indicated on a "Pass / Fail" basis.

Evaluation Criteria – to ensure the highest quality Course Choice course offerings the LDE developed more demanding *evaluation criteria* for RFA applications. These evaluation criteria are:

"Comparative Assessment" Application Evaluation Criteria

1) Ability of course provider to help Louisiana achieve key education goals
2) Commitment of course provider to serve special needs students
3) Quality of course content / course design / proposed instructors
4) Commitment of course provider to accountability
5) Cost effectiveness

The LDE will interpret these evaluation criteria as indicated in the table below.

Evaluation Criteria	How the Evaluation Criteria will be Assessed: Evaluation Sub-Components
1) Ability of course provider to help Louisiana achieve key education goals	1) Provider illustrates how its course offering(s) will help Louisiana achieve one or more of the state's Course Choice Program Goals: • Students enter the next, age-appropriate grade on time and on level • Students successfully complete rigorous and advanced high school and post-secondary course work • Students successfully complete industry-based certification courses, programs, internships and/or apprenticeships based on Pathways to Careers • Students graduate on time or early • Students graduate with the skills to enter post-secondary programs or workforce-ready
2) Commitment of course provider to serve special needs students	2a) Provider has a plan of action to serve special needs students
	2b) Provider has materials designed to serve special needs students
	2c) Provider agrees to implement accommodations for a student's individualized education plan
3) Quality of course content / course design / proposed instructors	3a) Curriculum sources are named; a listing of course instructional materials, facility requirements, and/or technologies is provided
	3b) Core courses are aligned with current Louisiana State Standards
	3c) Industry-based courses are aligned with Louisiana state adopted guidelines or industry-based standards
	3d) Dual enrollment courses meet the standards grade-level expectations for the high school course for which the student is receiving credit and for college credit as established by the Board of Regents
	3e) All instructional staff members are fully certified in the areas in which they teach per Louisiana requirements; data are provided indicating instructor effectiveness
4) Commitment of course provider to accountability	4a) Provider offers clear and rigorous standards for student achievement
	4b) Provider offers detailed systems for timely and complete student achievement reporting
	4c) Provider offers a description of how data will be collected and analyzed for student assessment
	4d) Provider utilizes accepted standards for academic performance and job skill certification
	4e) Provider provides clear standards for reporting its performance
5) Cost effectiveness	5a) Course tuition is at or below the maximum tuition provided by the MFP
	5b) Provider can justify that its course tuition bid(s) is / are at fair market value
	5c) Provider relates its proposed tuition for the course to class materials, activities and quality

All determinations of whether or not an application meets these evaluation criteria will be indicated on a "Pass / Fail" basis.

Evaluation Process Notes – LDE evaluation teams will evaluate every course provider's application package versus the eligibility standards described above. Application packages that do not "pass" all four eligibility standards will be rejected.

Applicants will be able to revise and resubmit their application package one time should they choose to do so.

LDE evaluation teams will then assess application packages that "pass" all four eligibility standards versus the five evaluation criteria. Applications packages must "pass" on each evaluation criterion, *but for each application LDE does not have to address each of the evaluation sub-components (articulated on page 8) to achieve a passing grade. If an application package achieves a "pass" on a majority of sub-criteria, then the application package will achieve a "pass" for that evaluation criterion.*

A course provider's application package will be accepted for interview if:

- the application package achieves a "pass" on all four eligibility standards;
- the application package achieves a "pass" on all five evaluation criteria; and
- the application package conforms with all of the RFA's administrative and legal requirements.

LDE will provide a detailed description of the interview evaluation process *only* to applicants who are accepted for an interview. These interview evaluation guidelines will explain how course providers can successfully move from the interview stage forward to the evaluations by the Independent Experts Panel and BESE.

BESE is responsible for the final evaluation and approval (or rejection) of all course provider applications.

No appeals will be considered at any stage. All determinations of accepted / rejected and proceed / do not proceed are final.

Unsuccessful course providers / applicants are encouraged to submit new proposals during future Course Choice RFA application processes.

Section 5: List of Appendices

The following appendices will provide applicants with useful information regarding BESE, the LDE, the State's educational standards and goals, and other topics relevant to the Course Choice RFA process.

Appendices Table 1: Course Choice Enabling Legislation		
Title / Subject of Appendix	**URL Link**	**Information Included**
Act 2/HB 976 (2012 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature)	http://www.legis.la.gov/legis/ViewDocument.aspx?d=793655	Enabling legislation for the Course Choice program
Bulletin 132: *Louisiana Course Choice Program*	http://bese.louisiana.gov/documents-resources/policies-bulletins	State Department of Education policy related to Course Choice.
Bulletin 741: *Louisiana Handbook for School Administrators*	http://bese.louisiana.gov/documents-resources/policies-bulletins	Policies passed by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) to govern the operation of public elementary, middle, and secondary schools.

Appendices Table 2: Louisiana Course Content Guidelines / Requirements		
Title / Subject of Appendix	**URL Link**	**Information Included**
Career and Technical Education Course Guidelines	http://bese.louisiana.gov/documents-resources/policies-bulletins	A listing of career and technical education public school courses offerings and guidelines for individual courses.
Course Code Catalog	Available upon request	A listing of courses and course codes used to track students' high school credit in the state Student Transcript System (STS).

Appendices Table 3: Louisiana State Standards Requirements		
Title / Subject of Appendix	**URL Link**	**Information Included**
Louisiana State Standards	http://www.louisianabelieves.com/academics/academic-standards	Academic standards define the knowledge and skills that students are expected to learn in a subject in each grade. Academic standards provide a clear path for students to gain the proficiency that is required to learn increasingly complex material in the next grade. Students who learn the knowledge and skills defined by the academic standards, year after year, are on track to graduate from high school on time and ready to enter college or the workforce

Appendices Table 4: Special Education Requirements		
Title / Subject of Appendix	**URL Link**	**Information Included**
Federal Government Section 508	http://www.section508.gov/#	Federal requirements for making educational web content equally accessible to people with disabilities
Section 508 Checklist	http://webaim.org/standards/508/checklist	Practical guide for adhering to the requirements established in Section 508
University of Washington publication	http://www.washington.edu/doit/Brochures/Technology/distance.learn.html	Useful information on "Making Distance Learning Accessible to Everyone"
University of Washington publication	http://www.washington.edu/doit/Brochures/Technology/equal_access_uddl.html	Useful information on "Universal Design of Distance Learning"
What Works with K – 12 Online Learning	http://www.iste.org/images/excerpts/K12OLL-excerpt.pdf	Excerpt (Chapter 8) on "Exceptional Learners: Differentiated Instruction Online"
National Center for Accessible Media (NCAM)	http://ncam.wgbh.org/experience_learn/educational_media/accessible-online-learning-tea	Accessible Online Learning

Appendices Table 5: Miscellaneous Resources		
Title / Subject of Appendix	**URL Link**	**Information Included**
INACOL National Standards for Quality Online Courses	http://www.inacol.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/national-standards-for-quality-online-courses-v2.pdf	National standards designed to provide states, districts, online programs, and other organizations with a set of quality guidelines for online course content, instructional design, technology, student assessment, and course management.
INACOL National Standards for Quality Online Teaching	http://www.inacol.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/national-standards-for-quality-online-teaching-v2.pdf	National standards that provide teachers a set of criteria for effective online learning to guarantee that the teachers are better able to understand the technology, new teaching methods and digital course content to foster a personalized online learning environment for every student.
Louisiana Letter Grade Policy	http://www.louisianabelieves.com/accountability/school-letter-grades	Louisiana has been grading schools for more than a decade. Since 1999, the state has issued School Performance Scores for public schools, which are based on data about student achievement. To more clearly communicate the quality of schools to parents and the public, Louisiana adopted letter grades based on School Performance Scores in 2010
LA Accountability System	http://www.louisianabelieves.com/accountability	Louisiana Believes starts with the premise that all students can achieve high expectations and master rigorous academic standards. If you believe all children can learn, then you must hold schools accountable for the performance of students. Louisiana grades schools on a scale of A through F, just like students. Letter grades are easy for parents and the public to understand. The grades are calculated based on objective measures of student achievement, including test scores and graduation rates. Today, the number of A and B schools – 471 – is higher than the number of D and F schools – 461. In 2012, nearly one-third of all schools achieved expected growth

Applicants should email CourseChoice@la.gov to register to receive all LDE communications about the Course Choice RFA process, and to review all publicly available information about the Course Choice RFA process at any time.