

Louisiana Believes

Louisiana Charter Application

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Everything You Need to Know to Complete a Louisiana Charter Application

Application Eligibility

- Any organization or individual may become eligible to submit a Louisiana charter application by meeting specific eligibility requirements.
- The Department has published on its website a set of [common eligibility requirements](#) that all applicants must complete. Local school boards may elect to impose additional eligibility requirements.
- Local school boards must publish any additional eligibility requirements to their websites no later than Friday, January 12, 2018.

To which board(s) should I submit my application?

- Local school boards and the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) all have the authority to approve charter schools. To submit an application to BESE, applicants must fall into one of the four specific categories of eligibility listed in Bulletin 126 §512(C).
- Applicants may submit charter applications to one authorizer or to multiple authorizers. Applicants may submit the same application to multiple authorizers or may craft a distinct application to submit to each authorizer. All documents required as part of an application to BESE are required for applications to local school boards. The Department has compiled a comprehensive set of resources that highlight differences between the relationships that charter schools have with each type of authorizer. These resources can be found in the Department's online [Toolbox](#).

Are there any unique opportunities I should be aware of as I complete my application?

Louisiana law allows for two unique opportunities:

- Applicants may submit a proposal for a growth plan to open multiple schools. Local school boards and BESE both have the authority to grant an applicant approval to open all or some of the schools in their growth plan. There are specific, clearly identified application questions that pertain to applicants who submit a proposal to open multiple schools.
- Applicants may submit a proposal to open a charter school in partnership with a corporate partner. Corporate partners must commit to make a significant donation to the school. If a local school board or BESE authorizes the plan, the charter organization will be able to reserve up to 50% of seats in the charter school for permanent employees of the corporate partner. The Department's website has a more thorough overview of corporate partnerships [here](#).

Which set of questions should I complete?

- There are two sets of questions – one set for experienced operators and another set for new operators.
- Experienced operators meet one of two criteria: either the organization applying for the charter already operates at least one school or the organization has partnered with an Educational Service Provider (ESP)¹ that operates at least one school.
- Organizations that do not meet either of these criteria should complete the set of questions for new operators.
- Local school boards may elect to ask additional questions, above and beyond the questions included in the common charter application. Additional questions must be published to an authorizer’s website no later than Friday, January 12, 2018.

Do I need to identify a school leader?

- New operators and experienced operators that have not yet operated two schools for at least three years each must identify a school leader in their application for all schools proposed to open in the fall of 2019.

When is the application due? What other dates do I need to know?

- The common application that all applicants must complete will be released by BESE on December 15, 2017, and is due on March 2, 2018. Local school boards can request additional information from applicants if they post that information to their websites no later than January 12, 2018.
- Local school boards must consider applications that they receive on or before June 8, 2018. Local school board applicants may elect to appeal to BESE if a local school board rejects their proposal, does not consider it on or before June 8, 2018, or authorizes an applicant to open a school but imposes conditions that the applicant finds unacceptable.
- The table below summarizes key application process dates. After an applicant submits an application to a local school board or BESE, the relevant authorizer will provide a more detailed timeline pertaining to that particular process. A detailed timeline for applicants who submit a proposal to BESE can be found [here](#). **The timeline includes links to additional documents that applicants must submit to BESE later in the process.**

¹ An Educational Service Provider (ESP) is an organization that a nonprofit board hires to manage all aspects of running a school. The ESP makes all hiring and firing, curricular, and budgetary decisions on behalf of the nonprofit board. The board retains the authority to review the performance of the ESP.

Charter Applicant Timeline

Date	Relevant Applicants	Activity
Friday, December 15	All applicants	Department releases common application and Toolbox with application resources
Friday, January 12	Local school board applicants	Local school boards publish charter application information to their websites, including additional eligibility requirements and additions to the common application.
Friday, February 9	State Applicants	If applicable, applicants notify BESE of their intent to apply to convert an existing public school to a Type 2 charter school by emailing fredericka.wicker@la.gov
Friday, March 2	All applicants	Charter applications are due – five components: proposal overview (new operator or experienced operator), application, finances template , eligibility form , background checks Charter applicants that wish to submit an application directly to BESE must meet the criteria listed in the eligibility form .
Friday, June 8	Local school board applicants	Deadline for local school boards to consider applications
Monday, June 11	Local school board applicants	If applicable, local school board applicants notify BESE of their intent to appeal to convert an existing public school to a Type 2 charter school by emailing fredericka.wicker@la.gov .
Friday, June 22	Local school board applicants	Deadline for local school board applicants to appeal to BESE
Ongoing	State & appeals applicants	BESE considers applications

How do I submit my proposal?

- Local school boards and BESE utilize their own submission systems.
- No later than Friday, January 12, 2018 local school boards must post on their websites the instructions for submitting a charter proposal.
- To submit a charter proposal to BESE, please email fredericka.wicker@la.gov to receive a username and password for the Department’s online submission system.

What resources are available to help me develop a proposal?

- The Department has compiled a comprehensive set of resources in an online [Toolbox](#) that you can find on the Department's website. The Toolbox is designed to help you determine whether you should apply for a charter school and which needs your charter school can meet.

How will my proposal be evaluated?

- Local school boards and BESE will provide for an independent review of all charter applications they receive. The rubric used by the independent evaluators hired by BESE can be found [here](#).
- Local school boards and BESE may choose to include multiple components in their charter application process. For example, authorizers may choose to request a second submission or an interview. Local school boards must post a description of the review process to their websites, no later than January 12, 2018.
- A detailed timeline for applicants who submit a proposal to BESE can be found [here](#). **The timeline includes links to additional documents that applicants need to submit to BESE later in the process.**
- All applicants will have the opportunity to write a response to a draft recommendation from the independent reviewer and to speak at a public meeting prior to an authorizer's consideration of their application.
- Authorizers are not required to agree with the recommendation submitted by the independent reviewer that they hire. For applications submitted to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, for example, the state superintendent exercises discretion in making recommendations to BESE.

Who should I contact with questions?

- No later than Friday, January 12, 2018, local school boards must post to their websites the contact information for a primary contact for charter school application questions.
- Freddi Wicker is the primary charter application process contact for the Louisiana Department of Education. She can be reached via email at fredericka.wicker@la.gov.

New Operator Application

If you are a new operator, no later than 3:00 pm CT on Friday, March 2nd you should submit five documents to each authorizer to which you are applying: a proposal overview ([new operator](#) or [experienced operator](#)), an application, a [finances template](#), an [eligibility form](#), and background checks that meet the [background check guidelines](#). Follow the links above to find the hyper-linked forms and guidelines. Keep in mind that local school boards may collect additional information above and beyond the information in these hyperlinked forms and the questions included below as part of the application. All additional information should be clearly indicated on each local school board website no later than January 12, 2018.

Applications should include only the information requested below, saved in a single PDF file. Applications should be no more than 50 pages, excluding the requested Appendices. There are no page limits for individual sections except for the Executive Summary.

Please clearly label each section of your application. There are no specific format requirements for the application that you submit, but keep in mind that your application is a professional document. The quality of the document that you submit should reflect the quality of the school that you propose to open. Evaluators will be able to navigate well-organized, effectively-edited documents easily, thereby focusing their energy on reviewing the content of each application.

The overview template and finances template should both be submitted as excel files. All background checks should be submitted in a single PDF file. The eligibility form should be submitted as a PDF file as well.

The purpose of this application is to assess the readiness of charter applicants to produce high-quality student outcomes exceeding the results that charter schools must achieve to remain in operation.

School leadership plays a fundamental role in the success of any new charter school. This application process in its entirety is an assessment of the strategic thinking of the school leader, including school staff and partners to whom the school leader will delegate responsibilities in the operation of the school.

Executive Summary

Provide a two-page overview of your proposed school that addresses the following prompts:

- (1) Explain the mission and vision of your school. What will your school set out to achieve in the long term, what will success look like, and how will your school get there?
- (2) Explain why your school would be important to the community in which you are proposing to locate.

Students

- (1) Demonstrate through the use of data that the student population that you wish to serve exists.
- (2) Describe your recruitment strategy and provide your recruitment plan. Provide any evidence that you have collected that demonstrates that parents and guardians have committed to enrolling their children in your school. You may provide evidence in Appendix A. Appendix A will not count against the page limit.

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- Academics**
- (1) Explain how you will set, and measure progress towards, performance goals that put your students on a path towards achieving your vision. Include your plan to gather baseline data necessary to establish goals.
 - (2) For all core content and mission-related subject areas:
 - Identify the curricula that your school will use and your reasons for these choices;
 - Identify the interim assessments you will use and how these align to the curricula;
 - Describe your professional development plan for teachers and how this plan is linked to the curricula and assessments.
 - (3) Describe how your school will identify students who are at risk and provide academic interventions for these students.
 - (4) If you are proposing a specialized school², describe the concrete structures, policies, and practices that will differentiate your school from options already available to the community you propose to serve.
 - (5) *(Applicable to applicants proposing to serve grades 9-12)* Provide an example of a daily schedule for a student attending your school as well as your school's academic calendar.
- Special Student Populations**
- (1) Describe your plan to identify, evaluate, and serve Students with Disabilities. Include your staffing plan for serving Students with Disabilities.
 - (2) Describe your plan to identify, evaluate, and serve English Learners. Include your staffing plan for serving English Learners.
- School Staff**
- (1) Provide an organizational chart.³ Include job descriptions that summarize the scope of work for all staff on the school leadership team.
 - (2) Describe your administrator and teacher recruitment strategy.
 - (3) Describe the expectations for teachers, how you will clearly communicate these expectations and ensure that teachers stay on track towards meeting expectations.
- Culture**
- (1) Describe the culture that you envision for your school and the practices that will foster and maintain that culture.
 - (2) Similarly, describe the behavior expectations of your school as well as the practices that will foster and uphold those expectations.
- Mission Critical Partners**
- Describe the mission-critical partnerships that your school has established and the terms of these partnerships.

² Examples of a specialized school are: single-sex schools, arts integration schools, or schools focused on Students with Disabilities.

³ Mission-critical partner organizations are organizations that will play a role in the operation of your school and its progress toward its mission.

**Board
Readiness**

- (1) Describe the roles necessary on the board, the responsibilities that align with each role, and identify who will play that role on the board. As Appendix B, provide a one-page resume for each of your identified board members. One-page resumes will not count towards the page limit.
- (2) Describe how the board will monitor the school's overall performance.
- (3) Describe the steps the board will take to evaluate the school leader. Specifically, describe:
 - The information the board will collect;
 - The systems by which the board will collect information;
 - The standards - including and in addition to student performance goals- the board will use to evaluate information it collects; and,
 - The process(es) by which the board will evaluate information and make decisions.
- (4) Describe the process by which your board identifies potential conflicts of interest before making decisions.
- (5) Develop the process by which you will develop and train your board.

**Financial
Readiness**

- (1) Complete the financial template.
- (2) Do you plan to use a financial manager or a back-office service provider? If the entity that will provide your financial services has been chosen, please provide its name. If that entity is an individual financial manager, please provide his / her one-page resume as Appendix C.
- (3) To whom will your financial manager or back-office service provider report: the school leader or the board?
- (4) Describe your approach to budgeting, including an explanation of your approach to cutting costs if faced (as schools so often are) with a budget shortfall.
- (5) Describe the accounting and control systems you will install, including essential checks, balances, and segregation of duties. Please indicate how a culture of proper financial controls and reporting will become an essential component of your organizational culture.

**Returning
Applicant
Groups**

Applicant groups that have submitted charter applications previously are required to complete this section

Describe the activities that your founding team has conducted since your last application to improve your readiness to start a charter school.

**School
Leader
Capacity**

Note that the application should not refer to the experiences of an Educational Service Provider or another company (such as a back-office service provider) that will provide services to the school. Only the school leader OR a member of the school leadership team may respond to the prompts below. In addition to submitting their resume, the school leader must at least respond to prompts 2 & 3 or prompts 4 & 5.

- (1) Provide as part of Appendix B the resume of the proposed school leader.
- (2) Describe the school(s) or academic program(s) for which you, the proposed school leader,

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have been responsible. Describe your leadership role(s) and primary responsibilities at the relevant school(s) or academic program(s). The summary should describe the impact that these responsibilities had on the success of the relevant entity.

- (3) Provide multiple years of student performance data under your leadership. This data must include but is not limited to: proficiency and growth on either state or national standardized tests.
- (4) Describe a leadership position you have held in which you were responsible for the operations and/or finances of a program or organization. Describe your leadership role and primary responsibilities at the relevant program or organization. The summary should describe the impact that these responsibilities had on the success of the relevant entity.
- (5) Provide data or evidence that speaks to the organizational and/or financial viability of the program/organization for which you were responsible as a leader.

Experienced Operator Application

If you are an experienced operator, no later than 3:00 pm CT on Friday, March 2nd, you should submit five sets of documents to each authorizer to which you are applying: a proposal overview ([new operator](#) or [experienced operator](#)), an application, a [finances template](#), an [eligibility form](#), and background checks [that meet the background check guidelines](#). Follow the links to find the hyper-linked forms and guidelines above. Keep in mind that local school boards may collect additional information above and beyond the information in these hyperlinked forms and the questions included below as part of the application. All additional information should be clearly indicated on each local school board website no later than January 12, 2018.

Applications should include only the information requested below, saved in a single PDF file. Applications should be no more than 40 pages, excluding the requested Appendices A, B, C, and D. There are no page limits for individual sections except for the Executive Summary.

Please clearly label each section of your application. There are no specific format requirements for the application that you submit, but keep in mind that your application is a professional document. The quality of the document that you submit should reflect the quality of the school that you propose to open. Evaluators will be able to navigate well-organized, effectively-edited documents easily, thereby focusing their energy on reviewing the content of each application.

The overview template and finances template should both be submitted as excel files. All background checks should be submitted in a single PDF file. The eligibility form should be submitted as a PDF file as well.

The purpose of this application is to assess the potential of charter applicants to produce high-quality student outcomes exceeding the results that charter schools must achieve to remain in operation.

Executive Summary

Provide a two-page overview of your proposed network, including:

- (1) The outcomes you will achieve;
- (2) The key components of your scale strategy; and
- (3) Your approach to mitigating the threats most likely to hinder your success.

Past School Performance

In your proposal overview you provided performance data on the schools your organization currently operates or has previously operated. If necessary, provide a brief accompanying narrative that describes your organization's success educating a similar demographic population to the population you intend to educate in Louisiana. Please note that the charter authorizer(s) to which you applied or the Department may contact your other authorizers.

In addition, describe the causes that led to and the current status of:

- (1) Any performance deficiencies or compliance violations that have led to authorizer intervention;
- (2) Any litigation involving your organization or a school that you operate; and,
- (3) Any material audit findings for your organization or a school that you operate.

Academics

Applicants that currently operate a charter school in Louisiana are not required to complete this section.

- (1) Describe the academic needs of the student population you propose to serve. Explain how you will set, and measure progress towards, performance goals that put your students on a path towards achieving your vision. Include your plan to gather baseline data necessary to establish goals.
- (2) For all core content and mission-related subject areas:
 - Identify the curricula that your school will use and your reasons for these choices;
 - Identify the interim assessments you will use and how these align to the curricula;
 - Describe your professional development plans for teachers and how they connect to the curricula and assessments.
- (3) Describe the system by which your instructional staff will design interventions for all students.
- (4) If you are proposing a specialized school⁴, describe the concrete structures, policies, and practices that will differentiate your school from options already available to the community you propose to serve.
- (1) *(Applicable to applicants proposing to serve grades 9-12)* Provide an example of a daily schedule for a student attending your school as well as your school's academic calendar.

Growth Plan

- (1) Describe the specific student population that your proposed school(s) will serve. Identify the needs of your intended student population.
- (2) *(Applicable to groups applying for multiple sites)*. Describe the number of schools that you plan to open in Louisiana every year for at least the next five years, the year in which each school will open, and how the organization will adapt to meet changing community needs. If your network operates multiple models, identify the model that you will open in each location.

Scale Strategy & Risk Mitigation

This section does not apply to Louisiana-based operators that run multiple schools and are applying for a school in a district in which they already operate.

- (1) Describe the steps that you will take to scale your model to new sites, including the people involved and the resources contributed both by the parent organization and the new school(s).
- (2) If your organization operates schools in other states, compare your efforts to scale operations to Louisiana to past scale efforts in other states.
- (3) Identify the greatest new threats to your success and the steps you will take to minimize the possibility that the threats you identified will prevent you from achieving your targeted outcomes.

⁴ Examples of a specialized school are: single-sex schools, arts integration schools, or schools focused on Students with Disabilities.

- Board Readiness**
- (1) Describe the roles necessary on the board, the responsibilities that align with each role, and identify who will play that role on the board. As Appendix A, provide a one-page resume for each of your identified board members. One-page resumes will not count towards the page limit.
 - (2) Describe how the board will monitor the school's overall performance.
 - (3) Describe the steps the board will take to evaluate the school leader. Specifically, describe:
 - The information the board will collect;
 - The systems by which the board will collect information;
 - The standards - including and in addition to student performance goals- the board will use to evaluate information it collects; and,
 - The process(es) by which the board will evaluate information and make decisions.
 - (4) Describe the process by which your board identifies potential conflicts of interest before making decisions.
 - (5) Develop the process by which you will develop and train your board.

- Financial Readiness**
- (1) Complete the financial template.
 - (2) Do you plan to use a financial manager or a back-office service provider? If the entity that will provide your financial services has been chosen, please provide its name. If that entity is an individual financial manager, please provide his / her one-page resume as Appendix B.
 - (3) To whom will your financial manager or back-office service provider report: the school leader or the board?
 - (4) Describe your approach to budgeting, including an explanation of your approach to cutting costs if faced (as schools so often are) with a budget shortfall.
 - (5) Describe the accounting and control systems you will install, including essential checks, balances, and segregation of duties. Please indicate how a culture of proper financial controls and reporting will become an essential component of your organizational culture

Educational Services Provider Contract

Complete this section if applicable. If your non-profit plans to use an Educational Service Provider (ESP), please provide as Appendix C a copy of the ESP contract that your non-profit board will sign with the Educational Service Provider that you have selected. Additionally, please provide an independent audit of the ESP as Appendix D.

School Leader Capacity (if applicable)

Note that the application should not refer to the experiences of an Educational Service Provider or another company (such as a back-office service provider) that will provide services to the school. Only the school leader OR a member of the school leadership team may respond to the prompts below. The school leader must at least respond to prompts 2 & 3 or prompts 4 & 5.

- (1) Provide as part of Appendix A the resume of the proposed school leader.
- (2) Describe the school(s) or academic program(s) for which you, the proposed school leader, have been responsible. Describe your leadership role(s) and primary responsibilities at the relevant school(s) or academic program(s). The summary should describe the impact that these responsibilities had on the success of the relevant entity.
- (3) Provide multiple years of student performance data under your leadership. This data must include but is not limited to: proficiency and growth on either state or national standardized tests.
- (4) Describe a leadership position you have held in which you were responsible for the operations and/or finances of a program or organization. Describe your leadership role and primary responsibilities at the relevant program or organization. The summary should describe the impact that these responsibilities had on the success of the relevant entity.
- (5) Provide data or evidence that speaks to the organizational and/or financial viability of the program/organization for which you were responsible as a leader.