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Louisiana Charter Application

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State Superintendent of Education

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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 11, 2019.

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 specific categories of eligibility listed in Bulletin 126 Chapter 5: Application and Approval Process for BESE-Authorized Charter Schools.

- 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 special considerations I should be aware of as I complete my application?

There are several special considerations that may or may not apply to applicant groups:

- 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.

- Applicants may submit a proposal for a virtual charter school. A virtual charter school (sometimes called an online charter school) serves students primarily through online instruction as opposed to in-person instruction. In addition to answering the questions in the common charter application, virtual charter school applicants should ensure that they complete the "Virtual School" tab of the new operator or experienced operator overview template and provide any additional documentation where necessary.

- Applicants may submit a proposal for an alternative charter school. Alternative schools address student behavior, dropout prevention, dropout recovery, and/or credit recovery through alternative educational placements; serve students self-selecting due to extenuating personal circumstances; and do not exist only for students who are academically advanced, gifted, talented, or pursuing specific areas of study (arts, engineering, medical, technical, etc.). Alternative education schools must be approved by BESE in order to be considered an alternative school. For details on the timeline and process for BESE approval as an alternative school, please review the "Alternative Designation" tab of the new operator or experienced operator overview template.

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 11, 2019.

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 2020.

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 14, 2018, and is due on March 1, 2019. Local school boards can request additional information from applicants if they post that information to their websites no later than January 11, 2019.

- Local school boards must consider applications that they receive on or before June 7, 2019. 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 7, 2019, or authorizes an applicant to open a school but imposes conditions that the applicant finds unacceptable.

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[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.

- 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.

2019 Charter Applicant Timeline

Date	Relevant Applicants	Activity
Friday, December 14	All applicants	Department releases common application and Toolbox with application resources.
Friday, January 11	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 8	State Applicants	If applicable, applicants notify BESE of their intent to apply for a charter school by emailing Andrew.Shachat@la.gov.
Friday, March 1	All applicants	Charter applications are due, inclusive of the following five components: the overview template (new operator or experienced operator), answers to all applicable application questions, the finances template, a completed eligibility form, and background checks.
Friday, June 7	Local school board applicants	Deadline for local school boards to consider applications.
Monday, June 10	Local school board applicants	If applicable, local school board applicants notify BESE of their intent to appeal a local school board decision and appeal as a Type 2 charter school by emailing Andrew.Shachat@.la.gov.
Friday, June 21	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 11, 2019 local school boards must post on their websites the instructions for submitting a charter proposal.

- To submit a charter proposal to BESE, please email Andrew.Shachat@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 11, 2019.

- 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 11, 2019, local school boards must post to their websites the contact information for a primary contact for charter school application questions.

- Andrew Shachat is the primary charter application process contact for the Louisiana Department of Education. He can be reached via email at [Andrew.Shachat@la.gov.](mailto:Andrew.Shachat@la.gov)

New Operator Application

If you are a new operator, no later than 3:00 pm CT on Friday, March 1st you should submit five documents to each authorizer to which you are applying: a new operator proposal overview, a completed 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 11, 2019.

Applications should include only the information requested below, saved in a single PDF file. Please clearly label each section of your application with headings that match the headings of the application. Applications should be no more than 50 pages, excluding the requested Appendices, which should be no more than 200 pages. There are no page limits for individual sections except for the Executive Summary.

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 that meet, if not exceed, the expectations 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 both of 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 by using 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.

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 the baseline data necessary to establish these goals.

(2) For all core content and mission-related subject areas:

(a) Identify the curricula that your school will use and your reasons for these choices;

(b) Identify the interim assessments you will use and how these align to the curricula;

(c) Describe your professional development plan for teachers and how this plan is linked to the curricula and assessments.

(3) Describe the system by which your instructional staff will design interventions for all students. If you are applying for a virtual school, additionally describe the system by which struggling students will receive in-person instruction, including the location for providing these services, the transportation services that will be available, and a plan for evaluating struggling students.

(4) *[If applicable]* If you are proposing a specialized school[2], 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) Will the curricula proposed in Academics Question (2)(a) be used to instruct and support Students with Disabilities? If not, please describe the curricula used.
	(3) Describe your plan to identify, evaluate, and serve English Learners. Include your staffing plan for serving English Learners.
	(4) Will the curricula proposed in Academics Question (2)(a) be used to instruct and support English Learners? If not, please describe the curricula used.
School Staff	(1) Provide an organizational chart. 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 how you will 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. Additionally, describe the behavior expectations of your school as well as the practices that will foster and uphold those expectations.

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[2] Examples of a specialized school include, but are not limited to: single-sex schools, arts integration schools, or schools focused on Students with Disabilities. The specialization of a specialized school should be integral to, at a minimum, the vision, structure, and academic model of the school.

Mission Critical Partners [*If applicable*]	*Applicable only to groups with mission critical partnerships. Mission-critical partner organizations are organizations that will play a significant role in the operation of the school and its progress toward its mission and vision. These organizations should provide services that align with the school's educational model. For example, an arts organization that provides services to students in an arts integration model charter school would be considered a mission critical partner.*

(1) *[If applicable]* Describe the mission-critical partnerships that your school has established and the terms of these partnerships.

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) 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.

(2) To whom will your financial manager or back-office service provider report: the school leader or the board?

(3) 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.

(4) 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 *[If applicable]*

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

(1) *[If applicable]* Describe the activities that your founding team has conducted since your last application to improve your readiness to start a charter school.

School Leadership Team 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. All responses in this section must speak specifically to the school leadership team that will be employees of and oversee the operation of the proposed school.

(1) Provide (as part of Appendix B) the resume for every member of the school leadership team. These should only be the senior most individuals responsible for the academic, organizational, and financial operations of the school who report either directly to the board or the school leader.

(2) Describe the school(s) and/or academic program(s) for which the school leadership team has been responsible. Describe their leadership role(s) and primary responsibilities at the relevant school(s) and/or academic program(s). The response should describe, using data where possible, the impact that these individuals had on their school(s) and/or academic program(s).

(3) Describe relevant leadership positions that the proposed school leadership team has held in which they were responsible for the operations and/or finances of program(s) and/or organization(s). Describe the leadership roles that were held and primary responsibilities for the relevant program(s) and/or organization(s). The summary should describe the impact that these responsibilities had on the success of the relevant entities.

(4) Provide multiple years of student academic performance data under the proposed school's leadership team. This data must include, but is not limited to, proficiency and growth on state and national standardized tests (where available), and data on graduation rates and growth for applicants proposing to serve high schools.

(5) Provide data or evidence that speaks to the organizational and/or financial viability of the program(s) and/or organization(s) for which members of the school leadership team were responsible as a leader.

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Experienced Operator Application

If you are an experienced operator, no later than 3:00 pm CT on Friday, March 1st , you should submit five sets of documents to each authorizer to which you are applying: an experienced operator proposal overview, a completed 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 11, 2019.

Applications should include only the information requested below, saved in a single PDF file. Please clearly label each section of your application with headings that match the headings of the application. Applications should be no more than 40 pages, excluding the requested Appendices, which should be no more than 200 pages. There are no page limits for individual sections except for the Executive Summary.

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 that meet, if not exceed, the expectations 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. Please 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	(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:

    (a) Identify the curricula that your school will use and your reasons for these choices;

    (b) Identify the interim assessments you will use and how these align to the curricula;

    (c) 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. If you are applying for a virtual school, additionally describe the system by which struggling students will receive in-person instruction, including the location for providing these services, the transportation services that will be available, and a plan for evaluating struggling students.

(4) If you are proposing a specialized school[3], 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 demographics of the 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 only applying to operate one or two additional new schools]

(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) *[Applicable to groups that operate 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.

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-

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[3] Examples of a specialized school include, but are not limited to: single-sex schools, arts integration schools, or schools focused on Students with Disabilities. The specialization of a specialized school should be integral to, at a minimum, the vision, structure, and academic model of the school.

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.

(6) *[Applicable to groups applying to open a school in a region they do not currently operate in]* Describe your plan for obtaining regional board representation for your proposed school(s).

Financial Readiness

(1) 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.

(2) To whom will your financial manager or back-office service provider report: the school leader or the board?

(3) 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.

(4) 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 [If applicable]

(1) If your non-profit plans to use an Educational Service Provider (ESP), please provide as an additional appendix a copy of the ESP contract that your non-profit board will sign with the ESP that you have selected. Additionally, please provide an independent audit of the ESP as part of that additional appendix.

School Leadership Team Capacity *[If applicable]*

[Not applicable to groups that have operated two or more schools for at least three years each] 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. All responses in this section must speak specifically to the school leadership team that will oversee the operation of the proposed school.

(1) Provide (as part of Appendix B) the resume for every member of the school leadership team. These should only be the senior most individuals responsible for the academic, organizational, and financial operations of the school who report either directly to the board or the school leader.

(2) Describe the school(s) and/or academic program(s) for which the school leadership team has been responsible. Describe their leadership role(s) and primary responsibilities at the relevant school(s) and/or academic program(s). The response should describe, using data where possible, the impact that these individuals had on their school(s) and/or academic program(s).

(3) Describe relevant leadership positions that the proposed school leadership team has held in which they were responsible for the operations and/or finances of program(s) and/or organization(s). Describe the leadership roles that were held and primary responsibilities for the relevant program(s) and/or organization(s). The summary should describe the impact that these responsibilities had on the success of the relevant entities.

(4) Provide multiple years of student academic performance data under the proposed school's leadership team. This data must include, but is not limited to, proficiency and growth on state and national standardized tests (where available), and data on graduation rates and growth for applicants proposing to serve high schools.

(5) Provide data or evidence that speaks to the organizational and/or financial viability of the program(s) and/or organization(s) for which members of the school leadership team were responsible as a leader.