

# Louisiana Believes

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## Charter Authorization: District Resources

# Objectives

This presentation will:

1. Describe the role of a charter school authorizer
2. Outline resources available to districts as charter school authorizers

# Authorizer Job Description

Authorizers establish and uphold a consistent set of performance expectations across five sets of processes:

1. School District needs analysis
2. New school approval
3. Pre-opening
4. Routine oversight and intervention
5. High-stakes accountability decisions

The following slides will review each of these processes and resources available to districts in developing and executing these processes.

# District Needs Analysis

**All school systems annually evaluate their needs and select strategies, including charter schools, for serving students who are being underserved.**

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## Components of Needs Analysis

| Component            | Purpose  |
|----------------------|--|
| Assess Needs         | Authorizers should consider: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. How many students are there in the district?</li><li>2. How many seats are available by school and grade level?</li><li>3. How many of those are high quality?</li></ol> |
| Identify Root Causes | Authorizers should consider: Why is the district struggling to make all of its seats high quality?   |
| Select Strategies    | Authorizers should consider: What might the district do to increase the quality of these seats?  |

# District Needs Analysis Resources

**The following resources available on the Louisiana Believes website will assist authorizers in assessing the needs of their district:**

1. [School System Planning Guide](#): This document provides an overview of the components of effective school system planning, as well as steps districts can take after assessing the needs of their schools and system.
2. [Secure Reporting System](#): This document provides guidance on the Secure Reporting System, a data exploration tool for principals and superintendents, which provides information on school system, school, student, and teacher performance.

# New School Approval

**All authorizers in Louisiana are required annually to run a new charter school application process using the common application and timeline approved by BESE.**

## Typical New School Approval Timeline

| Activity  | Date                        |
|---|-----------------------------|
| BESE approves common application and timeline                   | December                    |
| LDE provides charter application process training for districts | December                    |
| Districts post charter application to their websites            | January                     |
| Charter applications due  | Late February / Early March |
| Local school boards make new charter decisions                  | Early June                  |

Authorizers establish expectations for charter applications, select an external evaluator to review applications against those expectations, and recommend schools for approval based on the evaluations they receive.

# New School Approval Resources

**The district charter authorization website lists resources that will assist authorizers in developing and conducting a new school approval process:**

1. [District Charter Application Presentation](#): This presentation outlines the requirements of local school district application processes as well as an overview of the common charter application.
2. [District Website Template](#): This is an example of how districts can post charter application information on their respective websites.
3. [Common Charter Application](#): All districts are required to adopt the common charter application approved annually by BESE. Districts can find that document linked here.

# Pre-Opening

**Before an authorizer allows an approved school to open, the school must complete a series of checks established by their authorizer, culminating in the signing of a charter school contract.**

## Typical Pre-Opening Timeline

| Activity  | Date           |
|---|----------------|
| Local school boards approve new schools         | June           |
| New schools complete pre-opening steps          | January – June |
| Charter schools sign contracts with authorizers | Summer         |
| New charter schools open                        | August         |

A charter contract communicates the performance expectations to which the authorizer will hold schools accountable during the contract term. An authorizer's pre-opening checklist requires schools to meet legal requirements and set up operations prior to opening.



# Pre-Opening Process Resources

**Districts can use the following resources in developing and executing their pre-opening processes after approving charter schools:**

1. [Model Pre-Opening Checklist](#): This is an example of a pre-opening process that a district could follow. All districts should additionally consider necessary steps in this process that may be unique to them.
2. [Model Charter School Contract](#): This is an example of a contract that districts could use with a charter school. Again, all districts should additionally consider necessary provisions that may be unique to them and, therefore, not included in this model.

# Annual Oversight and Interventions

**Every year, authorizers review and evaluate the performance of charter schools against academic, financial, and organizational performance indicators.**

## Components of Annual Oversight

| Component                             | Purpose  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Routine data and document submissions | Review data and documents against performance indicators.  |
| Site visits                           | Observe charter school performance against performance indicators.   |
| Interventions                         | Notify charter schools when they violate expectations and communicate requirements for returning to good standing.     |
| Annual review                         | Summarize academic, financial, and organizational performance over the course of the year based on on-going oversight. |

# Annual Oversight and Interventions Resources

**The district charter authorization website lists resources that will assist authorizers to develop their own Charter School Performance Compact as well as conduct oversight activities:**

1. [District Charter School Oversight Presentation](#): This presentation provides information on conducting annual reviews as well as the Charter School Performance Compact.
2. [Model District CSPC](#): The Department's annual review measures a school's performance against standards enumerated in the Charter School Performance Compact. Districts can adopt this model district CSPC or use it as a resource in developing their own.
3. [Model Monitoring Calendar](#): This provides an example of the monitoring steps a district might take on an annual basis for all charter schools.
4. [Model Monitoring Checklists](#): These are checklists that a district can use when conducting site visits, file review, or other monitoring activities.

# High-Stakes Accountability

**Authorizers manage the portfolio of charter schools they have authorized by deciding whether to renew a charter school’s contract and the length of that renewal term.**

## High-Stakes Accountability Decisions

| Decision   | When Made                    | Description                                    |
|------------|------------------------------|--|
| Extension  | Fall of Year 4               | Whether the school stays open for a fifth year |
| Renewal    | Fall – last year of contract | Whether the school gets a new contract         |
| Revocation | In extenuating circumstances | Whether the school closes immediately          |

Authorizers base high-stakes accountability decisions on the set of expectations, derived from policy and included in the charter contract, that the authorizer has communicated since the application process and pre-opening and monitored annually through regular oversight.

# High Stakes Accountability Resources

**Districts may reference the resources below in both establishing their board's policy related to extension and renewal as well as communicating their expectations in charter school contracts.**

1. Chapters 13 & 15 of [Bulletin 126](#): BESE lists the requirements that schools must satisfy in order to be granted extension and renewal. Districts may refer to this in developing their own such policy.
2. [Model Charter School Contract](#): This is an example of a contract that districts could use with a charter school. Again, authorizers base high-stakes accountability decisions on the set of expectations included in the charter contract.
3. [Model District CSPC](#): High stakes accountability decisions are based upon a school's performance against standards enumerated in the Charter School Performance Compact. Districts can adopt this model district CSPC or use it as a resource in developing their own.
4. [Model Accountability Calendar](#): This provides an example of a calendar of steps leading up to district extension and renewal decisions.