

Louisiana Believes

Charter Authorizer Responsibilities

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Objectives

This presentation will:

1. Define the role of a charter school
2. Describe the role of a charter school authorizer

Role of Charter Schools

Charter School Framework

Charter Schools are independent public schools that are granted operational autonomy and are held accountable for improved student achievement.

Three basic principles of charter schools

Autonomy

Charter school leaders and boards are free to make decisions about staffing, developing curriculum, structuring the school day, and other factors to meet the needs of their students.

Accessibility

Parents select the school their child attends

Accountability

Charter schools are held to high academic, financial, and organizational standards. They are closed if performance is consistently low.

Autonomy Over Operational Decisions

Charter schools are public schools that benefit from increased levels of autonomy in exchange for stronger accountability.

Charter school leaders have autonomy over:

- The school's mission
- The curriculum and structure of the school day
- Budgeting and how to allocate the school's financial resources
- Daily schedule and yearly calendar
- Staffing

Accountable for School Performance

In exchange for this autonomy, charter schools face increased accountability. The authorizer of each charter school establishes these standards of accountability.

The state department requires schools to:

- Achieve pre-established academic outcomes for students
- Uphold financial and organizational standards

Charter schools that do not adhere to the standards set by their authorizers in these areas can face accountability actions up to and including closure.

Role of Charter Authorizers

Authorizer Job Description

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

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

School Portfolio Analysis

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

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

Questions?

Contact Information

Contact David.Shepard@la.gov with questions.