

# Louisiana Believes

## **Believe and Succeed: Louisiana's Initiative to Transform Struggling Schools**

Grant Application

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State Superintendent of Education

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## I. Introduction to Believe and Succeed

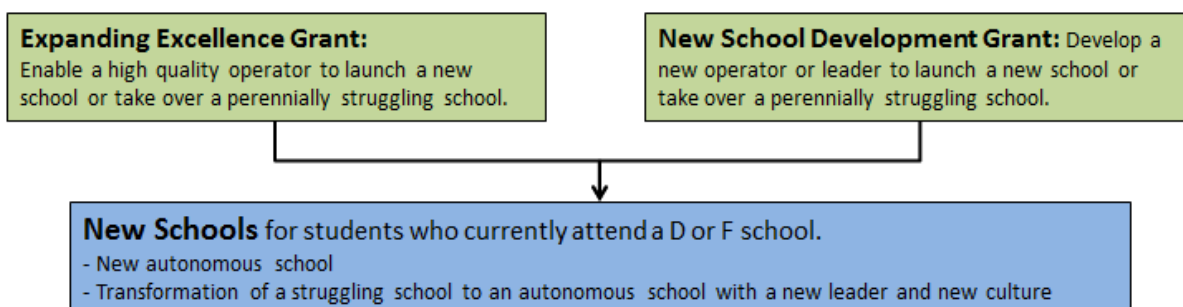
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The Louisiana Department of Education is committed to providing pathways to a positive and productive future for the nearly 160,000 students who currently attend a D or F school in Louisiana. Over the last year much progress has been made; 40,000 fewer students now attend D and F schools in Louisiana. Yet, more must be done to ensure that every child has a pathway to productive citizenship within their community and within our state. To achieve this goal, the Louisiana Department of Education is proud to announce the second annual **Believe and Succeed: Louisiana's Initiative to Transform Struggling Schools**.

Through Believe and Succeed, the Department will provide grants to Local Educational Agencies, nonprofits, and individuals. All grants will fund projects that directly result in the creation of a new educational pathway for students who currently attend a D or F school.

Applicants may apply for one or more of the following grants. More information on each grant, including eligibility to apply for each grant opportunity, can be found on the following page.

### Two Types of Grants



### Timeline

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Event	Date
Release of Believe and Succeed Application.....	Tuesday, December 17
Applications Due .....	Friday, March 7
Formal BESE Approval of Grant Recipients .....	Wednesday, August 13

### Contact

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If you have questions about Believe and Succeed, please email [david.shepard@la.gov](mailto:david.shepard@la.gov).

### Related Opportunities

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- **Believe and Prepare** provides educator preparation innovation grants to consortia of schools, districts, and educator programs. For more information contact [julie.stephenson@la.gov](mailto:julie.stephenson@la.gov).
- Districts may seek **School Improvement Grants** to implement whole school improvement efforts at the state's lowest performing schools. For more information, contact [john.hanley@la.gov](mailto:john.hanley@la.gov).

## II. Detailed Overview of Grant Opportunities

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Applicants may apply for one or more of the following grants. Grants provide funding for the 2014-2015 school year.

Grant	Purpose	Eligible Applicants
Expanding Excellence	Grants will provide start-up costs that enable a high-quality school operator to launch a new school that will serve students who currently attend D and F schools.	Louisiana school districts may apply. Louisiana nonprofit organizations may apply. <sup>1</sup>
New School Development	Grants will fund the development of new, autonomous schools that serve students who currently attend D and F schools. Grants will: (1) Fund the participation of a high-potential school leader in a leadership development or incubation experience. (2) Enable a high-quality district turnaround organization to guide a district through the process of empowering high-quality school leaders to run autonomous district schools.	Louisiana LEAs, Louisiana nonprofit organizations, and individuals may apply.

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<sup>1</sup> Charter organizations may not apply directly for Expanding Excellence grants. Charter organizations seeking Expanding Excellence grants must identify a district or a distinct non-profit organization – an organization that does not hold a charter – to complete and submit an Expanding Excellence grant application on their behalf.

# Application for New School Development Grants

### **III. Overview of New School Development Grants**

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The Louisiana Department of Education envisions a future in which all students have the opportunity to learn in an educational environment appropriately suited to their needs and ambitions. By awarding New School Development grants, the Department will invest in the most promising proposals that place highly-skilled leaders in a position to lead new schools that provide pathways to success for students who currently attend D and F schools.

### **IV. Eligibility**

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Applicants may submit a New School Development grant application that conforms to one of the following frameworks:

**Local school districts, charter organizations, nonprofits, and individuals may apply for funds to:**

- Send one or more high-potential school leader candidates through a high-quality leadership development program. School leadership candidates should be put in a position to run a school with autonomy upon completion of their leadership development program.

**Local school districts may also apply for funds to:**

- Contract with a district turnaround organization that both provides a high-quality leadership development experience to high-potential school leader candidates and works with the district to implement structural reforms that will allow the leadership candidates to lead autonomous schools upon the completion of their development experience.

### **V. Key Terms**

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- **Leadership Development Program:** Successful applicants might propose:

- A fellowship with a nationally-recognized school leadership development program
- A university-based leadership development program
- A fellowship associated with a specific high-quality charter management organization
- An apprenticeship at a successful school
- A rigorous self-designed program

A [listing](#) of sample leadership development programs can be found in the Department's online [Toolbox](#) with resources for Believe and Succeed applicants.

- A **new, autonomous school** can be either a charter school or a traditional public school run directly by a school district. A new, autonomous school can also be either a fresh start school or a transformation of an already existing traditional public school. In an autonomous school, the school leader must have complete freedom over budgetary, curricular, and staffing decisions. In order to convert a traditional public school to a new, autonomous school, the current school leader must be replaced by a new school leader who is given the autonomy to reset the school culture.

- **Track Record:** Applicants must present data that demonstrates that the leadership development organization or charter organization incubator they have chosen has a history of success. For example, leadership development organizations should be able to present data that demonstrates whether their alumni go on to lead successful schools after graduating.

## **VI. Funding**

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- Believe and Succeed is a **competitive** grant program. The Department would like to be able to fund all proposals that meet Believe and Succeed eligibility criteria at some level. However, if the number of high-quality applications exceed the number of proposals for which funding is available, proposals that align more closely with the application criteria are more likely to be funded.
- The Department is able to provide **partial funding** in cases in which part of an application aligns with the objectives of Believe and Succeed.
- In two scenarios, **funding may be contingent** upon the occurrence of some other event.
  - (1) If an applicant submits an application to send a promising leader through a leadership development program, the application can only be funded upon demonstration that the promising leader has been accepted to the leadership development program.
  - (2) If an applicant submits a Believe and Succeed application and a charter application simultaneously, and if the Believe and Succeed application describes a plan to prepare for the launch of the charter school, then the Believe and Succeed application may be approved by BESE contingent upon the approval of the charter application.
- Applicants are encouraged but not required to provide **matching funding**. While the level of match does not factor directly into the evaluation of a Believe and Succeed proposal, it indicates the level of commitment of the applicant or a community partner. Commitment to the creation of a new, autonomous school will be factored into the review of every proposal.
- New School Development grants will be funded from multiple sources, one of which is federal **1003(a) School Improvement funds**. District applicants should note that 1003(a) funds are the largest sources of funds behind Believe and Succeed, and these funds are designated as available only to districts. However, to be eligible to receive 1003(a) funds, district proposals must focus exclusively on schools listed on the Focus Schools list found [here](#).
- The **funding period** for New School Development Grants varies slightly depending on the source from which the grant is awarded. Applicants should plan to spend all grant funds between the date the grant is awarded by BESE and the end of the 2015 fiscal year. District applicants specifically targeting 1003(a) School Improvement funds may plan to spend funds for a slightly extended funding period ending on September 30, 2015.

## **VII. Application Criteria**

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New School Development Grants will provide funds to districts, charter management organizations, non-profits, and individual school leader candidates with a high-quality plan for the transformation of a

perennially struggling school or the creation of a new autonomous school to serve students who currently attend schools with D and F letter grades. Applications should address the following criteria.

**1. A sound plan for the creation and sustainability of one or more autonomous new schools**

Successful school leadership candidates must be given both the training needed to transition into new leadership roles, and, once in those roles, the autonomy needed to be successful. The same is true of new charter organizations. All applicants must describe the conditions and accountability relationships that will enable new charter organizations or the new school leader candidates to successfully open and sustain a new autonomous school upon completion of their leadership development or incubation program.

**2. High expectations and a clear plan for achieving success**

For schools to be successful, leadership must have a clear vision of what success looks like for students and faculty. Applicants should provide a succinct overview of the school mission and goals and should describe the standards they intend to use to measure student learning, the assessments they plan to use to measure their progress towards their goals, and their strategy for empowering teachers to lead students to academic achievement.<sup>2</sup>

**3. Alignment between the applicant’s plan for a new autonomous school and the leadership development program**

Applicants should choose a leadership development program or charter organization incubation program with a track record of success. The program should prepare the identified school and organization leader candidate(s) to lead students who currently attend low-performing schools to great academic gains. New School Development Grant applications will be evaluated based on the alignment between the chosen leadership development or organization incubation program and the applicant’s plan for one or more new autonomous schools.

**4. A rigorous school leader candidate selection process**

The Department will not directly assess the quality of the school leader candidate(s) or charter organization board members proposed in an application. Therefore, to ensure that the application process surfaces Louisiana’s most promising leaders, all school leader and charter organization board member candidates must qualify to participate in the leadership development or charter organization incubation program identified in the application prior to receiving funding.

The Department expects LEA and non-profit applicants to be able to articulate how they conducted a rigorous screening process for leadership and board member candidates selected for the

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<sup>2</sup> Traditional school district applicants should also describe what impact their school leadership candidates will have on student achievement in the district’s Focus Schools during the 2014-2015 school year, while leadership development candidates are still participating in their leadership development programs. This can include ongoing mentorship opportunities, collaboration with existing staff at the school, status checks on the progress the school is making prior to the new leadership, or other district strategies. 1003(a) School Improvement funding requires districts to be able to demonstrate that funds are being spent on activities that support school improvement efforts during the funding year.



leadership development or charter organization incubation program. Individual school leader candidates will be evaluated based not on their merits as a leader, but on the quality of their proposal for a new autonomous school. Applicants may be conditionally approved for a New School Development Grant pending a school leader candidate's acceptance into a leadership development program.

## VIII. Application

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Each application must include the following information, as required. Applications must be submitted via email to [david.shepard@la.gov](mailto:david.shepard@la.gov) no later 3:00pm CT on Friday, March 7<sup>th</sup>. Applications should be saved as a single PDF document. Any questions that arise during the application process should be addressed to [david.shepard@la.gov](mailto:david.shepard@la.gov).

<b>Cover Page</b>	Complete and include the cover page found on page 10 as the first page of your New School Development Grant application.
<b>Abstract</b>	Your abstract should summarize your project, goals, and expected outcomes. It should also outline how your application meets the criteria established for New School Development Grant recipients. Your abstract should not exceed one page, double-spaced.
<b>Project Narrative</b>	Describe your project design, project goals, and project impact. This section must address the New School Development Grant criteria and may not exceed five pages, double-spaced. Any charts, graphs, or examples should be included in the project narrative.
<b>Leadership Development or Charter Organization Incubation Program</b>	<p>Please provide the following information for the leadership development or charter organization incubation program with which you are partnering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Contact information for the partner</li><li>• The selection process used to identify the partner</li><li>• The program's track record of success</li></ul> <p>The section must not exceed four pages, double-spaced.</p>
<b>Budget</b>	Provide an itemized budget that clearly outlines the cost of the project and the amount of funding the Department is expected to match. District applicants should also complete and submit a separate <a href="#">budget template</a> for each school at which Believe and Succeed funds would be spent.
<b>Budget Narrative</b>	Provide a budget narrative that describes each item in the budget. Describe the assumptions that inform each item and explain how each item supports activities described in the project narrative. Please provide additional comments and explanations as deemed necessary. The budget narrative must not exceed two pages, double-spaced.
<b>Signed Assurances</b>	Provide a signed copy of the assurances including signatures from your board president and LEA superintendent, if applicable.
<b>Letter of Commitment</b>	If you are an LEA applicant planning to send a cohort of individuals into a leadership development program, provide a letter from your proposed leadership development program outlining responsibilities for each organization and their agreement with your LEA.

## New School Development Grant Application Cover Page

<b>Name of LEA or individual school leader candidate:</b>		
<b>Name of Leadership Development Program:</b>		
<b>Name of leadership development candidate(s):</b>		
<b>Amount of funding provided by the applicant:</b>	<b>Amount of funding requested from the State:</b>	
Please provide the following information for the primary contact for this application:		
<b>Name:</b>	<b>Phone Number:</b>	<b>Email:</b>
Please provide the following information for the LEA leader (LEA applicants only):		
<b>Name:</b>	<b>Phone Number:</b>	<b>Email:</b>
Please provide the following information for the LEA board president (LEA applicants only):		
<b>Name:</b>	<b>Phone Number:</b>	<b>Email:</b>

**New School Development Grant Application**  
**Assurances for LEA Applicants**

**For the LEA/Nonprofit board president and leader:**

If the autonomous school(s) described in this application does not open or is closed within its first two years of operation, the grant recipient may be required to re-pay to the state the state's contribution to the leadership development program.

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*Signature of Board President of LEA/Nonprofit* *Date*

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*Signature of LEA/Nonprofit Leader* *Date*

\* Please add a new signature line for all school leader candidate(s) proposed in this application.

# Application for Expanding Excellence Grants

## **IX. Overview of Expanding Excellence Grants**

Expanding Excellence grants encourage school operators that already operate successful schools in Louisiana or elsewhere to scale. Through Expanding Excellence grants, the Department will invest in the most promising proposals from school districts and Louisiana nonprofit partners to attract and support high-quality operators with plans to open new schools in communities with students who attend D and F schools.

## **X. Eligibility**

All Expanding Excellence grant applications must be submitted by a sponsor – either a school district or a nonprofit community partner with a vested interest in seeing the high-quality school operator expand. Sponsorship by a school district or nonprofit demonstrates that the school operator has support in the community to which they would like to expand.

Although charter operators are non-profit organizations, charter operators may not apply for an Expanding Excellence grant to fund their own expansion.

## **XI. Key Terms**

- A **sponsor** is a school district or a nonprofit community partner that writes a Believe and Succeed application on behalf of a school operator.
- **Track Record:** Applicants must present data that demonstrates that the school operator being sponsored in the Expanding Excellence grant has a history of success. The school operator should be able to provide statistically significant data demonstrating that their already existing schools outperform the traditional public schools that their students would have otherwise attended. The schools for which data is presented should also serve a similar student population to the student population that the school plans to serve as a result of their Expanding Excellence grant.

## **XII. Funding**

- Believe and Succeed is a **competitive** grant program. The Department would like to be able to fund all proposals that meet Believe and Succeed eligibility criteria at some level. However, if the number of high-quality applications exceed the number of proposals for which funding is available, proposals that align more closely with the application criteria are more likely to be funded.
- The Department is able to provide **partial funding** in cases in which part of an application aligns with the objectives of Believe and Succeed.
- If a sponsor submits a Believe and Succeed application at the same time as the sponsored school operator submits a charter application, the **Believe and Succeed application may be funded by BESE contingent upon the approval of the charter application.**
- Sponsors are encouraged but not required to provide **matching funding** to support the high-quality school operator that they would like to scale. While the level of match does not factor directly into the evaluation of a Believe and Succeed proposal, it indicates the level of commitment of the

applicant or a community partner. Commitment to the creation of a new, autonomous school will be factored into the review of every proposal.

- Expanding Excellence grants will be funded from multiple sources, one of which is federal **1003(a) School Improvement funds**. District applicants should note that 1003(a) funds are the largest sources of funds behind Believe and Succeed, and these funds are designated as available only to districts. However, to be eligible to receive 1003(a) funds, district proposals must focus exclusively on schools listed on the Focus Schools list found [here](#).
- The **funding period** for Expanding Excellence Grants varies slightly depending on the source from which the grant is awarded. Applicants should plan to spend all grant funds between the date the grant is awarded by BESE and the end of the 2015 fiscal year. District applicants specifically targeting 1003(a) School Improvement funds may plan to spend funds for a slightly extended funding period ending on September 30, 2015.

### **XIII. Application Criteria**

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Expanding Excellence grants enable local school districts and nonprofit organizations to attract proven school operators to communities where students currently attend D and F schools and to provide support during the pre-opening year. Sponsors must name a specific school operator in each Expanding Excellence Grant application. Applications should address the following criteria:

**(1) A commitment to serving a high-need student population.**

Applicants should demonstrate that the school operator they have chosen to sponsor will serve students who currently attend D and F schools, either by starting a new school or taking over a perennially struggling traditional district public school.

**(2) A track record of successfully operating schools that serve a similar student demographic population.**

Sponsors should be able to demonstrate that the organization with which they are working has a clear track record of improving the academic performance of student populations similar to the student population the organization plans to educate in their new school or takeover school. Track record can be based on the performance of existing schools within an organization's network or the previous measurable results of a proposed school leader.

**(3) Commitment from the sponsor to ensure that the school operator successfully opens a school serving the intended student population.**

Local sponsors – as opposed to the proposed school organization – should write and submit the Expanding Excellence Grant application in order to reward organizations that have secured local support for their efforts. Sponsors should describe their role in ensuring that the school operator successfully opens one or more schools to serve students who currently attend D and F schools.

## XIV. Application

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Each application must include the following information, as required. Applications must be submitted no later than Friday, March 7<sup>th</sup> at 3:00pm via email to [david.shepard@la.gov](mailto:david.shepard@la.gov). Applications should be saved as a single PDF document. Any questions that arise during the application process should be addressed to [david.shepard@la.gov](mailto:david.shepard@la.gov).

**NOTE:** The sponsoring organization, and not the school operator, should complete the application.

<b>Cover Page</b>	Complete and include the cover page found on page 17 as the first page of your Expanding Excellence Grant application.
<b>Project Narrative</b>	Applicants must address the application criteria. The project narrative must not exceed four pages, double-spaced. Any charts, graphs, or examples should be included in the program narrative.
<b>Budget</b>	Provide a proposed budget which clearly outlines the total request for funding and the amount of funding the Department is being asked to match. District applicants should also complete and submit a separate <a href="#">budget template</a> for each school at which Believe and Succeed funds would be spent.
<b>Budget Narrative</b>	Provide an itemized budget narrative for each budget category and detail how the budget supports activities described in the project narrative. The budget narrative should include additional comments and explanations as deemed necessary. It must not exceed two pages, double-spaced.
<b>Signed Assurances</b>	Provide a signed copy of the assurances.



## Expanding Excellence Grant Application Cover Page

<b>Name of partner organization providing matching funds:</b>		
<b>Name of charter organization:</b>		
<b>Amount of funding provided by the applicant:</b>	<b>Amount of funding requested from the State:</b>	
Please provide the following information for the primary contact for this application:		
<b>Name:</b>	<b>Phone Number:</b>	<b>Email:</b>
Please provide the following information for the partner organization leader		
<b>Name:</b>	<b>Phone Number:</b>	<b>Email:</b>
Please provide the following information for the charter organization board president		
<b>Name:</b>	<b>Phone Number:</b>	<b>Email:</b>

**Expanding Excellence Grant Application**  
**Assurances for LEA Applicants**

**For the partner organization board president and leader:**

If the autonomous school(s) described in this application does not open or is closed within its first two years of operation, the grant recipient may be required to re-pay to the State the State’s contribution to the expansion of the identified charter organization.

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*Signature of Board President* *Date*

**For the charter organization:**

Any charter organization that does not open and operate a school may be required repay to the state all of the expanding excellence funds the state contributed on their behalf.

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*Signature of Charter Organization Board President* *Date*

\* Please add a new signature line for all school leader candidate(s) proposed in this application.