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Louisiana Charter Application

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Everything You Need to Know to Complete a Louisiana Charter Application

How do I know if I am eligible to submit a charter application?

- 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 6, 2017.

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.
- Applicants may submit charter applications to one authorizer or to multiple authorizers. Local school boards and BESE accept a common charter application on the same deadline (Friday, February 24th, 2017). 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.
- 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 6, 2017.
- 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) that operates at least one school.
- Organizations that do not meet either of these criteria should complete the set of questions for new operators.
- 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.

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 2017.

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 6, 2016, and is due on February 24, 2017. Local school boards can request additional information from applicants if they post that information to their websites no later than January 6, 2017.
- Local school boards must consider applications that they receive on or before June 2, 2017. 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 2, 2017, 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 need to submit to BESE later in the process.**

Charter Applicant Timeline

Date	Relevant Applicants	Activity
Tuesday, December 6	All applicants	Department releases common application and Toolbox with application resources
Friday, January 6	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 5	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, February 24	All applicants	Charter applications are due – five components: proposal overview (new operator or experienced operator), application, finances template , eligibility form , background checks
Thursday, June 1	Local school board applicants	Deadline for local school boards to consider applications
Friday, June 2	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 9	Local school board applicants	Deadline for local school board applicants to appeal to BESE
Tuesday, August 15 – Wednesday, August 16	State applicants	BESE considers applications
Tuesday, October 17 – Wednesday, October 18	Appeals applicants	BESE considers applications on appeal

How do I submit my proposal?

- Local school boards and BESE utilize their own submission systems.
- No later than Friday, January 6, 2017 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. You will receive a user guide in addition to your username and password.

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. It also includes tools that are designed to help you write a proposal that meets BESE's expectations for quality.

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 6, 2017. 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 6, 2017, 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 may 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, February 24th, 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 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 6, 2017.

Applications should include only the information requested below, saved in a single PDF file. Applications should be no more than 60 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 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 in its entirety is considered 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, including:

- The problem that you are starting a school to address and why it needs to be addressed;
- The unique elements of your educational model that will meet the needs of your target student population; and,
- The expected outcomes for students both in the short run – after they graduate from your school – and in the long run, as adults.

Vision & Goals

- (1) Identify and describe in detail the problem that you are starting a school to address.
- (2) Provide a vision statement for your school.
- (3) Describe the mission of your school.
- (4) Explain the rationale for your proposed school's vision and mission.

- (5) Describe the performance goals that you will achieve to put students on the path towards achieving your vision. Provide the baseline data¹ used in establishing all performance goals. Include the goals that you will reach in years one through five, the length of your first charter contract.

Students

- (1) Describe the characteristics of the student population that your school will serve. The student population that you describe should be consistent with the enrollment projections that you provide in your proposal overview.
- (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 60-page limit.

Academics

- (1) 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.
- (2) Describe a day and a year in the life of a student at your school. Provide a weekly student schedule and a calendar of special events that will happen throughout the school's inaugural year.
- (3) Aside from the academic structures you have already addressed, describe the concrete structures, policies, and practices that you will implement in order to operationalize the mission and vision that you identified.²

Special Student Populations

- (1) Provide a detailed special education plan describing how you will ensure that all special education students succeed at your school. Describe plans for identifying, evaluating and serving, special education students. Include your staffing plan for special education.
- (2) Provide a detailed English Language Learner plan describing how you will ensure that all English Language Learners succeed academically and socially. Describe plans for identifying, evaluating and serving, special education students. Include your staffing plan for special education.

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.

¹ Including state accountability data.

² Structures are ways of grouping people (administrators, teachers, parents / guardians, and / or students). Policies are formal rules that govern how people interact. Practices are specific events, activities, or routine behaviors.

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

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- (2) Describe your administrator and 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.

Mission Critical Partners

- (1) For each mission-critical partner with which you already have a preliminary written agreement, provide a list of the services that are specified in the agreement. Describe why the partners you have selected are the best-fit organizations to provide the services you have listed.
- (2) Describe the expectations for all mission-critical partner organizations, how you will clearly communicate these expectations and ensure that mission-critical partners stay on track towards meeting expectations.

Culture

- (1) List and describe the values that will define your student culture. Provide your plan for instilling and maintaining student behavior expectations that correspond with these values.
- (2) Demonstrate that the system of policies and practices your school will implement for setting and maintaining student behavior expectations and norms.
- (3) Describe the steps that you will take to invest staff in the vision and to sustain their investment.
- (4) Define the norms that will shape the interactions between administrators and teachers and among teachers, the reason each norm is important, and the steps that you will take to establish and reinforce these norms.

Board Readiness

- (1) Describe the role that each board member will play 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) Identify the stakeholders whose partnership you have determined is necessary to your school's success. Describe what your board has done already to establish these relationships and explain what your board will do to deepen and sustain these relationships.
- (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.

**Financial
Readiness**

- (1) Do you plan to use a financial manager or a back-office service provider?
- (2) 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.

**Founder's
Submission**

For the prompts in the Founder's Submission section, both the board chair and the school leader should answer each question separately.

- (1) What vision and goals did you have for the organization in which you most recently held a formal leadership role?
- (2) What were the most important strategies that you implemented in order to ensure that your organization met its goals?
- (3) How did you set up your team to help them in understanding their role in helping the organization meet its goals?
- (4) How did your organization both monitor progress towards its goals and remain on track to meet its goals?
- (5) What relationships did you cultivate both in and outside of the organization for which you worked? How did they help you achieve your goals?

Experienced Operator Application

If you are an experienced operator, no later than 3:00 pm CT on Friday, February 24th, 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 6, 2017.

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 A, B, and C. 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:

- The outcomes you will achieve;
- The key components of your scale strategy; and
- 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:

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

Academics

- (1) 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.
- (2) Describe a day and a year in the life of a student at your school. Provide a weekly student schedule and a calendar of special events that will happen throughout the school's inaugural year.
- (3) Aside from the academic structures you have already addressed, describe the concrete structures, policies, and practices that you will implement in order to operationalize the mission and vision that you identified.⁴

Growth Plan

- (1) Describe the specific student population that your proposed school(s) will serve. Identify the needs of your intended student population.
- (2) 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.
- (3) Provide your organization's mission and vision. In what way will your growth in Louisiana align with your mission and contribute to your vision?

Scale Strategy

- (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 schools.
- (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) Describe your plan for embedding the fundamental features of the model that you described in your theory of change into the schools that you plan to open.

Risks and Associated Contingency Plans

- (1) Organizations that operate multiple schools should discuss the results of past scale efforts and lessons learned. Include particular challenges or troubles encountered and how you addressed them. Organizations that operate only one school should address challenges encountered while growing their initial school. Please address any changes to the leadership personnel or leadership structure of your organization in the last two years.
- (2) Identify the greatest new threats to your success.
- (3) Reflect on the measures you will take to minimize the possibility that the risks you identified in (1) and (2) will prevent you from achieving your targeted outcomes.

⁴ Structures are ways of grouping people (administrators, teachers, parents / guardians, and / or students). Policies are formal rules that govern how people interact. Practices are specific events, activities, or routine behaviors.

Board Readiness *Boards that do not currently oversee any BESE-authorized charter schools should respond to the following prompts.*

- (1) Describe the role that each board member will play 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) Identify the stakeholders whose partnership you have determined is necessary to your school's success. Describe what your board has done already to establish these relationships and explain what your board will do to deepen and sustain these relationships.
- (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.

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 B 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.

Founder's Submission *If your organization has not operated at least two schools for three years each, your school leader must complete the founder's submission. If your organization does not currently oversee any BESE-authorized charter schools, your board chair must as well.*

- (1) What vision and goals did you have for the organization in which you most recently held a formal leadership role?
- (2) What were the most important strategies that you implemented in order to ensure that your organization met its goals?
- (3) How did you set up your team to help them in understanding their role in helping the organization meet its goals?
- (4) How did your organization both monitor progress towards its goals and remain on track to meet its goals?
- (5) What relationships did you cultivate both in and outside of the organization for which you worked? How did they help you achieve your goals?
- (6) As Appendix E provide a one-page resume that demonstrates training to implement the school model. If you have led a school before, please include the school's performance results. The resume does not count against your page limit.

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