

# Louisiana Believes

## **Louisiana Charter Application**

John White

State Superintendent of Education

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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?***

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- 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 districts must publish any additional eligibility requirements to their websites no later than January 7, 2015.

### ***To which board(s) should I submit my application?***

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- Local school boards and the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) both have the authority to approve charter schools. To submit an application to BESE, applicants must fall into one of four specific categories, listed in [Charter Applicant 101](#).
- Applicants may submit charter applications to one authorizer or to multiple authorizers. Local school boards and BESE both accept a common charter application on the same deadline (Friday, March 6, 2015). Applicants may submit the same application to multiple authorizers or may craft a distinct application to submit to each authorizer.
- Local school boards may elect to ask additional questions, above and beyond the questions included in the common charter application. Local school districts must publish any additional questions to their websites no later than January 7, 2015.
- The Department has compiled a comprehensive set of resources to help you determine whether you should apply for a state-authorized charter school, a district-authorized charter school, or both. Those resources can be found in an online [Toolbox](#) on the Department's website.

### ***Are there any unique opportunities I should be aware of as I complete my application?***

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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 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 BESE or a local school board 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 has provided a more detailed explanation of the rules for becoming a corporate partner in [Charter Applicant 101](#).

## ***Which set of questions should I complete?***

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- 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 has already operated at least one school for at least one complete year or the organization has partnered with an Educational Service Provider (ESP) that has operated at least one school for at least one complete year.
- 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.
- 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 2016.

## ***When is the application due? What other dates do I need to know?***

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- The common application that all applicants must complete will be released by BESE on December 8, 2014, and is due on March 6, 2015. Local school boards can request additional information from applicants if they post that information to their websites no later than January 7, 2015.
- Local school boards must consider applications that they receive on or before Thursday, June 4, 2015. District applicants may elect to appeal to BESE if a district rejects their proposal, does not consider it on or before June 4, 2015, or authorizes an applicant to open a school but imposes conditions that the applicant finds unacceptable. In [Charter Applicant 101](#) the Department has published a more detailed explanation of the conditions that allow an applicant to appeal to BESE.
- The table below summarizes key application process dates. After an applicant submits an application to either BESE or a local school board, 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
Monday, December 8	All applicants	Department releases common application and <a href="#">Toolbox</a> with application resources
Wednesday, January 7	District applicants	Districts publish charter application information to their websites, including additional eligibility requirements and additions to the common application.

Friday, March 6	All applicants	Charter applications are due – four components: proposal overview ( <a href="#">new operator</a> or <a href="#">experienced operator</a> ), application, <a href="#">finances template</a> , <a href="#">eligibility form</a>
Thursday, June 4	District applicants	Deadline for local school boards to consider applications
Friday, June 12	District applicants	Deadline for district applicants to appeal to BESE
Wednesday, August 12	State applicants	BESE considers applications
Wednesday, October 14	Appeals applicants	BESE considers applications on appeal from districts

### ***How do I submit my proposal?***

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- BESE and each local school board utilize their own submission systems.
- No later than January 7, 2015, local school boards must post on their websites the instructions for submitting a charter proposal.
- To submit a charter proposal to BESE, please email [david.shepard@la.gov](mailto:david.shepard@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?***

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- 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?***

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- BESE and local school boards 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](#).
- Both BESE and local school boards 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 7, 2015. 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 school board meeting prior to the school board’s consideration of their application.

- School boards are not required to agree with the recommendation submitted by the independent reviewer that they hire.

## ***Who should I contact with questions?***

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- No later than January 7, 2015, local school boards must post to their websites the contact information for a primary contact for charter school application questions.
- Applicants may contact the Department for two reasons: (1) to ask questions about BESE's charter application process, and (2) if they are unable to identify or reach a primary charter application contact within a local school district. David Shepard is the primary charter application process contact at the Department. He may be reached via email at [david.shepard@la.gov](mailto:david.shepard@la.gov) or via phone at 225.342.7185.

## New Operator Application

If you are a new operator, no later than 3:00 pm CT on Friday, March 6<sup>th</sup>, you should submit four documents to each authorizer to which you are applying: a proposal overview ([new operator](#) or [experienced operator](#)), an application, a [finances template](#), and an [eligibility form](#). Follow the links to find the three hyper-linked forms above. Keep in mind that districts 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 district's website.

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 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 should be 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.

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|--------------------------|--|
| <b>Executive Summary</b> | Provide a two-page overview of your proposed school, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The problem that you are starting a school to address and why it needs to be addressed;</li><li>• The unique elements of your educational model that will meet the needs of your target student population; and,</li><li>• The expected outcomes for students both in the short run – after they graduate from your school – and in the long run, as adults.</li></ul> |
| <b>Vision</b>            | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>(1) Why do you want to start a school? Identify and describe in detail the problem that you are starting a school to address.</li><li>(2) Provide the mission of your school.</li><li>(3) Provide a vision for your school that clearly illustrates how your school will put students on a trajectory for lifelong success.</li></ol>  |
| <b>Students</b>          | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>(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.</li></ol>  |

- (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 50-page limit.
- (3) Describe the performance goals that you will achieve to put students on the path towards achieving your vision. Start with baseline data for all performance goals. Include the goals that you will reach in years one through five, the length of your first charter contract.

## **Theory of Change**

- (1) Identify your educational model. Describe the underlying theory that explains why your educational model will address the problem you have identified.
- (2) Describe the concrete structures, policies, and practices that you will implement in order to operationalize the theory you described in (1).<sup>1</sup>
- (3) Describe a day 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.
- (4) For all core content and mission-related subject areas:
  - Describe the teaching methods and curriculum that will be used;
  - Identify who will teach the material (school staff or partner organization); and,
  - Explain why the teaching methods and curriculum were selected.
- (5) Describe the systems you will use to reflect on your school's progress towards achieving its goals and to make course corrections as necessary.

## **Teachers and Partners**

- (1) Provide an organizational chart, including partner organizations. Include job descriptions that summarize the scope of work for all staff on the school leadership team.
- (2) Describe your teacher recruitment and retention strategy.
- (3) For each 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.
- (4) Describe the expectations for teachers and for all partner organizations. How will you clearly communicate these expectations and ensure that teachers and partners stay on track towards meeting expectations.

## **Culture**

- (1) Describe the values that will define your student culture. Also provide your plan for setting and maintaining positive student norms and behavior expectations.
- (2) Describe the steps that you will take to invest staff in the vision and to sustain their investment.
- (3) 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

teach 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. Appendix B will not count towards the 50-page limit.
- (2) Provide evidence of the board's readiness to leverage and sustain relationships with key stakeholders.
- (3) Describe the steps the board will take to ensure that the school leader keeps the school on track to achieve its vision. Specifically, describe:
  - The information the board will collect;
  - The systems by which the board will collect information;
  - The standards the board will use to evaluate information it collects; and,
  - The process(es) by which the board will evaluate information and make 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 and balances. Please indicate how a culture of proper financial controls and reporting will become an essential component of your organizational culture.

**Special  
Student  
Populations**

- (1) Provide a detailed special education plan describing how you will ensure that all special education students succeed academically and socially. Describe plans for recruiting, identifying, serving, and disciplining special education students. Include plans for involving families in special education decisions as well.
- (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 recruiting, identifying, and serving English Language Learners. Include plans for engaging non-English speaking families of English Language Learners as well.



## Experienced Operator Application

If you are an experienced operator, no later than 3:00 pm CT on March 6<sup>th</sup>, you should submit four documents to each authorizer to which you are applying: a proposal overview ([new operator](#) or [experienced operator](#)), an application, a [finances template](#), and an [eligibility form](#). Follow the links to find the three hyper-linked forms above. Keep in mind that districts 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 district's website.

Applications should include only the information requested below, saved in a single PDF file. Applications should be no more than 40 pages, excluding the requested Appendices A and B. 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 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.

### **Growth Plan**

- (1) 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 the demographic characteristics of the students to be served by each school. If your network operates multiple models, identify the model that you will open in each location.
- (2) If you are simultaneously opening new schools in other states or have submitted applications to open schools in new states, provide a list including the name and location of each school, the authorizer and application status for each application, and the number of students served by each proposed school.
- (3) Describe the vision for your organization after your growth plan has been implemented. In what way will your growth in Louisiana contribute to that vision?
- (4) Describe the specific student population that your proposed school(s) will serve. Identify the needs of your intended student population.

### **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 school district(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.

- Theory of Change**
- (1) Identify your educational model. Describe the underlying theory that explains why your educational model will address the problem you have identified.
  - (2) Describe the concrete structures, policies, and practices that you will implement in order to operationalize the theory you described in (1).<sup>2</sup>
  - (3) Describe a day 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.
  - (4) For all core content and mission-related subject areas:
    - Describe the teaching methods and curriculum that will be used;
    - Identify who will teach the material (school staff or partner organization); and,
    - Explain why the teaching methods and curriculum were selected.
  - (5) Describe the systems you will use to reflect on your school's progress towards achieving its goals and to make course corrections as necessary.
- 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.
  - (2) Identify the greatest new threats to your success.
  - (3) Describe any changes to the leadership personnel or leadership structure of your

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<sup>2</sup> 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.

organization over the last two years.

- (4) Reflect on the countermeasures you will take to minimize the possibility that the risks you identified in (1) – (3) will prevent you from achieving your targeted student outcomes.

## **Board Readiness**

Boards that do not currently oversee any charter schools in Louisiana should respond to the following prompts.

- (1) Describe the role that each board member will play on the board. As Appendix A, provide a one-page resume for each of your identified board members. Appendix A will not count towards the 40-page limit.
- (2) Provide evidence of the board’s readiness to leverage and sustain relationships with key stakeholders.
- (3) Describe the steps the board will take to ensure that the school leader keeps the school on track to achieve its vision. Specifically, describe:
  - The information the board will collect;
  - The systems by which the board will collect information;
  - The standards the board will use to evaluate information it collects; and,
  - The process(es) by which the board will evaluate information and make 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 you non-profit board will sign with the Educational Service Provider that you have selected.