

Louisiana Believes

# 2017 CHARTER APPLICATION PROCESS MANUAL

For Local School Boards and District Administrators

*A guide to running an evaluation process for charter schools  
applying to open in the fall of 2018 and beyond*

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## Introduction

Charter schools are grounded in the idea that the talented adults who work most closely with children should be given the freedom to make professional judgments about how to best meet each child's needs. In each charter school, the non-profit charter holder sets up a school with structures and leadership specifically tailored to the students who will attend. By authorizing charter schools, local school boards pay homage to the immense knowledge and skill that each teacher and school leader brings to work every day.

The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education has approved a schedule for district charter application processes. Districts must accept applications between January 6 and February 24, and all local school boards must make their approval decisions prior to June 1. To ensure that districts are prepared to begin receiving applications in January, the Department has created this manual, as well as a district charter application process webpage that includes a recorded webinar.

This manual serves three purposes. It describes:

1. Actions that districts must take to comply with all charter application process requirements,
2. Additional components above and beyond minimum requirements that districts may include, and
3. Common district practices in running compliant charter application processes.

Districts may use this manual to prepare for the annual charter school application process. In addition, districts may contact [david.shepard@la.gov](mailto:david.shepard@la.gov) with questions about the application process or the legal requirements for overseeing charter schools once they are authorized.

## Charter Process Framework

PHASE	OVERVIEW OF LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD ACTIVITIES
Before January 6, 2017	<p><b>Key Decisions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the common charter application, which can be found on the Department’s district charter application process webpage. Decide whether to ask additional questions not asked in the application or whether to add requirements to the application process. More information can be found on page 5.</li> <li>Charter applicants may apply for a charter to convert a traditional district school to a charter school. Local school boards must decide whether charter conversion applicants must earn support from parents and from school faculty. More information can be found on page 5.</li> </ul> <p><b>Legal Requirement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post the application and all legally required information to the district’s website. More information can be found on page 4.</li> </ul>
February 24, 2017 – June 1, 2017	<p><b>Legal Requirement</b></p> <p>If one or more charter applications are submitted,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hire a third-party independent evaluator to review the application(s).</li> <li>Notify all state legislators in whose legislative district the charter school would be located that the application has been received.</li> <li>Provide charter applicants with the opportunity to respond to a draft recommendation by the third-party evaluator.</li> <li>The school board must hold a public meeting at which all charter approval decisions are made.</li> </ul>
After June 1, 2017	<p><b>Legal Requirement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Notify all state legislators in whose jurisdiction the charter school would be located whether the application was approved or denied.</li> </ul>

## Legal Requirements for Local School Boards

State law and BESE policy assign the following responsibilities to local school boards during the charter school application process:

**1. Review and decide on each charter application within the timeline set by the state board.**

This year local school boards must review and vote on applications between March 4 and June 2.

**2. Notify state legislators of applications received for schools that would be located within their jurisdiction.**

RS 17:3983.1 requires local school boards to provide to state senators and representatives in whose legislative district a proposed charter school would be located the following information, both by electronic and postal mail:

- The date the proposal was submitted
- The name of the local school board to which the application was submitted
- The type of charter school the charter group seeks to operate
- The location of the proposed charter school

**3. Provide for an independent evaluation of the charter proposal by a third party with educational, organization, legal, and financial expertise.**

See page 6 for a description of common practices that districts use to work with third-party evaluators.

**4. Publicize via the district's website:**

- The timeline, guidelines, and all forms required for submitting a charter application;
- The timeline and process by which the school board will review applications; and
- The name and contact information for a primary point of contact for charter proposals.

**5. Provide applicants with the opportunity to respond to the independent evaluator's draft recommendation before the evaluator issues a final recommendation.**

**6. Hold a public meeting to receive public input on charter applications before making approval or denial decisions.**

**7. Notify state legislators of decisions made regarding applications for schools to be located within their jurisdiction.**

## Optional Charter Process Components

### ***Option to Require Submission of Additional Information***

A local school board may meet minimum website compliance requirements by completing the District Website Template and copying and pasting the text to their district website. Local school boards may also choose to post:

- Additional forms that charter applicants must complete, with district-specific questions
- Additional charter application process dates articulating district-specific deadlines
- Additional information about the review process that will be used to evaluate charter applications

### ***Option to Require Type 3 Charter Applicants to Satisfy Additional Eligibility Requirements***

Local school boards may require Type 3 charter applicants (applicants applying to convert a traditional district school into a charter school) to demonstrate support from a majority of the school's professional staff and parents and guardians of a majority of students who are currently enrolled in the school in order to be eligible to submit a charter application for an already existing traditional public school.

Local school boards may opt to enact neither of these requirements, both requirements, or either the professional staff requirement or the parent and guardian requirement. Local school boards that opt to enact one or both of these requirements must post the requirement(s) and instructions for how to satisfy them to their district website no later than January 6, 2017.

The Department has created the following resources from which districts may develop instructions for how applicants may satisfy these requirements:

- [Model voting process – professional staff](#)
- [Professional staff voting form](#)
- [Parent and guardian voting form](#)

## Third Party Reviewer: Common Practices

Local school boards are required by law to select a third party evaluator to provide a recommendation for every charter application that the district receives. Evaluators base their recommendations on the information that applicants provide in their applications. Districts may also empower evaluators to conduct background research and / or to conduct an interview. Local school boards are not required to follow the recommendations provided by the evaluator, nor are districts required to recommend that local school boards follow the evaluator's recommendation.

### Sample Third Party Reviewer Responsibilities

- Collecting applications
- Developing the application criteria and scoring rubric
- Communicating with applicants about the application process
- Performing background research on applicants
- Conducting interviews
- Writing recommendations

Districts should choose a third party evaluator that has the capacity to review the number of applications the district expects to receive. Any evaluator contract may include the following elements:

### Reviewer Contract Elements

- Responsibilities of the reviewer and of the district
- Description of the final recommendations and the process by which they will be produced
- A timeline for fulfilling both district and reviewer responsibilities
- Fees charged by the reviewer for carrying out their responsibilities

## District Technical Support

In addition to this manual, district staff should utilize the following resources:

- [\*State charter school law\*](#)
- [\*BESE's Bulletin 126\*](#)
- The Department's [\*district charter school application process webpage\*](#)

District staff with additional questions after reviewing these resources may contact David Shepard at [\*david.shepard@la.gov\*](mailto:david.shepard@la.gov) with additional questions.



## Overview of Louisiana Charter Types and Required Qualifications

TYPE	DEFINITION	AUTHORIZER	FUNDING SOURCE	LEGAL STATUS AUTHORITY FOR EMPLOYMENT DECISIONS	QUALIFICATIONS FOR APPLICANTS	APPEALS MECHANISM
<b>TYPE 1</b>	<b>New Start-up</b>	Local School Board	Local School Board <i>(Local, State, Federal Funds)</i>	Nonprofit Corporation <i>(charter agency)</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Organized as nonprofit</li> <li>2. Include three certified teachers as part of team writing application</li> </ol>	<p>If any of following happens, applicant can apply to state as Type 2 charter:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. District doesn't run charter process</li> <li>2. District has D or F letter grade</li> <li>3. District rejects applicant</li> <li>4. District takes no action on application</li> <li>5. District approves application, but includes conditions unacceptable to applicant.</li> </ol>
<b>TYPE 2</b>	<b>New Start-up or Conversion of pre-existing school</b> <i>(must be first denied by local school board)</i>	BESE	State Department of Education <i>(State and Federal Funds)</i>	Nonprofit Corporation <i>(charter agency)</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Organized as nonprofit</li> <li>2. Include three certified teachers as part of team writing application</li> <li>3. Have at least 3 board members at the time of application submission</li> <li>4. If converting public school, must have favorable vote of staff and families.</li> </ol>	No appeal after BESE rejection.
<b>TYPE 3</b>	<b>Conversion of pre-existing school</b>	Local School Board	Local School Board <i>(Local, State, Federal Funds)</i>	Nonprofit Corporation <i>(charter agency)</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Organized as nonprofit</li> <li>2. Include three certified teachers as part of team writing application</li> <li>3. Local school board may require favorable vote of staff and families.</li> </ol>	<p>If any of following happens, applicant can apply to state as Type 2 charter:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. District doesn't run charter process</li> <li>2. District has D or F letter grade</li> <li>3. District rejects applicant</li> <li>4. District takes no action on application</li> <li>5. District approves application, but includes conditions unacceptable to applicant.</li> </ol>
<b>TYPE 4</b>	<b>New School or Conversion of pre-existing school</b>	BESE / Local School Board	Local School Board <i>(Local, State, Federal Funds)</i>	Local School Board	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Must be local school board</li> <li>2. Include three certified teachers as part of team writing application</li> </ol>	None. Application goes directly to state.
<b>TYPE 5</b>	<b>Pre-existing school transferred for low academic performance</b>	BESE / RSD	State Department of Education <i>(State, Federal Funds)</i>	Nonprofit Corporation <i>(charter agency)</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Organized as nonprofit</li> <li>2. Include three certified teachers as part of team writing application</li> <li>3. Have at least 3 board members at the time of application submission</li> <li>4. Include a person or entity that has at least 5 years of experience in education</li> </ol>	None. Application goes directly to state.

## Differences between Type 1, Type 2, and Type 3 Charters

	TYPE 1 (START UPS)	TYPE 2 (START UPS OR CONVERSIONS)	TYPE 3 (CONVERSIONS)
<b>Application Requirements – Conversions</b>	Not applicable	Applicants must submit evidence of support from current parents and teachers at the school	Districts can but do not have to require applicants to submit evidence of support from current parents and teachers at the school
<b>At-Risk and SPED Requirements</b>	Must retain at-risk and SPED percentages equal to the average of the percentages of Free and Reduced Lunch eligible students and SPED students in the districts in which enrolled students reside	Must retain at-risk and SPED percentages equal to the percentages of Free and Reduced Lunch eligible students and SPED students within the geographic boundaries from which the school enrolls its students	Must retain at-risk and SPED percentages equal to the percentages of enrolled students who were eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch or who qualified as SPED students in the year before the school became a charter school
<b>Contract</b>	Charter contract is with local school board	Charter contract is with BESE	Charter contract is with local school board
<b>Enrollment</b>	Can only enroll students within the school district in which the school is located unless an agreement is reached with another school district for the transfer of MFP funding for students residing in that alternate district	Can enroll students from across the state; funding formulas are adjusted based on the school districts from which students come	Can only enroll students within the school district in which the school is located unless an agreement is reached with another school district for the transfer of MFP funding for students residing in that alternate district; already enrolled students are automatically granted admission
<b>Facilities</b>	The school district in which the school is located must make available to the school any facility that is vacant or slated to be vacant for no more than the cost to the district	The school district in which the school is located must make available to the operator any facility that is vacant or slated to be vacant for no more than the cost to the district; for conversions, this applies to the facility the school currently uses	The school district must make available to the operator the facility in which the school is currently located for no more than the cost to the district
<b>Funding</b>	Per pupil funding flows through the school district; the school district retains up to 2% as an administrative oversight fee	Per pupil funding flows directly from the state; the state retains up to 2% as an administrative oversight fee	Per pupil funding flows through the school district; the school district retains up to 2% as an administrative oversight fee
<b>Governance</b>	No more than 20% of board members can be members of the same immediate family	No board members can be members of the same immediate family	No more than 20% of board members can be members of the same immediate family
<b>LEA Status</b>	The school district in which the charter is located is considered the school's LEA; the charter school can work out an agreement with the district to participate in any grant programs for which the LEA applies	Each charter school is its own LEA, with independent authority to apply for grants and other funding for which LEAs are eligible	The school district in which the charter is located is considered the school's LEA; the charter school can work out an agreement with the district to participate in any grant programs for which the LEA applies
<b>Oversight</b>	Oversight by local school district	Oversight by BESE	Oversight by local school district
<b>Services (Transportation, Food, etc...)</b>	Can contract with district in which school is located for services	Can contract with district in which school is located for services	Can contract with district in which school is located for services