

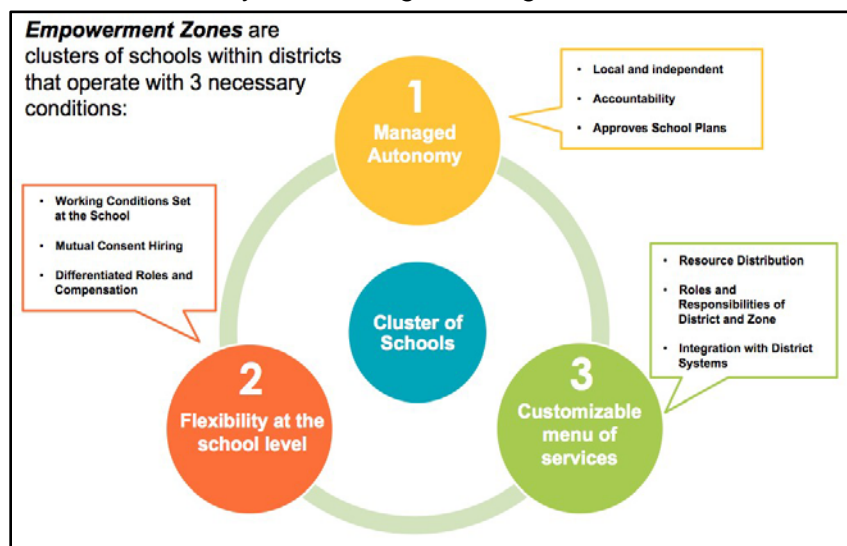
1. Partner Background

Organization name: Empower Schools

Summarize your organization's mission and its connection to Louisiana's plan for struggling Schools:

Empower Schools partners with communities to help them get the schools they want with the results students need. Many efforts to improve educational outcomes either seek to dismantle traditional school systems to make room for new charter schools or merely attempt to patch existing schools with more money and minor changes; however, we believe in a *third way* and *empowered schools*. We believe that schools are the unit of change and that districts are an essential partner.

Empower's approach, centered on Third Way solutions and empowered schools, is flexible and effective. We are regulatory entrepreneurs able to identify and leverage existing laws and policies to create the conditions for school success regardless of past performance. In our experience, a one-by-one approach to school improvement often does not yield rapid or sustainable results. Instead, we employ a 'cluster strategy' called an Empowerment Zone which enables more than one school in a district to operate under the conditions needed for successful turnaround.

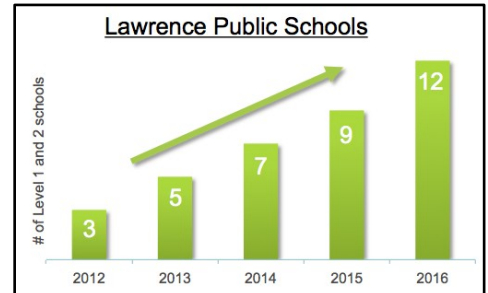


2. Evidence of Track Record of Student and School Outcomes

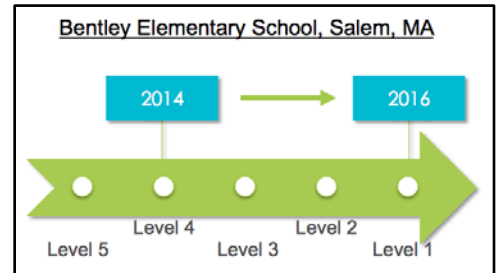
In any format, please illustrate your organization's track record in dramatically improving schools or systems of schools and/or radically increasing outcomes for targeted subgroups of students:

Empower has a track record of dramatically improving outcomes for students in several communities in Massachusetts as well as new partnerships in Springfield, MA; Denver, CO; and is engaged in active discussions with a variety of other states and districts interested in similar Third Way solutions.

In Lawrence, MA in 2012, Empower Schools supported the design and launch of a comprehensive district turnaround plan for Lawrence Public Schools. Empower set the conditions for success, including flexibilities at the school level and reconfiguration of the worst performing schools. These enabling conditions have already led to meaningful results for students. Specifically, the number of Level 1 and Level 2 (the highest performing tiers of MA's school accountability framework) in Lawrence has quadrupled since Empower's involvement.



In Salem, MA, Empower identified a novel regulatory pathway, recruited a new leader and a proven education non-profit to guide start up efforts, and assisted on contract development in a single school Third Way solution. In two years, the school moved from a Level 4, on the verge of state takeover, to a Level 1 school meeting all of its state-determined accountability targets.



In Springfield, MA, and Denver, CO, we created Zones of schools that combine the autonomies and energetic innovation of charters with the critical commitment to universal service and local voice that have been hallmarks of districts. All school leaders in the Zones, in collaboration with the educators in the school, now have the ability to set the school's own curriculum, schedule and calendar, professional development, and budget and staffing plan, decisions not previously available to them.

While it is too early to have student level data trends from these Zones, in Springfield there are promising early data points to suggest that the Zone is creating an environment for rapid and sustained student achievement increases. Additionally, the Springfield School Committee recently voted to place one of its struggling high schools into the Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership, an indication that they see promise as well.

3. Your Organization's Model

a. How will you differentiate your services to meet the unique needs of schools and districts in Louisiana?

The Empowerment Zone model is intentionally designed to be flexible enough to meet the unique needs of a struggling school as well as adaptable enough to integrate into the local district context. By establishing and managing the conditions needed for a Zone, we enable not only accelerated school-level improvement but also new school designs such as personalized learning, competency-based and project-based learning, early college models, and beyond. Since they remain integrated with local systems, Empowerment Zones require a level of customization in the design phase not seen in other school or district improvement efforts.

b. What are the attributes of your ideal partner school or district?

The Zone model is meant to provide districts and schools with the necessary conditions for school transformation and improvement; Zones are not a continuation of the status quo, nor are they a one-size-fits all solution taking place outside of the current system. Thus, our ideal partner district is one that is ready and willing to blaze a Third Way path with us. Based on our

experience working with districts across the country, we have identified several conditions for success in our district partnerships:

- Logical cluster of struggling schools: A logical cluster could be schools in the same neighborhood, with the same grade levels, with a feeder pattern, etc. We are not a single school solution.
- Local leadership champion: Important local stakeholders in this partnership include the superintendent, the mayor, the union (if applicable) or teachers in the district, and the state, among others. Some, but not all, of these parties must be willing to take bold action to lead the charge to improve educational opportunities for students in their community.
- Capacity to manage change effectively: Due to a Zone's intentional alignment with existing district systems and design and launch in collaboration with local stakeholders, there are impacts on people and processes in the current system. Managing this adaptive change is challenging, but not impossible, work for a talented leader.

c. Describe your experience working with other third party providers to support coherent school and district improvement.

In designing and launching Empowerment Zones, Empower Schools collaborates with a wide range of third party partners to drive coherent school improvement. In Springfield, for example, the unique conditions for school autonomy have enabled a variety of school-level and Zone-level partnerships with organizations including TNTP, Achievement Network, UnboundEd, MAP, New Classrooms, Teaching and Learning Alliance, Expeditionary Learning, and more. Not only does Empower work closely with providers already on the ground, but we support schools by bringing in high-quality providers of their choice to meet their unique and differentiated needs.

d. What support from the state, district or school partners would enhance your success in Louisiana?

Empowerment Zones are new paradigm in the education sector and exemplify the emerging "Third Way." We have already seen promising results in our early district partnerships and are encouraged by the progress schools are making, but we recognize that the model is a new one and may evolve as we refine it over time. For that reason, Empower Schools is looking for active partnership from people and organizations at every level who share our "Third Way" vision. These partners must be willing to engage with us throughout the Zone design and launch process to develop solutions that fit the differentiated needs of the state, the district, the schools, the teachers, and most importantly, the students.