

1. Partner Background

New Schools for Baton Rouge

1b. Organizational mission and connection to Louisiana’s plan for struggling schools

Founded by community leaders in 2011, New Schools for Baton Rouge’s (NSBR) mission is to ensure every child in our city has access to an excellent school. We focus our work on dramatically increasing the supply of high-quality, public-funded school options for all students and families. We believe strategic partnerships and leadership from within the civic community – nonprofits, businesses, and local leaders – will lead to more responsive and tailored solutions that ultimately deliver high-quality schools.

Specifically, NSBR raises and invests resources to:

- **Recruit and Support Great Schools.** We partner with school authorizers to recruit, launch and support excellent schools with proven track records of success to provide families across the socio-economic spectrum with excellent educational options – including public charter, nonpublic, and faith-based models.
- **Cultivate a Thriving Education Ecosystem.** We collaborate with other education and civic organizations around common goals for educational quality. We invest in programs and initiatives that support high quality schools and help to expand or sustain their excellence.
- **Engage Our Community.** We partner with community leaders to identify and solve for local challenges, including access to high quality school options, parent awareness of school programs that best meet the needs of their child, and school facility development.

NSBR’s founding goal was to create excellent school options for the highest need students in North Baton Rouge, where nearly all of the schools serving this cluster of neighborhoods have earned a “D” or “F” rating in the state accountability system. As NSBR has made considerable progress toward our original goal, we have expanded our commitment to ensure that all students across the city who lack access to a high-quality school have that option.

2. Evidence of Track Record of Student and School Outcomes

Since our first schools launched in 2014, NSBR has collaborated with local and state civic leaders to open nine schools led by proven, high-performing school organizations that will ultimately serve more than 6,000 students. By 2024, NSBR is positioned to recruit and launch nearly a dozen school operators in Baton Rouge. In support of these schools, NSBR also invests in organizations to build robust talent pipelines, support community engagement efforts, and provide financing and development support for high quality facilities.

A significant part of NSBR's strategy is to launch top regional and national charter management organizations that we have recruited to Louisiana, including IDEA Public Schools (Texas), BASIS Schools (worldwide), Democracy Prep (Northeast U.S.), and Inspire NOLA (New Orleans), among others. In addition, Building Excellent Schools will launch its fifth Baton Rouge campus.

Given this focus on prior experience, NSBR expects the schools in our portfolio to earn "A" or "B" letter grades within five years of opening. Typically, these organizations open in or take over school buildings that have historically been among the lowest performing schools in the state. While NSBR's currently active schools are only a few years old, they are already demonstrating early signs of promise. In 2015-16, among open-enrollment schools that serve middle school grades, three of NSBR's schools ranked in the top 10 citywide. Moreover, all of NSBR's transformation schools grew their School Performance Scores, with two qualifying as top gains schools.

Further, NSBR is providing high quality options to those who have historically been underserved. Of the 101 schools in Baton Rouge, only 22 schools serve a population of students that is more than 95 percent low-income. Although schools in NSBR's portfolio currently represent only seven percent of schools in the city, they represent over one third of the schools serving the city's most economically disadvantaged students.

3. Organizational Model

3a. Plan to differentiate services to meet the unique needs of schools and districts in Louisiana

NSBR is committed to partnering with local school districts in the identification, recruitment and launch of schools and support organizations critical to providing families with higher quality school options. NSBR could not have achieved success without strong relationships with community and civic leaders within Baton Rouge. These partnerships were critical to recruiting high quality school and support organizations to the city, and NSBR will adopt the same approach to our work elsewhere in the state. Looking ahead, NSBR commits to continuing to partner with local partners on potential challenges and obstacles by collaboratively crafting solutions based on "lessons learned" from similarly positioned communities in Louisiana and across the country.

NSBR will calibrate the supports and services we provide based on local resources and capacity. Fortunately, our current school partners' needs to grow and achieve scale can be leveraged to benefit new local partners so that NSBR's work within a community can focus on bringing the right school operator to the local geography and tailoring implementation to the community. Specifically, NSBR's rigorous diligence process comprehensively considers a school operator's or organization's fit for a particular community; considerations include evidence of a proven track record, community-level demand, community engagement, and financial solvency. Thus far, the schools that NSBR has recruited have proven they can meet the needs of the community while also meeting rigorous expectations for quality.

3b. Desired attributes of an ideal partner school or district

NSBR seeks to work with districts that desire to bring highly successful school models to their community, providing these operators with the autonomy they need to faithfully execute their school vision, while holding them accountable for providing dramatically improved outcomes for children and families. NSBR's value proposition is to provide those partner districts with strategic guidance on how to adapt highly successful school models to the context of new communities. NSBR's model has been successful largely because it defers programmatic decisions and execution to its partners based on their track records of success. Its partnerships are based on a mutual respect for partners' autonomy to make the best decisions for students in exchange for accountability for dramatically improved results.

3c. Experience working with other providers to support school and district improvement

NSBR refers to third party providers as the "ecosystem" that must exist for high quality schools to thrive. We believe collaborative and seamless partnerships are imperative to equity and coherence across the system, and we regularly convene partners to ensure coordination toward a shared vision of educational excellence for all children and families. In addition to planning a convening role, NSBR provides private resources to fuel the success of our ecosystem partners. Most recently, NSBR has recruited and supported the expansion of partners supporting schools' needs for high quality teachers. Through our efforts, we have coordinated organizations such as The New Teacher Project, Teach For America, City Year, Relay GSE, Southern University Baton Rouge, and Brothers Empowered to Teach around a collective vision to build a robust pipeline of school-level leadership from residency to veteran-level experience.

3d. State or district partners support that could enhance NSBR's effectiveness

To the extent possible, NSBR seeks to encourage an environment that allows school and ecosystem partners to operate as freely as possible across communities in Louisiana. Ideally, the state would act to ensure that students, families, and communities receive the maximum resources and benefits possible. We look forward to working with state and district partners to ensure funding flows to meet the specific needs of each child, and developing mechanisms that facilitate and are supportive of partner operations in both urban and rural contexts as well as multiple sites will also be critical.