



Request for Proposals (RFP) For Public Charter Schools

October 16, 2024

Dothan City Schools Board of Education

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Empower Everyone Everyday

Dothan City Schools Mission:

"Communicate, Achieve, Relate, Engage, Succeed", (C.A.R.E.S)

Introduction

With the passage of the *Alabama School Choice and Opportunity Act*, Act 2015-3, on March 19, 2015, public charter schools may be established in Alabama in accordance with the Act. Under this law, ***a charter school is a public school that operates according to the terms of a charter, or contract, that has been approved by a local board of education and the State Board of Education or the Alabama Charter Schools Commission.*** Locally approved charter schools operate under the control and management of the local board of education. The local board is required to ensure that a locally approved charter school is subject to all applicable federal, state, and local rules, regulations, court orders, and statutes as well as meets the performance objectives identified in the contract.

This RFP from the Dothan City Schools Board of Education (DCS), an approved charter schools authorizer, seek proposals for a high quality public charter school in the Dothan City boundaries seeking to open in the 2024-2025 school year or thereafter with a year of planning. DCS is charged with authorizing high-quality proposals that meet specified education needs in Dothan City and those needs are identified as (a) foundational principals of elementary reading and (b) foundational principals of elementary mathematics.

All public charter schools approved in Dothan City through this process will be subject to the legal requirements set forth in the *Alabama School Choice and Student Opportunity Act*, Ala. Code §16-6-6F-1, et seq, Act 2015-3.

Characteristics of the Schools the District is Most Interested in Authorizing

Dothan City Schools Board of Education (DCS) is committed to receiving applications for charter schools. We encourage new innovative and rigorous approaches to help us reach our mission and strategic goals. In order to assist you in your application, we are providing you with specific information about the types of charter applications we are most interested in receiving. Specifically, the Board seeks proposals for a startup public charter school that will address the following educational priorities:

1. Engaging and preparing students through a rigorous, standards-based education that uses an arts integrated, science, technology, engineering, and math framework with a focus foundational reading and foundational math instruction (STREAM) in the early elementary grades (Kindergarten through grade 3) with innovative, and high-quality educational services;
2. Ensuring that hired or contracted faculty and staff that have outstanding special training and experience in administering state and federal laws related to early education and/or at-risk students who are reading below grade level; students with math illiteracy or non-proficiencies; special needs students under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; and students with needs as identified in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
3. Manage all related logistical services efficiency to include services such as school transportation and appropriate feeding programs.
4. Demonstrating competence and success in managing such funding efficiently and within reasonable budgets;
5. Increasing educational experiences and opportunities for at-risk and/incarcerated students economically or academically disadvantage;
6. Ensuring that charter school teachers and school administrators/leaders have a direct role in operation of the school;
7. Encourage the use of high-quality models of teaching, governing and scheduling;
8. Providing for exceptional levels of results-driven accountability based on student outcomes;
9. Offering related services needed and or identified for students to include services such as speech therapy and occupational therapy and ensuring these services are provided in location that is centrally located for parents in the service area.
10. Operating within the allowable financial structure for public school funding set forth in

- Act No. 2015-3, and adhering to all state and federal law;
11. Create expanded opportunities for involvement in the education system by students, parents and community members; and
 12. Accept and fully commit to serving all students who may attend or is enrolled (i.e., students with and without disabilities, incarcerated youth).

Applicant Types

The request for proposal can be used for the following applicant type:

- **Start-up public charter school** – a school which did not exist as a non-charter **public or non-public** school prior to becoming a public charter school.

Operators will be defined in two categories as follows:

New Operators are nonprofit organizations which:

- Have never operated a charter school OR currently operate a charter school that has been open for less than one school year (regardless of location)
- Do not intend to employ an educational service provider OR intend to employ an educational service provider that has not operated a school for more than one year (regardless of location)

Existing Operators are nonprofit organizations which currently:

- Have one or more schools in operation nationwide which have been in operation for more than one full school year
- Intend to employ an educational service provider with one or more schools in operation for more than one full school year

Evaluation Process

Complete petitions for charter schools proposing to open for 2025 - 2026 must be submitted online through <https://charter.tools/> no later than 4:00 pm on Saturday, November 30, 2023. All requested content must be included and all formatting guidelines must be followed in order for an application to be considered complete. The evaluation process will include four steps of review and are summarized as follows:

1. Initial Review of Charter Application

The Superintendent and/or Superintendent's designee will complete the initial review of the charter application to determine if the applicant has met all the requirements to be considered for full review. Incomplete petitions will not be considered for 2025-2026. If the application is determined to be complete, the charter application will move on to Step 2. If the application is not complete, the review process will terminate, and the applicant will be issued a denial letter with the reason and area of incompleteness noted.

2. Academic and Operational Review of Charter Application

This review will be completed by review team members specific to each area of the application using the Charter.Tools program. The applications will be reviewed for program innovation, a demonstrably effective curriculum and academic plan, cultural responsiveness, solid financial planning, depth and breadth of community support, evidence of strong academic leadership and an effective board, and carefully designed accountability measures.

If determined necessary, additional persons with particular expertise may be invited to review specific areas of the application to assist in creating a thorough application process review.

3. Full Team Review

Once each area has been reviewed by team members specific to each area, the full review will meet to discuss and review the application(s). Once the full review team has discussed the

completed application(s), the team will then submit the application(s), completed scored rubric, and details of the discussions from the full review to the Superintendent for final review. The Superintendent will then present the application to the Dothan City Schools Board of Education for final review and approval or denial.

4. Board Review as Authorizer

The board may, pursuant to *Alabama Act 2015-03*, approve or deny the application within 60 days of the submission of a complete application, by a resolution adopted at a public meeting of the Board. If the Board approves the application, it may include reasonable and appropriate conditions that the applicant must satisfy prior to the execution of a charter contract. If the Board denies the application, it will provide an explanation for the reasons for the denial.

Applicant Code of Conduct

The Superintendent and members of the Dothan City Schools Board of Education are obligated by state law to make decisions in the best interests of children, free from personal or political influences. Similarly, charter school applicants have the responsibility of respecting and upholding the integrity of the charter school application process.

Specifically, charter school applicants *shall not*

1. Initiate, or attempt to initiate, any activity with the Superintendent or Dothan City Schools Board of Education member that is prohibited by the Code of Governmental Ethics;
2. Direct any communications, including application documents, to the superintendent or the DCS Authorizer's Charter Liaison and team members at any point during the application submission and evaluation process.

It is the responsibility of the charter applicant to ensure proper citation and acknowledgement of any sources included within the application. Any charter application that is found to be plagiarized will be submitted for disqualification. Charter school applicants in violation of these requirements may be deemed ineligible for consideration of charter school approval.

Public Disclosure

All charter school proposals submitted to DCS are considered public records and are subject to public release. Redaction of personal information is an applicant responsibility. Applicants are requested to provide redacted submissions of any file that includes personal information.

In addition, applicants are advised that neither School Board members, the Superintendent, nor district staff will comment on the contents of any application submission during the review and evaluation period, outside of the established public processes for this purpose (School Board meetings); in the event of media inquiries, the district will refer individuals to an applicant's primary contact using the information included in this application.

PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

As a charter school authorizer, Dothan City Schools will be responsible for maintaining high standards for school performance, upholding school autonomy, and protecting student and public interests. This is outlined in NACSA's "Core Performance Framework and Guidance". Therefore, a performance contract will be used as a guide. Dothan City Schools will maintain high standards and manage charter school performance by setting expectations and holding schools accountable for results, rather than by dictatorship.

The Dothan City Schools Performance Contract will be created as a separate document from the application and executed by the governing board of each charter school and Dothan City Schools. The performance contract will define roles, powers, and responsibilities for the schools and the Dothan City Schools.

The performance contract will meet the Dothan City Schools performance framework that plainly defines student measures such as academic and operational performance expectations by which the charter schools will be judged. The performance framework will include measures and metrics for, at a minimum, student academic proficiency and growth, achievement gaps, attendance, recurrent enrollment, postsecondary readiness (high schools), financial performance, and board stewardship (including compliance). The performance framework will be divided into three sections: academic performance, financial performance, and organizational performance.

To emphasize the importance of academic rigor and student experience in alignment with the district's overall goals, the academic performance data will have an increased weight in the performance calculation. The Organization Framework focuses on organizational processes established to ensure competent operations by the school by looking at compliance with laws. It is a compliance checklist that ensures that the school is responsive to the needs of its students, employees and school community.

Dothan City Schools shall establish basic financial annual performance targets for its authorized schools. These targets will reflect those set by the District and ALSDE for all schools, in consultation with its Charter School(s). All parties should negotiate school-specific annual performance targets for the Financial Framework for each year the contract is in effect. In addition to reviewing the annual financial targets for the previous year, during the Annual Site Visit, the Parties shall negotiate school-specific annual financial targets for the next year.

For each designated performance framework category, charter school performance will fall into one of three categories: *Meets Standard*, *Does Not Meet Standard*, or *Falls Far Below Standard*. The thresholds set for each performance level will be based on specific charter goals and calculated using publicly available metrics. The renewal of the charter school's charter will be based on the data collected regarding how the school is progressing towards the annual school specific indicators and compliance with the terms of this Contract. During the site visits, Dothan City Schools and the charter school will review progress made toward charter school specific indicators established the previous school year. Next, the parties will negotiate annual school-specific indicators for the next year considering and incorporating the general annual performance indicators set by Dothan City Schools for that year.

The performance contract will be based upon the criteria established in the performance management framework and any school-specific criteria that was agreed upon by the petitioner and the district. If the petition was approved conditionally, all conditions must be met by the petitioner before a contract may be drafted. If the petition is denied, the district will send the petitioner a comprehensive list of the reasons for denial that will also be posted on the district website. This information will be shared and posted within 15 days after the board's denial recommendation.

The performance contract will provide for an initial term for five operating years or a longer term with periodic high stakes reviews. Dothan City Schools performance contract will be aligned with existing Dothan City Schools policies. All authorizer contracts will specify a required high-stakes review to take place prior to contract renewal.

Timeline

Sept 3 - November 1, 2024	Authorizer releases a Request for Proposal (RFP) for potential charter school applicants.
December 2, 2024	Application due to Authorizer via https://charter.tools/ online
	Applications must be submitted by 4:00 pm Monday, December 2, 2024
	<i>**Applications submitted prior to December 2 will not be considered received until December 2, so that all applications can be reviewed simultaneously.</i>
December 2, 2024 – January 31, 2025	Review window for authorizers to consider applications
January 31, 2025	Decisions from authorizer due

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