
SCHOOL REDESIGN REQUEST FOR INFORMATION OVERVIEW

Seeking Charter Management Organizations, Networks and Schools; Turnaround Leadership Providers; and Educational Management Partnerships
for Colorado Schools and Districts

*This is a request for information (RFI) only. This is not a formal bid solicitation.
No award will result from this RFI.*

Introduction

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) invites partners to join the state’s effort to transform low-performing schools and ensure that all students—regardless of where they live—have access to schools that prepare them for college and career. Interested partners may have the opportunity to engage with district and school leaders to support school improvement efforts across the state through management partnerships, leadership development and/or charter school operations. This Request for Information (RFI) is intended to provide centralized information about organizations that are available to partner with districts and schools that have been identified as needing support.

In Colorado, school districts have made great strides in raising the bar of student academic achievement. About 9 percent of K-12 students, or approximately 79,000 students, however, attend schools that are not meeting state expectations in academic achievement, growth or postsecondary and workforce readiness. Further, the majority of students in these schools are from historically underserved backgrounds – specifically those from economically-challenged communities and racial minority groups. These students continue to fall short of their academic potential and are missing the skill sets to compete with their middle-class peers.

CDE is committed to changing this reality and ensuring that ALL students graduate ready for college and careers, prepared to be productive citizens of Colorado. To realize our vision, the Department is looking for expert partners willing to work with school and district leaders to design innovative and community-relevant school improvement solutions. Leaders across the state—in urban, suburban and rural communities—need partners willing to collaborate and able to add expertise and capacity to schools with persistent challenges.

Colorado's Accountability Clock

Colorado's accountability system is based upon the philosophy that schools and districts that meet state expectations for student academic performance earn increased autonomy, while those not meeting state expectations will receive increased support and monitoring. Schools and districts not meeting expectations in achievement, growth and postsecondary workforce readiness, as determined by the School and District Performance Frameworks, are assigned a plan type of Priority Improvement or Turnaround. Colorado's state accountability law states that schools and districts cannot retain one of those plan types for more than five consecutive years before significant action must be taken. This statutory timeline is referred to as the Accountability Clock. For those schools and districts that reach the end of the five year Accountability Clock—or for those wanting to take early action—the pathway options outlined in statute include management partnerships, converting district-run schools to charter schools, seeking innovation status, and closing schools.

Schools may also be identified for support under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Whether a school is identified by the state's accountability system, the federal system or both, CDE recognizes that each school has different needs based on the context in their communities. CDE's goal is to work with each district and school to understand their needs and invest in strategies to help them progressively improve and maintain their improvement on the state performance frameworks, before the end of the Accountability Clock.

RFI Purpose

CDE will use responses to this RFI to:

- Create an inventory of high quality, proven school and district improvement partners that can be used as a part of the Accountability Clock and Every Student Succeeds Act processes.
- Provide information to the State Board of Education on available management and charter providers that are able to work with schools and districts that reach the end of the Accountability Clock.
- Support interested school districts in developing their own Request for Proposals or in developing formal relationships with partners they deem to be an appropriate fit to meet their specific needs.
- Identify turnaround leader development providers for the School Turnaround Leaders Development program.

The responses collected from this RFI will not constitute an exclusive list. If CDE distributes the information to the State Board of Education, to school districts or to any other party who requests the list, those parties may still choose to contract with a different entity not included on CDE's list. School districts will be responsible for complying with all applicable state and federal procurement laws.

Who should submit?

CDE is seeking information from providers willing and able to engage deeply with schools and districts across the state as partners of various scope and design. Specifically, the following three types of partner organizations are encouraged to respond to this RFI:

- **Charter Networks, Charter Management Organizations and/or Individual Charter Schools** that have a track record of success and are interested in operating additional schools in Colorado.
- **Turnaround Leadership Providers** that operate leadership development programs specifically targeted for schools and districts in need of support.
- **Management partners or non-profit networks** that can engage with districts and schools in a variety of ways and in one or more of the 4 Domains for Rapid Improvement, which are highlighted below.

Roles for Charter Networks, Charter Management Organizations, and Individual Charter Schools

Charter networks and charter management organizations (CMOs) operate public charter schools that can either be authorized by districts or by the Charter School Institute (CSI). Charter schools serve students and operate schools based on the contract established with the district or CSI.

Through this RFI, CDE seeks networks, CMOs or individual charter schools that operate inside or outside of Colorado and have a track record of success based on student achievement data. The network, CMO or standalone charter school must be willing and eager to take on the challenges of some of the state's lowest-performing schools. Depending on the local district, they may be asked to convert current low-performing schools to charter status or to open new charter schools. CDE is seeking partners in the charter school community that can work collaboratively and productively with local school districts and boards of education.

Roles for Turnaround Leadership Providers

CDE seeks qualified providers of turnaround leadership development programs to serve and grow leaders who can demonstrate dramatic and lasting improvements of student achievement and growth. Through the School Turnaround Leaders Development (STLD) grant program (C.R.S.22-13-101), CDE seeks to add to its existing list of identified providers to offer district and school leaders training supported by state funding. Programs do not need to be delivered in Colorado, but the ability to serve Colorado educators in cost-effective ways is important. Information about this program and currently identified providers can be found at: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/turnaroundleadership>.

Roles for Management Partners and Non-Profit Networks

Educational management partners and non-profit networks work in collaboration with school district leaders, staff members, principals, teachers, community partners, and other providers to ensure conditions for success and sustainability in low-performing schools. This category also includes current schools or leadership teams who are interested in replicating their model. Education providers are expected to have demonstrated expertise in improving low-performing schools and districts. The primary responsibility of management partners is to implement instructional, programmatic, and/or structural supports that result in improved student performance. All supports must serve to increase student achievement no matter the specific focus of the partnership.

Management partners can fulfill a variety of roles in a school's plan. Partners may comprehensively manage and operate a school or fill a specific, targeted need within a school. Depending on context, management partners may be contracted by the district to manage a school in perpetuity contingent on meeting annual requirements. Alternatively, districts may enter into short-term contracts with partners to support specific capacities within a school or district with the goal of working toward sustainability within the school or district in a set amount of time.

Table 1 provides descriptions of the various roles in which management partners and non-profit networks could serve. For the targeted areas of focus, the table is organized around the Center on School Turnaround's [*"4 Domains for Rapid Improvement."*](#) Because turnaround work is complex and highly dependent on local context, CDE is organizing its supports around the 4 domains in an effort to help CDE, districts, and schools strategically plan and prioritize for systemic and sustained improvement. The 4 Domains are: Turnaround Leadership, Talent Development, Instructional Transformation, and Culture Shift.

Table 1. Range of Supports: Management Partnerships & Non-Profit Networks

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| <i>Whole System</i> | A district may decide that it needs to relinquish control of operations for an entire school or number of schools to an outside partner that is better able to serve the needs of that community. This model would constitute the most comprehensive form of management. A partnership of this magnitude would require a major overhaul of systems and structures along with a detailed plan of the restructuring as well as contracts for length of time, performance outcomes, accountability measures, and consequences. |
| <i>Turnaround Leadership</i> | Leadership at the district and school levels are critical to the success of any school improvement effort. A district may determine that specific leadership training is needed at some or all levels of the system. Partners may be needed to provide systemic, small group, or individualized leadership training and coaching depending on the specific needs of each district. |
| <i>Talent Development</i> | A district may decide that a school, subset of schools or the entire district would benefit from a partner that would manage its systems to recruit, grow, and retain high quality staff and leadership. This may include control of the implementation of the educator effectiveness model, teacher professional development, and/or the hiring and retention decisions of school leadership, teachers or other staff. |
| <i>Instructional Transformation</i> | A district may conclude that a school, subset of schools or the entire district would benefit from a partner that would manage all or some instructional systems. These systems may include assessment, data, curriculum, intervention, MTSS, and/or special education. |
| <i>Culture Shift</i> | A district may determine that a school, subset of schools or the entire district would benefit from a partner that would develop capacity for shifting culture at all levels of the organization to focus on student learning and engagement. This work might focus on adult culture, student engagement, family and community partnerships, and other strategies. |
| <i>Other</i> | Providers who serve schools in ways other than the examples above are encouraged to complete the RFI and explain the organization’s services. Other potential areas of support might include finance and budget, time and scheduling and wrap-around services. Organizations that have expertise in online learning, blended learning, and/or competency-based system design and work directly with online schools and programs are strongly encouraged to complete the RFI. |

How to submit?

Please tell us about your organization and its accomplishments, and how your organization can help all students of Colorado reach their potential by completing the School Redesign Request for Information Form posted at: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/performance>.

Instructions

- Please submit your organization's response electronically to PartnerRFI@cde.state.co.us by **Friday, February 23, 2018 at 5:00 PM MST**. Late responses may be accepted or rejected by CDE at its sole discretion.
- Please address all of the questions in this application for your organization type. You may exceed the length of the boxes in the form – the PDF form will automatically add a scroll button within the box. However, please strive to keep answers concise.
- You may submit additional attachments that are directly relevant and provide additional support or evidence for the responses in the RFI form.
- If there are any questions about the RFI process or the PDF form, please address those to Brenda Bautsch at Bautsch_b@cde.state.co.us.

Public Posting and Release of Information

- CDE will publicly post the responses that sufficiently address all of the questions listed in the RFI and provide concrete evidence of improving student outcomes in low-performing schools on CDE's public website for schools and other interested parties to access the information: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/performance>
- This information will be posted no later than March 23, 2018.
- Further, all information submitted in response to this RFI (inclusive of submissions that are not posted on CDE's website) are subject to public release through the Colorado Open Records Act, CRS § 24-72-200.1, et seq.

Additional Information on the RFI Process

- In the event that a response is incomplete, missing information or needs additional evidence, CDE at its sole discretion may reach out to the respondent for more information or a resubmission, or CDE may elect not to include the response on its publicly posted list.
- This Request for Information will be re-opened annually to allow for additions to the public list of providers.
- If a provider is added to CDE's public list through this RFI process and needs to make changes to the posted information, please contact Brenda Bautsch at Bautsch_b@cde.state.co.us.