

System & Process Elements

Definition and Terms

Administrative Capacity: Need Definition

Authorizer: school district, BOCES, or CSI, Need Better Definition

Education Management Provider (EMP): Means a nonprofit, not-for-profit, or for-profit entity that contracts with a charter school to provide, manage, or oversee all or substantially all of the educational services provided by the charter school (SB 12-067)

Financial Capacity: Need Definition

Organizational Capacity: Need Definition, to include governance and management structures

Comment [MS1]: The definitions need help

System & Process Elements for Authorizers of Multi-District Online Schools¹

CDE Review and Certification Criteria

It is recommended that the following system and process elements serve as the basis for the Colorado Department of Education's review and certification of authorizer's of multi-district online schools.

Evidence according to each standard/area should be utilized as the foundation for evaluation and decision-making regarding authorizer capacity to successfully authorize multi-district online schools.

It is recommended that the Colorado Department of Education collect signed assurances for those standards that speak to a local district's commitments. Alternatively, for those standards that either identify local polices to be created, or ask an authorizer to describe an approach to quality authorization, CDE shall seek, through written application, information from applying districts about their existing policies, new policies, and plans for implementing these standards.

Some of the evidence elements below differ in requirement depending on whether the authorizer is new (not currently authorizing any multi-district online schools) or renewing (currently authorizing multi-district online schools). Therefore, each piece of evidence is labeled N for New Authorizer and/or R for Renewing Authorizer. Additionally, the requirements for each piece of evidence can be satisfied by the authorizer via an assurance and/or documentation. Each piece of evidence is labeled A for assurance, AS for assurance with sample documentation, and D for documentation.

¹ Based largely on NACSA Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing
Key for the New and Renewing Authorizer Columns: A=Assurance; D=Documentation

Evaluation

Standard/Area	Evidence	New	Renewing
Authorizer Commitment and Capacity			
1)	Ensure the district mission statement is inclusive of multi-district online schools (District or BOCES commitments to be made through assurances to CDE)	A	A
a)	Assurances that the authorizer:	A	A
i)	Will hold schools accountable for their performance	A	A
ii)	Has expertise in implementing and supporting online learning	A	A
b)	Assurance of accountability to the public:	A	A
i)	For the proper stewardship of educational resources	A	A
ii)	To commit to offering quality, sustainable education options to students	A	A
2)	Demonstrate sufficient staffing and expertise to provide proper oversight (direct or indirect)	D	D
a)	Description of the responsibilities of the authorizer staffing and their qualifications	D	D
b)	Describe and provide rationale for staffing (or equivalent) and financial resources devoted to authorization activities	D	D
c)	Demonstration of plan for authorizer staffing professional development	D	D
3)	Demonstrate financial commitment to support and oversight duties	A	A
a)	Expenditures on oversight and support of multi-district online schools should be annually reported	A	A
4)	Demonstrate commitment to ongoing authorizer quality improvement	A	A
a)	Plan for evaluation of authorizing practice aligned with state standards for quality multi-district online school and development of improvement plans, as needed	A	A
School Application Process and Authorizer Decision Making			
Districts and BOCES who are certified as multi-district online school authorizers may decide to directly manage and operate multi-district online schools. Similarly, Districts and BOCES may choose to establish			

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Standard/Area	Evidence	New	Renewing
	<p>a contract with an educational service or management provider. Separately, districts may also choose to authorize charter schools or contract schools. The following components and criteria for an application process may be used by a district choosing to directly manage and operate schools as components and criteria for plans, rather than for applications to be reviewed. As such, the terms “application/plan” will be used throughout the section. Districts or BOCES planning to play both direct management, and charter, contract or service provider authorization roles should address their processes for both in their application.</p> <p>Description of the application/plan and review process the authorizer will use to make decisions regarding the granting of new multi-district online schools. The following elements should be included.</p>		
	1) Ensure Transparency	A	A
	a) Explanation of rights and responsibilities of both authorizer and applicant	A	A
	b) Evidence that training and supports for school staff are sufficiently provided	A	A
	2) Establish rigorous performance standards aligned to the state accountability system	A	A
	a) Identify sources of academic outcomes data that will form the evidence base for decision making (including but not limited to the CDE SPF)	A	A
	i) Including state-mandated and other standardized assessments, student academic growth measures, internal assessments, qualitative reviews, and performance comparisons with other public schools in the district and state	A	A
	b) Identify sources of financial data that will form the evidence base for decision making, grounded in professional standards for sound financial operations and sustainability	A	A
	c) Define the sources of organizational data that will form the evidence base for decision	A	A

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Standard/Area	Evidence	New	Renewing
	making, focusing on fulfillment of legal obligations, fiduciary duties, and sound public stewardship		
	d) Define clear, measurable, and attainable academic, financial, and organizational performance standards and targets that the school will utilize when determining renewal, including but not limited to state and federal measures	A	A
	e) The performance measures, mechanisms and consequences by which the authorizer will hold the school accountable for performance, aligned with the performance measures	A	A
3)	Implement rigorous decision making criteria and practices	A	A
	a) Evidence of rigorous application evaluation criteria and evidence of transparent and consistent procedures for decision making	A	A
	b) Evidence that performance outcomes serve as the primary basis for decision making	A	A
4)	Define a timeline for local application and oversight processes	A	A
	a) Clearly defined timeline for submission, review, and decision making	A	A
	b) Clearly defined timeline for oversight procedures	A	A
Ongoing Oversight, Evaluation, and Accountability			
1)	Outcomes-based annual review process	D	D
	a) Description of the activities of the review process, including site visits (if any, physical and/or virtual), review of enrollment trends, types of outcomes data used, financial audits, and annual report creation, and how these will be used in decision making	D	D
	b) Description of comprehensive review of performance outcome data that is inclusive of review of both SPF and UIP	D	D
	c) Demonstration of evidence based decision making that holds schools accountable for performance expectations as defined by	D	D

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Standard/Area	Evidence	New	Renewing
	authorizer policy		
2)	Transparent compliance monitoring	A	A
	a) Description of compliance monitoring systems and procedures	A	A
	b) Description of compliance monitoring systems and procedures	A	A
3)	Transparent timelines	A	A
	a) Description of timeline for authorizer review of school(s) (annually, at a minimum), and provision of feedback	A	A
4)	Assures practices adopted by the authorizer to ensure alignment with national best practice recommendations for educational management provider (EMP) contracting	A	A
	a) Documentation of educational, organizational, and financial performance records based on all existing schools (if applicable)	A	A
	b) Presentation of growth plan, business plan, and most recent financial audits	A	A
	c) Clear evidence of capacity to operate new schools successfully while maintaining quality in existing schools (if applicable)	A	A

Further Recommendations

The OTF recommends the following further recommendations.

1. That the certification of authorizers of multi-district online schools begins in August of 2016 for implementation in the 2017 school year (Table 1).

Timeline for Authorizer Applications	Context
August, 2016	First round of authorizer applications
September, 2016	CDE has 30 days to respond to the application
October, 2016	Second round (re-application) of authorizer applications
November, 2016	CDE has 30 days to respond to the re-application process
January, 2017	Appeal process due to the State Board of Education within 60 days of CDE second round denial

Table 1: Timeline for new and existing authorizer application process

2. That CDE continue the certification of online schools until implementation of the certification of online school authorizers begins.
3. That new authorizers must submit an application to the CDE for approval, according to these standards, practices, systems and processes, within the timeline established in Table 1.

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4. That existing authorizers currently overseeing multi-district online schools must submit an application to the CDE for approval, according to these standards, practices, systems and processes, within 5 years of implementation of these recommendations.
5. Any multi-district online school whose authorizer loses certification will continue to serve their students through the completion of the school year when lost certification occurred, and for no more than one (1) additional school year.

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