



2022-2023 School and District Support Request for Information

Distributed by:
Colorado Department of Education

Contact:
Carol Mehesy, District Transformation Manager
Mehesy_C@cde.state.co.us

June 2022

Unit of School & District Transformation
201 E. Colfax Ave., Denver, CO 80203
Lindsey Jaeckel, Executive Director
Jaeckel_L@cde.state.co.us
Carol Mehesy, Program Manager
Mehesy_C@cde.state.co.us

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 have access to schools that prepare them to be college and career ready. Interested partners may have the opportunity to engage with district and school leaders to support school improvement efforts across the state by providing:

District-level supports

- District-level Strategic Planning (holistic or targeted at one or more key district systems)
- District Improvement Implementation Support
- District Managers

School-level supports

- School Holistic Diagnostic Reviews and Improvement Planning
- School Improvement Implementation Support
- School Managers

Note: School Turnaround Leadership Development (STLD) program providers have the option of applying under District Improvement Implementation Support, School Improvement Implementation Support or both in order to become a qualified STLD provider. Additional information about this program and currently identified providers can be found [here](#).

CDE's goal for this Request for Information (RFI) is to update its [Advisory List of Providers](#), which provides centralized information about organizations that are available to partner with districts and schools that have been identified as needing support. The 2022 RFI is open to potential new partners or partners who are already included in CDE's advisory list of providers and who wish to remain on this list.

Given the disruptions and innovations caused by COVID-19 and changes to CDE's RFI structure and criteria, all new and previously approved partners will be required to complete a new RFI proposal to provide updated information about the supports or services offered by their organization. However, CDE intends to utilize the quality review process for this RFI to establish a multi-year list of approved providers.

In Colorado, school districts have made great strides in raising the bar of student academic achievement. However, approximately 74,000 students, the majority of whom are from traditionally underserved communities, attend schools that are not meeting state expectations in academic achievement, growth, or postsecondary and workforce readiness.

CDE is committed to ensuring that all students are prepared for success in college and careers upon graduation. To realize this vision, CDE is looking for expert partners who are 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 who are willing to collaborate and are able to add expertise and capacity to underperforming schools.

Colorado's Performance Watch Process

Colorado's accountability system is based upon the philosophy that schools and districts not meeting state expectations would benefit from receiving increased support and monitoring. State expectations are evaluated through the School and District Performance Frameworks, which examine student performance in achievement, growth, and postsecondary workforce readiness. Under these frameworks, the two lowest ratings are Priority Improvement or Turnaround, and years spent with these ratings is referred to as Performance Watch.

Colorado's state accountability law states that schools and districts cannot remain in Priority Improvement or Turnaround (i.e., on the Accountability Clock) for more than five consecutive years before the State Board of Education must direct significant action. After receiving two consecutive Priority Improvement or Turnaround ratings, a school or district must receive an Improvement rating or higher for two consecutive years to exit Performance Watch.

For those schools and districts that reach year five on Performance Watch- or for those wanting to take [early action](#) - the [pathway options](#) outlined in statute include full or partial management of a school or district, converting district-run schools to charter schools, seeking innovation status, and closing schools. For charters, the pathways in statute differ and include changes to the operator or governing board or revocation of the charter.

Schools may also be identified for Comprehensive, Targeted or Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (CS, TS, A-TS) under the federal 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 student performance and maintain their improvement on the state performance frameworks.

RFI Purpose

CDE will use responses to this RFI for the following purposes:

- **Approved Providers List:** Vet and approve turnaround leader development providers for the School Turnaround Leaders Development program and diagnostic review providers, both of which require schools/districts to work with a CDE-vetted partner through the Empowering Action through School Improvement (EASI) grant.
- **Management Providers List:** Provide information to districts and to the State Board of Education on available external management providers that are able to work with schools and districts that reach the end of Performance Watch (formerly the Accountability Clock).
- **Advisory Providers List:** Create and maintain an inventory of high-quality, proven school and district improvement partners that can be used as a part of Performance Watch and ESSA CS, TS and A-TS schools' processes and/or for schools/districts interested in more rigorous school improvement activities.

The responses collected from this RFI will not constitute an exclusive or exhaustive list. Colorado schools and districts, the State Board of Education, and any other interested parties may still choose to contract with a provider not included on CDE's list. Districts will be responsible for complying with all applicable state and federal procurement laws.

Additionally, for schools or districts at the end of Performance Watch and subject to State Board Directed Action, selecting a provider from the list does not guarantee that the State Board of Education will approve that provider and/or statutory pathway. When reviewing a proposal, the State Board generally seeks to ensure the selected provider is the right fit and the statutory pathway selected is significantly rigorous to positively and urgently impact student performance.

Who should submit?

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

District-level support providers

- District-level Strategic Planning (holistic or targeted at one or more key district systems)
- District Improvement Implementation Support
- District Managers

School-level support providers

- School Holistic Diagnostic Reviews and Improvement Planning
- School Improvement Implementation Support
- School Managers

Note: School Turnaround Leadership Development (STLD) program providers have the option of applying under District Improvement Implementation Support, School Improvement Implementation Support or both in order to become a qualified STLD provider. Additional information about this program and currently identified providers can be found [here](#).

Given the disruptions and innovations caused by COVID-19 and changes to the structure and quality criteria of CDE's RFI, all new and previously approved partners will be required to complete a new RFI to provide updated information about their organizations' supports or services. CDE intends to utilize the quality review process for this RFI to establish a multi-year list of approved providers.

Quality Criteria and Service Expectations

CDE has outlined the quality criteria and service expectations for each of the service areas in the rubrics for each service area. These rubrics can be found [here](#). Providers who are interested in responding to this RFI are strongly encouraged to review these rubrics to understand the scope, quality criteria, and CDE's service expectations for each service area.

CDE is seeking to increase the number of approved providers with demonstrated expertise and a track record of positive impact in each of these service areas. All applications will be evaluated and rated as "Level A" (fully meets or exceeds criteria at a high level) or "Level B" (meets majority of criteria at a high level). This information will be publicly available as part of the EASI grant application process.

Considerations for Applicants

CDE is interested in receiving RFI responses from providers with a wide range of expertise areas related to the service areas identified above and to the [Four Domains for Rapid Improvement](#). All providers will be asked to speak to their organizational approach, capacity, areas of expertise, and track record. Providers may apply to as many service areas as applicable based on their expertise and track record. Note: providers who apply to multiple service areas may receive different ratings for each of the service areas depending on demonstrated expertise and track record.

How to submit?

CDE is excited to learn about potential partner organizations and their accomplishments and how those organizations can help Colorado students reach their potential. To apply, please complete the School and District Support Request for Information process described below.

1. Attend webinar for potential providers (optional)

An optional webinar for interested providers will be offered on Friday, June 24th from 10:00-11:00 am MST. Please complete this [brief form](#) to register for the webinar. Note: the webinar will be recorded and posted for those unable to attend.

2. Submit Letter of Intent

If your organization intends to submit an application for this RFI, please complete this brief [online Letter of Intent](#) by July 1st, at 5:00 pm MST. While this letter is optional, we strongly encourage submission.

3. Submit application (required)

- Complete applications are due electronically by [Google form submission](#) by July 25th, at 5:00 pm MST. Late responses may be accepted or rejected at CDE's discretion. *Note: Applicants will need to submit using a [gmail account or google-linked account](#) in order to use the required google-form submission.*
- All application forms are linked below and are available at [this CDE webpage](#).
- All providers must complete Form A: Organization Overview and Team Expertise Matrix
- Providers must then complete an additional, service-specific RFI form for each service to which they intend to apply:
 - Form B: District-level Strategic Planning
 - Form C: School-level Holistic Review and Improvement Planning
 - Form D: District-level Improvement Implementation Support
 - Form E: School-level Improvement Implementation Support
 - Form F: District-level Management Partners
 - Form G: School-level Management Partners
- Organizations may also choose to attach additional documentation/evidence as outlined in the RFI Forms (B-F). Please only include additional documentation/evidence that is directly relevant to the application as outlined herein. Please see Appendix A for more information on annotating and submitting supplemental documents.
- ***Note: Narrative responses for Form A should not exceed 3 pages and narrative responses from Forms B-G should not exceed 8 pages each (does not include additional documentation). Applicants will be given the opportunity to provide additional information on their capacity and impact through annotated work products, the completion of the team capacity matrix, provision of supporting impact data, and references. Please see Appendix A for additional information.***

Please contact Carol Mehesy (Mehesy_C@cde.state.co.us) with any questions about the RFI process.

Public Posting and Release of Information

- CDE will post the responses for all applications that sufficiently address all RFI questions and meet the criteria to be identified as a Level A or Level B provider and demonstrate concrete evidence of improving student outcomes in low-performing schools. Responses will be posted on CDE's website for schools and other interested parties to access.
- This information is anticipated to be posted on or around September 15, 2021.
- All information submitted in response to this RFI (including submissions that are not posted on CDE's website) is 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 RFI will be reopened periodically in future years to allow for additions to the public list of providers. In addition, approved providers may be requested to submit a short renewal application.
- Successful providers will be strongly encouraged to participate in opportunities to be introduced to eligible Colorado schools and districts in the fall of 2022.
- 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 Carol Mehesy (Mehesy_C@cde.state.co.us).

Appendices

- Appendix A – Annotating and Submitting Supplemental Documents
- Appendix B – Considerations for District and School Managers
- Appendix C – Research and Resources Informing CDE RFI and School Improvement Approach
 - Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement
 - Family, Community, and School Partnership research
 - Effective Practices for serving students with disabilities

Appendix A - Annotating and Submitting Supplemental Documents

Annotation Guidelines

All supplemental evidence and documentation submitted with your application must be annotated. For each supplemental document, provide annotations to indicate where and how this document demonstrates fulfillment of the rubric criteria.

- Ensure your comments are clearly called out and easy for the CDE team to locate and identify. You may use the "comment" function on a Word document or on a PDF. If you're embedding comments in or on a document, ensure that these are clearly identified (e.g., highlighted) and distinguished from the rest of the content of the document.
- Each annotation comment should contain:
 - the criteria code for each criterion addressed (codes can be found in the form rubrics)
 - a brief narrative description of how this part of your supplemental document demonstrates the criteria
 - any additional context not given in the document that helps to demonstrate how the document fulfills the identified criteria

Annotation Examples: *A provider submitting a sample Diagnostic Report may include the following comments on their attached Report:*

- (C3.a) This box illustrates some of the data points that we collect and use in our Holistic Review services. In addition to these data points, we also performed lesson plan audits for all ELA and math courses, visited all ELA and math classrooms, and conducted focus group interviews (ELA teachers, Math teachers, SpEd teachers, and Instructional Leads).
- (C3.a) This section of the report shows how our findings are organized by the Four Domains.
- (C4.b and C5.a) In this section, we highlight both strengths and areas of need for each domain.

Submission Guidelines

- **Naming Conventions:** Please ensure that the file name for each supplemental document uploaded follows these naming conventions:
 - [Organization Name]_[Descriptive Document Title]
 - **Example:** Great Schools_Sample Holistic Review Report
- **Document length:** Each supplemental document should be 12 or fewer pages. You are welcome to submit excerpts from longer documents (note that you may need to provide any missing context in a brief narrative statement on any excerpted or abridged documents).
- **Total number of supplemental documents submitted:** You may submit ***no more than three*** supplemental documents for each Form you are submitting.

- **Annotations:** All supplemental documents that are submitted must be annotated according to these guidelines.

Appendix B – Considerations for Providers Offering Management Services

CDE is interested in receiving RFI responses from a wide range of management providers. Providers could be organized as non-profit or for-profit and could include educational institutions or individual consultants. Management providers must have a proven track record of success working with schools or districts, as applicable, in turnaround contexts to improve student achievement.

Scope of Work

Management providers can fulfill a variety of roles in a school's or district's plan for dramatic improvement. A provider may comprehensively manage and operate a school or district, or a provider may fill a specific, targeted need. However, in all cases, management providers have authority over and responsibility for the areas that have been identified in the State Board Directed Action and the district's or school's plan.

School-Level Management: School-level management is typically characterized by the provider:

- Working in collaboration with school district leaders, principals, teachers and other school staff, families, community partners, and other providers to ensure conditions for success and sustainability in low-performing schools.
- Implementing instructional, programmatic, and/or structural supports that result in improved student performance.
- Assuming either whole or partial authority over the school, including specific authorities that are typically reserved for the principal and/or Principal supervisor
- For more information on the school-level manager role, please see the service provider application rubric.

District-Level Management: District-level management is typically characterized by the provider:

- Partnering with district leaders on decisions that impact schools, such as instructional and staffing decisions, and also on broader initiatives such as board training, support and development, financial and operational support and planning, policy work, and community engagement at the district level
- Assuming either whole or partial authority over the district, including specific authorities that are typically reserved for the superintendent or members of the cabinet.
- For more information on the district-level manager role please see the service provider application rubric.

District-level management providers are expected to have demonstrated expertise working at the highest levels of an organization to impact positive change in low-performing education systems.

Timeline

Depending on context, management providers 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 providers to support specific capacities within a school or district with the goal of working toward sustainability and phased release from the school or district over a set amount of time.

For more information on the management accountability pathway in Colorado, including applicable state law, fact sheets, and district and school rubrics for management pathway plans, please visit our [accountability website](#).

Appendix C - Key Research Informing RFI

Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement

- [WestEd Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement Research](#)
- [CDE's Turnaround Rubric for the Four Domains](#)

Family, Community, and School Partnership

- [CDE Family, Community, and School Partnership Resources](#)

Effective Practices for Serving Students with Disabilities

- [High Leverage Practices in Special Education](#)