



New York State Education Department

Charter School Office 2011-2016 Strategic Plan

July 2011

The Regents of The University of the State of New York
Office of School Innovation
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, New York 12234
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/>

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Core Elements	4
Mission Statement	4
Vision Statement	4
Multi-year Goals with Measurable Outcomes	5
Defined and Aligned Personnel	8
Agency Capacity	9
Organizational Structures:	9
Board of Regents’ Policies and Decision-making Rights.....	9
External Influences on Decision-making.....	11
Human Resources:	13
Leadership	13
Staffing Structure	13
Recruitment.....	16
Professional Development	18
Financial Resources:	19
Quality Authorizing Practices	21
Conclusion	22
Appendix A: Proposed Organizational Structure	23

Introduction

In the fall of 2010, the New York State Education Department's Charter School Office (NYSED CSO) received a grant from the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) to implement a strategic planning process for the Charter School Office. The outcome of the process, this strategic plan, will focus the work and resources of the Charter School Office to fulfill two primary responsibilities of the Board of Regents as they pertain to charter schools in New York State. The first is that of serving as a high quality authorizer of charter schools throughout New York State; the second is that of providing oversight for all charter schools in New York State (including those that may be authorized by other charter entities in New York State).

The Charter School Office contracted with SchoolWorks, LLC, an educational consulting company based in Massachusetts, to facilitate the strategic planning process and capture the resulting strategic plan. The mission of SchoolWorks is to advance all aspects of student learning by building the capacity of educators and educational institutions to assess, plan for, and achieve student success. SchoolWorks has national experience in school and district accountability, as well as high quality charter school authorizing and oversight.

Using the Strategic Plan Guidelines created by NACSA, representatives of NYSED and SchoolWorks formed a Strategic Planning Team and launched the strategic planning process in the fall of 2010. The process has been guided by the following principles:

Be strategic by intentionally responding to the current environment and build commitment by engaging key stakeholders.

One of the primary steps in the strategic planning process was to assess the current environment in which the Charter School Office operates by analyzing external and internal environmental factors that directly impact the work of the Charter School Office, as well as to build commitment by engaging key stakeholders in all phases of the work.

Essential to this effort was the collection of stakeholder perception data through focus groups, interviews, and a stakeholder survey. As such, between January and March of 2011 conference calls and focus groups were held with 21 stakeholders representing members of the Board of Regents, the New York City Charter School Center, the New York Charter Schools Association, the State University of New York Charter Schools Institute, and various charter school operators, among others. Additionally, an online survey was conducted to provide all stakeholders unable to participate in the focus groups with an opportunity to engage in the strategic planning process. Thirty-eight individuals responded to the survey.

The stakeholder perception data allowed the Strategic Planning Team to identify perceived areas of strength and areas for further attention. The Strategic Plan Team provided a full summary of the perception data to the Department; however, following are some of the key themes that emerged. Stakeholders expressed, in general, that the recent changes adopted by the Department have been positive. For example, stakeholders indicated that the new charter school application kit is a vast improvement over previous versions and that the process is

streamlined and far more efficient. They also noted, however, that past efforts of the Charter School Office were focused primarily on compliance with laws and regulations and not on academic performance and fiscal and organizational viability. Additionally, stakeholders expressed that clear and transparent policies and procedures regarding other aspects of charter school authorizing (pre-opening requirements, site visits, renewal, school closure, etc.) are desired and would greatly increase the Office's ability to attract high quality charter school applicants.

A second major component of the strategic planning process was the facilitation of a Charter School Office staff mini-retreat held in March. During the mini-retreat, staff members engaged in conversation regarding the roles and responsibilities of the Charter School Office as they pertain to Board of Regents authorized schools, as well as the roles and responsibilities of the Charter School Office in relation to all charter schools in New York State, regardless of charter authorizer. The mini-retreat laid the groundwork for the development of revised Charter School Office mission and vision statements. Additional staff meetings were also held to finalize the mission and vision statements.

In addition to involving stakeholders and Charter School Office employees, Department and Charter School Office leadership participated in a number strategic planning sessions as members of the Strategic Planning Team. The Strategic Planning Team met formally and informally throughout the strategic planning process to discuss progress and to align efforts with other initiatives of NYSED's Office of Innovative School Models (within which the Charter School Office is housed), including: the Board of Regents' Reform Agenda, mission and goals of the Office of Innovative School Models, and priorities outlined by the federal Charter Schools Program (CSP) grant.

Lastly, the Strategic Planning Team worked together to ensure that core charter school monitoring and oversight guidance documents and tools to be utilized by Charter School Office staff reflect the emerging mission, vision, and values of the Charter School Office, as outlined in this strategic plan. This work, funded with generous support from the Tiger Foundation and completed by consultants affiliated with NACSA and SchoolWorks, is an essential component to ensuring that the Charter School Office staff has the tools necessary to fulfill the mission, vision, and values articulated in this plan.

Be systematic and data-based by gathering new information to inform strategic decisions.

The Strategic Planning Team took a systematic, data-based approach to the strategic planning process. The Team used stakeholder perception data and information gleaned from focus groups, interviews, as well as the online survey to begin assessing the strength of Board of Regents' policies and Charter School Office practices through the lens of NACSA's *Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing (Principles & Standards)*. The Strategic Planning Team then supplemented this information with a review of documented policies and practices of the Charter School Office, as well as an analysis of the extent to which existing policies and practices had been faithfully implemented in prior years. The end product was a summary document detailing areas of strength and areas for further attention among the

policies and practices of the Charter School Office. The summary document aided leadership in prioritizing goals and creating a clear direction for the Charter School Office.

Set priorities that finalize a clear direction and goals for the organization.

Once the Strategic Planning Team came to a thorough understanding of areas of strength and areas needing further attention, the Strategic Planning Team was able to identify a mission statement, vision, and goals. The priorities identified within the mission statement, vision, and goals focus the work of the Charter School Office on closing the gap between areas identified as needing further attention and exemplar practices of high quality charter school authorizers.

Guide resource acquisition and allocation.

Once clear goals and priorities were established, the Strategic Planning Team was able to discuss how the Charter School Office will organize itself and deploy resources in order to meet the identified goals and priorities. The Strategic Planning Team began by assessing current staffing in relation to stated goals. Through the strategic planning process, it became evident that the Charter School Office would need to align its current staff to its newly adopted mission and vision, as well as hire additional staff members to carry out the mission and vision of the Office. The Team began to identify additional staffing and professional development necessary to ensure that the Charter School Office has the capacity and infrastructure available to meet its mission. In addition, the Strategic Planning Team drafted a five-year budget that will assist leadership in ensuring that the Charter School Office has access to other resources that will be necessary in realizing its mission.

Outcome

This strategic planning document represents the culmination of these activities. The Strategic Planning Team is confident that with this revised focus and strategic plan, the Charter School Office will become a high-quality authorizer for Board of Regents authorized schools, an effective oversight agent for all charter schools within the State of New York, and a leader in sharing innovative schools designs and practices to all New York State public schools.

Through the strategic plan, it is our hope and expectation that the Board of Regents will become the authorizer of choice for charter school operators within New York State.

Core Elements

An essential element of the strategic planning process was the creation of new mission and vision statements to guide the work of the Charter School Office. The following mission and vision statements are the result of input from stakeholders, staff members, and leadership. Additionally, the mission and vision incorporate the three core principles of charter authorizing developed and defined by NACSA.

Mission Statement

The mission of the New York State Education Department Charter School Office is to create and sustain excellent educational options for New York State families on behalf of the Board of Regents through high quality charter school authorizing, fair and transparent oversight of all charter schools, and the dissemination of innovative school designs and practices.

Vision Statement

As a high-quality charter school authorizer, the Charter School Office, on behalf of the Board of Regents, exemplifies the *Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing* created by NACSA by focusing on three core values.

- *The Office maintains high standards for charter schools authorized by the Board of Regents.* This is accomplished by implementing a rigorous application and charter approval process, providing effective oversight, and recommending ineffective schools for closure.
- *The Office upholds charter school autonomy.* This is accomplished by honoring and preserving core autonomies crucial to school success, minimizing administrative and compliance burdens on schools, and holding schools accountable for outcomes instead of processes.
- *The Office protects student and public interests.* This is accomplished by prioritizing student well-being by ensuring access and fair treatment to all students, as well as sharing the academic value of effective charter schools with parents and families through the dissemination of innovative school designs and practices.

As a regulatory body, the Charter School Office creates a policy environment for oversight that safeguards the public trust.

- *The Office defends the legal and contractual autonomies of all charter schools in the state to operate with the maximum flexibility.* Collaborative partnerships with other authorizers in New York State enhance the Office's ability to accomplish this essential condition.
- *The Office ensures that all charter schools are compliant with federal and state laws and regulations.* Collaborative partnerships within the State Education Department leverage the Office's capacity to deliver on this promise.

As a partner in expanding excellent educational school options of all types in New York State, the Charter School Office serves as a resource for innovative school designs and educational practices to be shared with all public schools everywhere.

- *The Office proactively disseminates best practices developed by charter schools.* This occurs by leveraging the power of various media to reach an extensive audience.
- *The Office forms strategic alliances with partner organizations to ensure that the maximum number of families have access to excellent, innovative school options.* This occurs by dedicating staff and other resources to the cultivation of relationships with key stakeholders across the State and beyond.

Multi-year Goals with Measurable Outcomes¹

The mission and vision of the Charter School Office are categorized into three core areas: high quality charter school authorizing, fair and transparent oversight of all charter schools, and the dissemination of innovative school designs and practices. Accordingly, goals with measurable outcomes have been established for each of the three main areas. A final fourth goal was created to assess the Charter School Office's overall progress towards achieving the mission and vision.

Goal #1: High Quality Charter School Authorizing for Board of Regents Charter Schools

Increase the number of high-quality charter schools in New York State, especially those serving educationally disadvantaged students who are at greatest risk of not meeting State academic standards.

Measurable Outcomes:

1. Each year, 100% of the portfolio of existing charter schools that earn charter renewal from the Board of Regents will meet rigorous charter school performance standards set by the Department; those that do not will be closed.
2. Each year, at least 90% of post-charter planning and implementation sub-grant recipients will give an overall rating of "satisfied" or higher when asked to rate NYSED's administration of the CSP sub-grant program in the areas of clear communication, timely release of funds, and responsiveness.
3. By December 31, 2012, the Charter School Office will successfully complete the systematic revision and alignment of practices and policies pertaining to the charter application and approval process, oversight process, and charter renewal and revocation processes.
4. By December 31, 2015, the Board of Regents will issue 100 additional charters for new high-quality charter schools to open.
5. By December 31, 2015, of the 100 additional charters issued, the Board of Regents will

¹ Many of the goals and measures included within this document are aligned to the Charter School Program grant application submitted in March 2011 to the US Department of Education.

issue 20 charters for new high-quality charter schools to open that meet CSP grant priorities related to school turnaround.

Goal #2: Fair and Transparent Oversight of All New York State Charter Schools

Create a policy environment for oversight that safeguards the public trust by leveraging collaborative partnerships focused on strengthening the overall quality of the New York State charter-authorizing infrastructure.

Measureable Outcomes:

1. Each year, at least three representatives of New York State charter authorizing entities will be invited to present on best practices related to charter authorizing oversight at a national or regional conference.
2. Each year, at least 75% of NYSQCAP authorizing staff members will give an overall rating of “satisfied” or higher when asked to rate the quality of collaboration and professional development opportunities provided through NYSQCAP.
3. Each year, at least 75% of NYSQCAP authorizing staff members will give an overall rating of “satisfied” or higher when asked to rate the quality of collaboration with other NYSED departments pertaining to compliance with relevant federal and state laws and regulations.
4. By December 31, 2011, the Charter School Office will invest in improving communication with internal and external stakeholders by establishing a position dedicated to serving as a communications specialist.
5. By December 31, 2012, the Charter School Office will form a collaborative partnership between the Charter School Office, SUNY Charter Schools Institute, and the NYC DOE to support the creation of high quality public charter schools in New York (entitled the New York State Quality Charter Authorizing Partnership (NYSQCAP). Members will meet at least twice per year in formal professional development setting to enhance staff capacity.

Goal 3: Dissemination of Innovative School Designs and Practices

Promote the dissemination of New York State charter school best practices to other public schools.

Measureable Outcomes:

1. By June 30, 2012 NYSED will award at least seven CSP dissemination sub-grants that meet the rigorous sub-grant competition standard.
2. Beginning December 2012, there will be a ten percent (10%) annual increase in the number of educational personnel in traditional public school districts that are aware of resources related to charter school best practices.
3. Beginning December 2012, there will be a five percent (5%) annual increase in the number of educational personnel in traditional public school districts that indicate that they have adopted charter school best practices.
4. By December 31, 2015 seventy five percent (75%) of key stakeholders at each partner school will indicate that the dissemination partnership with a high-performing charter school has had an impact on the implementation of best practices at their school.

Goal 4: Overall Mission

Improve student achievement outcomes in New York State charter schools, particularly for students who are at greatest risk of not meeting State academic standards

Measureable Outcomes:

1. Each year the percentage of New York State charter school students in the following categories that achieves at or above the proficient level on State examinations, in the following subjects, will increase by 2% from the prior year (in accordance with the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA)).
 - a. fourth grade, reading/language arts
 - b. fourth grade, mathematics
 - c. eighth grade, reading/language arts
 - d. eighth grade, mathematics
2. Each year, high school graduation rates for charter school students in New York State in the following categories will either meet the State standard of 80% or will reduce the gap between the state standard and the prior year's rate by at least 20%, as measured by either the four year graduation cohort rate or the five year extended cohort graduation rate.
 - a. all students
 - b. students with disabilities
 - c. English language learners
 - d. students that qualify for free-reduced lunch
 - e. students who reside in a rural LEA
3. By December 31, 2015 results from a rigorous outcomes research study will show that New York State charter schools will outperform, at a statistically significant level, comparable students in traditional New York State public schools in categories determined by the research design.

Defined and Aligned Personnel

In order to ensure that the Charter School Office’s personnel is aligned to the three main components of the mission and vision, the following table was created to indicate those individuals responsible for each core area. The table presents the current structure and the proposed structure of the Charter School Office at the end of the five-year strategic planning period.

Mission	Vision	Goals	Responsible Teams			
			Current Structure (2010-11)	Proposed Structure (2015-16)		
High-quality Charter School Authorizing for Board of Regents Charter Schools	<p>High standards for BOR Charter Schools through a rigorous application process, effective oversight, and closure of ineffective schools.</p> <p>Preserving autonomy, minimizing administrative burdens, and holding schools accountable for outcomes not processes.</p> <p>Protect student and public interests by ensuring fair treatment and sharing the value of effective charter schools to parents.</p>	<p>Goal 1: Increase the number of high-quality charter schools in New York State, especially those serving educationally disadvantaged students who are at greatest risk of not meeting State academic standards.</p>	<p>Goal 4: Improve student achievement outcomes in New York State charter schools, particularly for students who are at greatest risk of not meeting State academic standards.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New School Development Performance Oversight: Accountability/Renewal Performance Oversight: Finance Consultant Support for Reviews and Site Visits <p>TOTAL FTE w/ Consultants: 7.3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New School Development Performance Oversight: Accountability/Renewal Performance Oversight: Finance Consultant Support for Reviews and Site Visits <p>TOTAL FTE w/ Consultants: 13.8</p>	
	<p>Fair & Transparent Oversight of All New York State Charter Schools</p> <p>Defend legal and contractual autonomies through partnerships with other NYS authorizers.</p> <p>Ensure compliance w/ federal and state laws and regulations through collaborative partnerships within NYSED.</p>			<p>Goal 2: Create a policy environment for oversight that safeguards the public trust by leveraging collaborative partnerships focused on strengthening the overall quality of the New York State charter-authorizing infrastructure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSP Grant Statutory Administration/ Compliance Monitoring Data Management And Analysis Legal Counsel Consultants for Data Management <p>TOTAL FTE w/ Consultants: 3.0</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSP Grant Statutory Administration/ Compliance Monitoring Data Management And Analysis Legal Counsel Consultants for Data Management <p>TOTAL FTE w/ Consultants: 7.0</p>
	<p>Dissemination of Innovative School Designs and Practices</p> <p>Disseminate best practices developed by charter schools.</p> <p>Form strategic alliances with partner organizations to ensure the maximum number of families have access to excellent, innovative school options.</p>			<p>Goal 3: Promote the dissemination of New York State charter school best practices to other public schools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications Specialist Dissemination Specialist Consultants: Researchers <p>Total FTE w/ Consultants: 0.5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications Specialist Dissemination Specialist Consultants: Researchers <p>Total FTE w/ Consultants: 3.5</p>
<p>Oversight of Mission, Vision, and Goals and Administrative Support</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director Support Staff <p>Total FTE: 1.5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director Support Staff <p>Total FTE: 3.0</p>		

Agency Capacity

Organizational Structures:

Policies that define the role of the governing board and the external relationships must be outlined. This provides clear lines of authority to safeguard the authorizer from conflicts of interest and political influence.

In the State of New York, the Board of Regents is responsible for the general supervision of all educational activities within the State. In addition to its role in overseeing all educational activities within the State, the Charter Schools Act (Article 56 Section 2850, as amended) identifies the Board of Regents as both a charter entity, as well as the institution responsible for the oversight of all charter schools in New York State.

The Board of Regents comprises 17 members elected by the State Legislature for five-year terms: one from each of the State's 13 judicial districts and four members who serve at large. Prior to joining the Board, each Board member is required to take an oath of office and sign a conflict of interest form. These actions safeguard the authorizer from conflicts of interest and political influence.

Board of Regents' Policies and Decision-making Rights

In addition to the above, other measures are in place to ensure that the Board of Regents is insulated from conflicts of interest and political influence. Specifically, as part of the strategic planning process, a policy document has been drafted that describes clear and transparent policies and protocols related to the core charter school authorizing and oversight functions. The Office intends to continue the work of developing these policies and procedures over the 2012-13 school year. Once completed, the policies will further insulate the Board of Regents from conflicts of interest.

The table on the following page illustrates the lines of authority and decision-making rights of the Board of Regents, Department leadership, and Charter School Office staff when carrying out essential responsibilities and key policies related to the oversight of charter schools.

1. **Board of Regents:** It is the role and responsibility of the Board of Regents to set the mission, vision and goals of the Charter School Office, as well as to approve core charter authorizing policies. Decisions related to the granting of a charter, renewal, non-renewal, and revocation of a charter, as well as material changes to a charter are made by the Board of Regents on the recommendation and advice of the leadership of the Department.
2. **New York State Education Department Leadership:** It is the role and responsibility of the New York State Education Department leadership to create and implement a strategic plan that will accomplish the mission, vision, and goals outlined by the Board of Regents. These include determining the organizational structure and establishing the practices and protocols that will guide the Charter School Office staff to this end. It is the role of the Charter School Office staff to advise leadership throughout this process.

3. **Charter School Office Staff:** It is the role and responsibility of Charter School Office staff to lead the implementation of the policies, practices, and protocols adopted by the Board of Regents and New York State Education Department Leadership. New York State Education Department Leadership may provide further direction or consultation when required.

Responsible Party	Time and Attention	
Board of Regents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission, Vision, and Goals • Charter Authorizing Policies • Charter Granting, Renewal, Non-Renewal, and Revocation • Material Changes to a Charter 	Board of Regents Direction	NYSED Leadership Advice
New York State Education Department Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Plan • Resource Allocation • Organizational Structure • Practices and Protocols • Charter Probation 	NYSED Leadership Direction	CSO Leadership Advice
Charter School Office Staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSP Grant • Performance Monitoring • Compliance Monitoring • Dissemination, Communications, and Research 	CSO Leadership Advice	CSO Staff Direction



External Influences on Decision-making

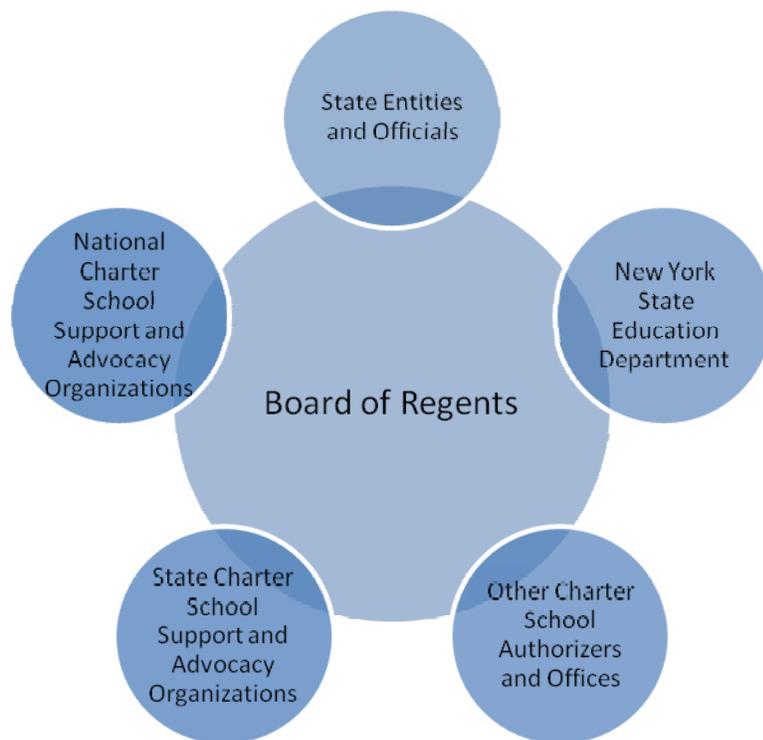
Within the State of New York, the Board of Regents is responsible for the general supervision of all educational activities within the State, including those activities related to charter school authorizing and oversight. The Board of Regents serves as one of two statewide charter entities (or authorizers) in New York State and oversees the compliance of all New York State charter school with federal and state laws and regulations. However, the Board of Regents, as a public entity, does not act in isolation. Instead, the Board of Regents, NYSED, and the Charter School Office participate in a public system of governance and oversight, as well as within the context of a larger charter school movement.

While the Board of Regents is insulated from conflicts of interest and political influence because of its membership requirements and, eventually, its clear and transparent policies and protocols, it is necessary to note that within the State of New York there are a number of external relationships that impact charter school authorizing in New York State. The following individuals and organizations, by nature of their function and duty, have both active and inactive influence in Board of Regents' decision-making:

1. **State Entities and Officials.** **The New York State Legislature** elects the members of the Board Regents. **The State University of New York's Board of Trustees (SUNY Trustees)** also serve as a statewide authorizer in New York State. The Trustees appoint the staff of the SUNY Charter Schools Institute, who conduct day-to-day authorizing and oversight activities on behalf of the SUNY Trustees. **The Governor of New York State** appoints members of the other statewide authorizer, the SUNY Trustees. In addition, the SUNY Trustees and the Civil Service Office (among others) are impacted by budgetary and other decisions of the Governor. **The Civil Service Office** makes rules and other regulations that govern the appointment, dismissal, and other rules pertaining to public employees, such as staff of the Charter School Office.
2. **New York State Education Department:** The **New York State Education Department Leadership** guides the overarching work and goals of the **Charter School Office**. The staff of the Charter School Office and Department Leadership inform the actions of the Board of Regents. Beyond the role of some **School Districts** to authorize conversion charter schools (such as Buffalo), other school districts influence the work of the Board of Regents and the Charter School Office. The extent of their influence is typically based on the degree to which the presence of charter schools within their districts impacts the academic and organizational viability of their programs.
3. **Other Charter School Authorizers and Offices:** Other charter authorizers, and their staffs, create options for charter school operators who wish to start and run a charter school or convert an existing public school to a charter school. The SUNY Trustees and the **SUNY Charter Schools Institute** is able to grant charters to new school operators. The New York City Schools Chancellor and the **New York City Department of Education** oversee existing charter schools authorized in New York City prior to May 2010, when the **NYS Charter Schools Act was amended, but are unable to grant new charters under the amended law.** All local boards of education and the New York City Schools Chancellor are able to grant

charters to those wishing to convert an existing public school into a charter school. Accordingly, these authorizers establish a competitive marketplace and influence the Board of Regents through the policies for authorizing and oversight of their charter schools, as well as their decisions/actions regarding the granting of new charters, renewal, non-renewal, and revocation.

4. **State Charter School Support and Advocacy Organizations:** The **New York Charter Schools Association** (NYCSA) and the **New York City Charter School Center** (Center) advocate on behalf of their members and stakeholders to members of the New York State Legislature, the Governor, and other charter authorizers. In addition, these organizations provide technical assistance and consulting services to charter schools statewide and within New York City, respectively.
5. **National Charter School Advocacy and Support Organizations:** In addition to New York State support and advocacy organizations, there are a number of national organizations that advocate on behalf of charter school authorizers and operators. The **National Association of Charter School Authorizers** (NACSA) and the **National Alliance for Public Charter Schools** (the Alliance) seek to impact national policy regarding charter school authorizing and oversight. In addition, they partner with authorizers across the nation and work to improve authorizing and oversight policies and practices. The **United States Department of Education’s Office of Charter Schools Program** serves as a resource for states and charter authorizers. Further, the Charter Schools Program provides funds to create new high-quality public charter schools.



Human Resources:

Strong authorizing agencies have competent and talented leadership. The strategic plan addresses the recruitment and development of such talent.

Leadership

In May 2011, the Board of Regents appointed a new Commissioner of Education, **John B. King, Jr.** to lead NYSED. Dr. King co-founded Roxbury Preparatory Charter School and the Uncommon Schools network in New York, a highly regarded not-for-profit that starts and manages high performing public charter schools. Dr. King has deep experience in and knowledge of the public charter school sector and brings that orientation to his leadership role in the Department.

In March 2010, **Sally Bachofer** was hired as NYSED Assistant Commissioner to lead the newly-created Office of Innovative School Models. Prior to joining the Department, Ms. Bachofer served as NACSA's Director of Knowledge, responsible for creating model policies and resources for NACSA members, staff, and consultants; and she previously worked as Coordinator of Accountability for the Massachusetts Charter School Office. Ms. Bachofer reports directly to the NYSED Senior Deputy and the Commissioner and provides the Charter School Office with a direct link to the NYSED senior leadership.

The Charter School Office is aligned organizationally within the Office of Innovative School Models and is directly managed by **Cliff Chuang**. Mr. Chuang previously served as CSP Project Director for Massachusetts for five years and has also managed Massachusetts' nationally recognized Expanded Learning Time grant and federal School Improvement Grant. He formerly helped to launch the high school at the Academy of the Pacific Rim Charter Public School as the mathematics department chair.

Given that competent and talented leadership is already in place, the strategic planning process regarding human resources focused on identifying needed positions to fulfill the mission and vision of the Charter School Office and developing the expertise of current staff members through professional development activities.

Staffing Structure

Through the strategic planning process, the following resource investments into both staff and/or consultant support were identified to be essential to the realization of the mission, vision, and goals set out in this strategic plan. It is important to note, however, that while the Strategic Planning Team identified the need for the following resources, the Team recognizes the realities of working within a state governmental agency and the confines of civil service rules. Further, given budget cuts, the Team understands that while there is a need for additional employees, resources from the State Education Department's general education fund may not be available.

The staffing structure detailed below is the desired staffing structure for the Office through 2015-16. The staffing was based on the projected growth of charter schools within the State of New York, as well as those specifically authorized by the State Education Department. **As the**

Office begins to authorize more charters and provide oversight a greater numbers of schools, the need for additional resources and employees will be required to oversee them effectively.

Additionally, there are three other key operational factors related to staffing and resource deployment that are not explicitly broken out and detailed within the descriptions and chart below. As the plan is implemented, the Office will take these factors, outlined below, into consideration.

First, due to the expected significant increase of new charter schools authorized by the Board of Regents to operate in New York City, assignment and supervision of staff to NYSED's Brooklyn Office (currently 2.0 FTE) will need to be prioritized and considered carefully.

Second, a subset of professional staff members in the office will serve as liaisons to assigned Regents-authorized charter schools and as a general point of contact for all charter schools and districts in a geographic region of the state, in addition to specializing in a functional area. Each liaison will be responsible for reviewing pertinent documents and charter revisions, as well as participating in various monitoring activities for those schools with which s/he works. Liaisons will also participate in review of new applications and pre-opening site visits for new schools in addition to other duties. The distribution of time for these staff members between liaison and functional work will vary depending on caseload and the specific skills and talents of each individual.

Finally, given the high-growth and cyclical nature of this work, as well as the need for external, independent feedback, the flexible use of consultants for reviews, site visits, and report-writing will be necessary to ensure high quality authorizing and oversight.

Goal 1: Increase the number of high-quality charter schools in New York State, especially those serving educationally disadvantaged students who are at greatest risk of not meeting State academic standards.

- **New School Development.** Those staff members assigned to New School Development are responsible for implementing the new charter application process. Utilizing the newly developed practices related to the new charter application cycle, New School Development will thoroughly evaluate charter school applications and make recommendations to Department Leadership as appropriate.
- **Performance Oversight: Accountability and Renewal.** Staff members assigned to Performance Oversight: Accountability and Renewal are responsible for oversight over academic programming and student outcomes of Board of Regents authorized charter schools. The team will grow incrementally as the Board of Regents authorizes more charter schools over time. Performance Oversight: Accountability and Renewal will enable the Office to collect and analyze data and other performance information pertaining to the academic performance of charter school authorized by the Board of Regents. This information will be essential to informing charter renewal decision-making.
- **Performance Oversight: Finance.** Performance Oversight: Finance staff are responsible for oversight over the financial management functions of Board of Regents authorized charter schools.

The staffing structure for this goal area was created primarily using NACSA's *The State of Charter School Authorizing*. According to NACSA, the average number of schools per authorizing FTE for large authorizers is 1 FTE to 8.0 schools. Recognizing that the Office is in a time of transition, the Office utilized a 6:1 ratio for years 0 and 1. This will allow the Office to build capacity while effectively authorizing and overseeing Board of Regents schools. For years 2 and 3, the Office projected an 8:1 ratio in accordance with the numbers presented in NACSA's report. For years 4 and 5, the Office utilized a 10:1 ratio. As the Office staff increases their knowledge and capacity, and as more policies and procedures are implemented and systematized (resulting in greater operational efficiencies), the number of schools per FTE will slightly increase over time.

The Strategic Planning Team notes, however, that the staffing plans are projections and may change over the coming years, particularly given the financial climate in uncertain budget times.

Goal 2: Create a policy environment for oversight that safeguards the public trust by leveraging collaborative partnerships focused on strengthening the overall quality of the New York State charter-authorizing infrastructure.

- **CSP Grant.** CSP grant will consist of a dedicated full-time CSP Project Director who will be charged with ensuring proper stewardship of CSP funds and compliance with all State and federal laws and regulations. S/he will work closely with the current CSP grants manager, new schools development staff, and other professional staff charged with monitoring and compliance, including a CSP Grants Manager, to ensure seamless coordination of the integrated charter authorization and grant review process, timely processing and payment of all sub-grant awards, and appropriate oversight and monitoring. S/he will coordinate with the other active authorizers in the State to ensure that their processes adhere to CSP grant requirements.
- **Statutory Administration/Compliance Monitoring.** This area is responsible for monitoring the compliance of all New York State charter schools with law and regulations. The Statutory Administration/Compliance Monitoring employees will fulfill due diligence responsibilities pertaining to all New York State charter schools and outlined in the Charter Schools Act.
- **Data Management and Analysis.** This position is responsible for collecting and analyzing statewide data that is required to ensure compliance with annual reporting requirements to the Governor on status of New York State charter schools, as well as to collect and analyze data aimed at measuring the Office's progress toward meeting Strategic Plan goals and measures.
- **Legal Counsel.** Legal Counsel reports directly to the Assistant Commissioner and will be responsible for informing the Office of laws and regulations relating to charter school oversight and authorization. Legal Counsel will draft and review all charter contracts and management agreements for those schools approved by the Board of Regents.

The staffing structure for this goal area was created primarily using data from other state agencies in regards to the number of staff per school. Given the pre-existing staffing structure, as well as the information from other state agencies, the strategic planning team created a ratio of 50 schools per 1 FTE.

Goal 3: Promote the dissemination of New York State charter school best practices to other public schools.

- **Dissemination Specialist.** This position will be charged with promoting dissemination of charter school best practices to public schools throughout the State, and will administer the dissemination grant competition. This individual will serve as a resource to other staff outside of the Charter School Office, and partners outside the agency, who support the State’s school turnaround efforts. S/he will also work alongside Charter School Office new school development staff to inform teachers, parents, and communities about charter schools.
- **Communications Specialist.** This position will be charged with ensuring that internal and external stakeholders receive essential and important information and messages in a timely and appropriate manner.

Goal 4: Improve student achievement outcomes in New York State charter schools, particularly for students who are at greatest risk of not meeting State academic standards.

- **Director.** The position is responsible for overseeing the work of the Charter School Office and ensuring that the Office operates as a high-quality charter school authorizer and oversight agent for the Board of Regents. In addition to this, the Director will guide the Office’s work toward fulfilling the mission, vision, and goals identified within this plan, among many other duties.
- **Support Staff.** Support staff will enhance the work of the Charter School Office by providing administrative support to the Director, as well as other staff members as necessary.

In addition to the teams and staff positions outlined above, the Charter School Office recognizes that from time to time it will rely upon the expertise of contracted consultants to assist in fulfilling its core oversight responsibilities. These additional supports are accounted for within the Five Year Projected Staffing Plan outlined on the following page.

Recruitment

The Charter School Office is currently in the process of determining viable recruitment strategies to fill the open positions described above. The recruitment strategies will be determined while bearing in mind the civil service restrictions. The Office will explore reaching out across the country to recruit high-quality applicants. Additionally, the Office will seek to hire individuals with relevant experience that would increase the skills and capacity of the Charter School Office.

Five Year Projected Staffing Plan						
	Actual 2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
# of Board of Regents Authorized Schools	36	53	78	98	118	136
# of Non-BOR Schools	160	177	202	222	242	260
# of All Charter Schools	196	230	280	320	360	396
Strategic Plan Goal #1: Increase the number of high-quality charter schools in New York State, especially those serving educationally disadvantaged students who are at greatest risk of not meeting State academic standards.						
New School Development	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Performance Oversight: Accountability/Renewal	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.5	4.0	5.0
Performance Oversight: Finance	1.0	1.0	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0
Consultant Support for Reviews and Site Visits	0.3	1.1	1.4	2.0	2.4	2.8
BoR Charter Authorization FTE Total w/ Consultants	7.3	8.1	8.9	10.5	11.9	13.8
Strategic Plan Goal #2: Create a policy environment for oversight that safeguards the public trust by leveraging collaborative partnerships focused on strengthening the overall quality of the New York State charter-authorizing infrastructure.						
CSP Grant	1.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Statutory Administration/ Compliance Monitoring	0.5	1.0	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0
Data Management and Analysis	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Legal Counsel	0.5	0.5	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Consultant Support for Data Management	0.0	0.6	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
All Charter Schools FTE Total w/ Consultants	3.0	5.1	6.1	6.0	6.5	7.0
Strategic Plan Goal #3: Promote the dissemination of New York State charter school best practices to other public schools.						
Dissemination Specialist	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Communication Specialist	0.5	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Consultants: Researchers	0.0	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5
Dissemination/Communications FTE Total w/ Consultants	0.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5
Strategic Plan Goal #4: Improve student achievement outcomes in New York State charter schools, particularly for students who are at greatest risk of not meeting State academic standards.						
Director	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Support Staff	0.5	0.5	1.0	1.5	2.0	2.0
Total FTE w/ Consultants	12.3	18.2	20.5	22.4	24.9	27.3

Professional Development

In order to develop the expertise of current staff members, the Office plans to invest resources in the training of its employees. Specifically, a collaborative partnership between NYSED, SUNY, and the NYC DOE was recently created to support the creation of high quality public charter schools in New York (entitled the New York State Quality Charter Authorizing Partnership (NYSQCAP)). An essential component of this partnership will be identifying common areas of professional development for charter authorizing staff members through a needs assessment that will be conducted during the summer of 2011. Once needs are identified, the Charter School Office will work collaboratively with its partners to determine mutually agreeable forums for training and assistance. These training forums may include statewide authorizer forums for aligning best practices, as well as specifically tailored trainings delivered by charter authorizing experts (including in-house experts at SUNY Charter Schools Institute, the Charter School Office and NYC DOE).

Furthermore, the Charter School Office intends to invest resources in sending staff to national conferences or workshops conducted by higher education institutions. Attending national conferences, however, is only effective in that staff members share their newly acquired knowledge with colleagues. As such, prior to the conferences, staff members will participate in pre-conference preparation meetings, providing staff members with an opportunity to discuss specific conference goals and identify areas for exploration. After the conference, staff members will participate in post-conference trainings where they will share their knowledge and discuss how this knowledge could and should impact the work of the Charter School Office.

These aforementioned professional development forums will be supported by the funds designated in the CSP grant.

In addition to the above described professional development opportunities, the Strategic Planning Team created the following professional development plan to be implemented over the following year. These professional development opportunities will be delivered during regularly scheduled staff meetings. Also, staff members will meet with leadership on a bi-weekly basis, providing additional opportunities to develop expertise. Additionally, the Office staff identified a number of internal state resources that could be utilized to deliver professional development, such as the Governor's Office of Employee Relations and Lifeworks. Department Leadership will explore these options over the next few years.

Overall Focus	Projected Dates of PD	Proposed PD Goals
Agency Commitment and Capacity	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that all staff prioritize a commitment to excellence in authorizing practices
Application Process and Decision-making	Fall 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop expertise in requirements and criteria for applicants proposing to operate a virtual or online charter school
Performance Contracting	Fall 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop expertise in understanding the terms of charter contract Analyze, assess, and amend current charter contract (if necessary)
Ongoing Oversight and Evaluation	Winter 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that oversight policies and practices prioritize student outcomes and are aligned with standards for renewal
Renewal	Winter 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thoroughly evaluate a charter school renewal application Understand the process for renewal site visits and the role the visits plays in renewal decision-making
School Closure	Spring 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop expertise in staff to effectively oversee the closure of a charter school utilizing the newly created school closure guidelines

Financial Resources:

The strategic plan not only determines the financial needs of the organization but also identifies how the organization will raise, access, and deploy them.

Funding to support the work of the Charter School Office has historically come directly from the same general education fund that also supports the work of the New York State Education Department, along with administrative set-aside funds from the federal Charter Schools Program grant. A specific line-item prospective long-term budget that identifies resource needs and allocations based on the key anticipated work of the Charter School Office has never been created by Department staff. The Strategic Planning Team drafted a working five-year line item budget that aligns with the resource needs of the Charter School Office to implement its mission, vision, and goals contained.

This staffing plan presented in this plan assumes an ideal resource scenario based on best-practice charter-authorizing industry standards and good faith estimates based on historical workload and expense estimates. However, the Strategic Planning Team recognizes the realities of the fiscal state of the government and realizes that while funds may be requested, all funds

may not be received. The Charter School Office, in collaboration with SUNY Charter Schools Institute and the NYC DOE, recently submitted a federal Charter Schools Program grant for the years 2011-2016. Four new positions and substantial consultant support were included within the grant budget request to advance the work of the Charter School Office in alignment with the mission, vision, and goals into 2012-13 as set forth in this strategic plan. To support the further high quality expansion envisioned by the New York State Charter Schools Act, the Department will need to strongly consider re-allocating current resources and seeking additional revenue. The Charter School Office will also continue to consider operational efficiencies (such as a fully electronic document submission and application review system) and differentiating oversight practices (e.g., less on-site attention to high-performing schools with track records of success) to minimize the need for additional staff resources. However, if budget constraints prevent the proportional expansion of staff and/or consultant support, the number of new charters authorized by the Board of Regents may need to be limited to ensure that the quality of authorizing practice is not compromised.

Quality Authorizing Practices

In order to be a high-quality authorizer, clear policies regarding charter school authorizing and oversight must be established and followed. As part of the strategic planning process, a draft policy document was created that addresses the core oversight functions of charter authorizing. This document is under development. The Office anticipates that the work will continue over the next year. Upon its conclusion, the document will include policies for a comprehensive, rigorous application process, performance contracting, ongoing oversight and evaluation, renewal decision making, among others.

Conclusion

The strategic planning process enabled the Office to establish new mission and vision statements that will guide the future work of the Charter School Office. In addition to establishing new mission and vision statements, the Office created goals with measurable objectives to assess the Office's overall progress towards achieving the mission and vision.

The strategic planning process also enabled the Office to articulate the lines of authority and decision-making rights of the Board of Regents, Department leadership, and the Charter School Office, as well as determine those organizations and entities within the State of New York and throughout the country that have both active and inactive influence on the Board of Regents' decision-making.

Further, through the strategic planning process, the Strategic Plan Team was able to assess the Office's current ability to meet the goals as outlined in this plan. The Team found that a realignment of staff members, as well as the hiring of additional employees is needed to carry out the mission and vision of the Office. The plan, therefore, includes a proposed five-year projected staffing plan (ending 2015-16).

Given the revised staffing structures and potential addition of new employees, the Strategic Planning Team determined the professional development needed to ensure that the Office is able to operate as a high-quality charter school authorizer and oversight agent. The strategic plan includes a newly formed partnership with SUNY and the NYCDOE, which will provide opportunities for all charter school authorizing staff members to participate in collaborative professional development sessions. In addition to this, the Office created a professional development plan aligned to NACSA's *Principles & Standards* that identifies specific areas of focus and goals for the 2011-12 school year.

With the realigned staffing structure and potential addition of new employees, the Office determined the financial resources needed to meet the mission, vision, and goals set forth in this plan by creating an internal five-year budget, which identifies total projected costs for the Charter School Office.

Further, the Office began the work of creating policies and procedures for authorizing and oversight of all Board of Regents schools. A policies and procedures document has been drafted and is under development. The Office will continue this work over the 2011-12 school year.

With the revised focus and this strategic plan, the Strategic Planning Team is confident that the Charter School Office will become a high-quality authorizer for Board of Regents authorized schools, an effective oversight agent for all charter schools within the State of New York, and a leader in sharing innovative schools designs and practices to all New York State public schools.

Appendix A: Proposed Organizational Structure

