

December 20, 2022

Nexus at NACSA AUTHORIZER EVALUATION REPORT

HAWAI'I STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION
Authorizer

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Nexus Authorizer Evaluation Report: Hawai'i State Charter School Commission
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ABOUT THE EVALUATION

Purpose and Process

This evaluation is designed to provide the authorizer with a reflective, formative analysis of its primary strengths, priorities for improvement, and recommendations for moving forward. Through this evaluation, NACSA hopes to provide the authorizer with critical feedback that will accelerate the adoption of practices that will lead to stronger outcomes for students and communities.

This evaluation is based on NACSA's *Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing*, which is recognized as the leading framework for authorizing best practices, having been written explicitly and implicitly into numerous state charter school laws. Consistent with NACSA's *Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing*, this evaluation assesses the authorizer's core responsibilities in the following areas:

1. Organizational Capacity and Commitment;
2. Applications and School Openings;
3. Monitoring and Intervention; and
4. Renewal, Expansion, and Closure.

This evaluation is also guided by key findings from NACSA's *Quality Practice Project (QPP)*, an initiative that seeks to build a stronger evidence base between authorizing practices and student outcomes. Through this research, NACSA studied the practices of authorizers with a range of performance profiles and identified certain practices and perspectives, which correlate with strong student and public-interest outcomes. The key findings from this initiative, which are incorporated into this evaluation, include:

- **Commitment.** Great authorizers reflect their institution's commitment to quality authorizing. Authorizing is visible, championed, and adequately resourced, rather than buried in a bureaucracy. The people responsible for day-to-day authorizing functions have influence over decision-making.
- **Leadership.** Great authorizers are dedicated to a mission of giving more children access to better schools through the proactive creation and replication of high-quality charter schools and the closure of academically low-performing charter schools.
- **Judgment.** Great authorizers make decisions based on what will drive student outcomes, not based on checking boxes or on personal beliefs.

This evaluation is the culmination of a process, which included an extensive document review, data analysis, surveys, multiple conversations and discussions with the authorizing staff, and a two-day site visit, during which the evaluation team interviewed authorizing staff, leadership, board members, and charter school leaders.



ABOUT NEXUS AT NACSA

NACSA believes that authorizers are responsible for ensuring that charter schools are good schools for children and the public. As an independent voice for quality charter school authorizing, NACSA uses data and evidence to encourage smart charter school growth. NACSA works with authorizers and partners to create the gold standard for authorizing and build authorizers' capacity to make informed decisions. NACSA also provides research and information that help policymakers and advocates move past the rhetoric to make evidence-based policy decisions.

Nexus at NACSA is the first and only consulting group to make the connection between people and practice. People make change happen. That's why we purposefully weave organization and people development into every solution to maximize improvement and success.

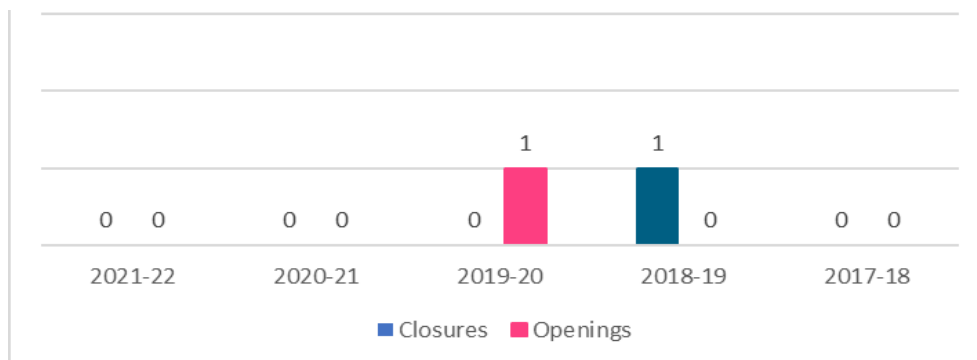
More at www.qualitycharters.org.

ABOUT THE HAWAI'I STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION

Charter and District Schools

	CHARTER	DISTRICT
No. of Schools	37	295
Student Enrollment	12,029 (as of 6/30/22)	159,503 (21-22 SY)
Subgroup Percentages		
• FRL	34	50
• SPED	10	10
• EL	3	10

Charter School Openings and Closings Over Time



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Key Facts on Authorizing and Policy Context

Year of first charter

- 1994 (conversions)
- 1999 (new schools)

Key historical/political context

- Hawai'i is noteworthy nationally as having one central "school district" operated by the Hawai'i Board of Education, rather than locally controlled school districts.
- The state's first charter school law grew out of dual movements to "address both general-public demand for more local control of the schools and Native Hawaiian demands for culturally sensitive educational opportunities for Hawaiian children."
- In the legislative statement behind the 1994 bill creating "student-centered schools," the legislature noted its focus on "school empowerment" and that "any meaningful reform will require restructuring from the bottom up with emphasis on the individual school as the basic management unit of the educational system." (L. 1994, c. 272 §1)
- Additionally, the state's charter school law builds on efforts to expand Native Hawaiian and Hawaiian Immersion educational options, such as the establishment of the Hawaiian Language Immersion Program (HLIP) within the Department of Education in 1987 (See History of HLIP)

Important legislation

- 1994: legislation enacted permitted teachers and parents to collectively petition to convert an existing school to a "student-centered school," granting the school charter-like autonomy. (L 1994, c. 272)
- 1999: legislation establishing New Century Charter Schools. All existing "student-centered schools" would be considered charter schools under new legislation, which also would permit establishment of new, stand-alone charter schools. The Hawaii Board of Education was established as sole authorizer. (L 1999, c. 62)
- 2011: Legislature establishes charter school task force in order to review and propose legislative reforms to the state's charter school program. NACSA was commissioned to assist. (L 2011, c. 130 §7)
- 2012: Legislature enacts Act 130, significantly overhauling the existing charter school law, including establishing the Hawaii Public Charter School Commission as an independent authorizing board, as well as creating avenues for additional entities (such as colleges and universities, non-profit organizations, or county and state agencies) to apply to the Hawaii Board of Education for authorizing authority. The legislation also established a more robust charter contract and accountability system. (L 2012, c. 130)
 - Despite reforms to permit additional entities to apply to act as authorizers, no such alternative authorizers have been approved
- Subsequent amendments:
 - Gradual amendments since (including 2013 (L 2013, c. 159), 2014 (L 2014, c. 99), 2015 (L 2015, c. 114), 2016 (L 2016, c. 113), 2019 (L 2019, c. 269) and 2021 (L 2021, c. 167)) to strengthen the charter law in alignment with best practices



Key components of charter school law

- The 2012 law radically reformed Hawai'i's charter school law, and established Hawai'i's legislative framework as a model for adopting best practices and policies for charter school authorizing
 - Establishes Hawai'i State Public Charter School Commission (HSPCSC) as an independent authorizing board
 - Establishes pathway and rigorous expectations for additional entities that seek authorizing authority
 - Establishes Hawaii Board of Education with important oversight of authorizers, as well as rigorous authorizer accountability framework
 - Charter school law includes, and instructs authorizers and potential authorizers, to adopt many best practices of quality authorizing, such as principles and standards, comprehensive contracts, and performance frameworks.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since its inception in 2012, the Hawai'i State Public Charter School Commission (the Commission) has worked diligently to achieve its mission to “authorize high-quality public charter schools throughout Hawai'i by soliciting, evaluating, and approving applications for new schools; negotiating and executing sound school contracts; monitoring performance and legal compliance of our schools; and determining renewal, nonrenewal, or revocation of their charter contracts.” The new strategic plan is evidence of the commitment by the Commission and Commission staff to not only establish practices and policies to achieve its mission, but to do so with the aloha spirit as a guiding principle, and to ensure alignment with national best practices. Throughout its history, the Commission has exemplified a desire to learn, grow, and improve, and to honor the unique context, needs, and aspirations of culture and communities of Hawai'i.

The Commission underwent a NACSA evaluation in 2017 and willingly and openly sought out this 2022 version. The process has yielded a final report that is focused on the Commission's strengths, highlights, and areas of improvement. These come together under targeted recommendations that can be implemented, over time, to ensure a high-quality, community-responsive, and culturally relevant portfolio of charter schools will exist to serve Hawai'i's students and families. This evaluation may present slightly different from the prior one in that the Commission's current challenges are less technical in nature and more focused on the complexities of navigating the contextual and landscape challenges. The Commission has made great strides and progress in strengthening its processes, policies, and procedures to align with NACSA's *Principles and Standards* and to reflect the communities it serves. The work ahead needs to focus on establishing a clear vision, agreed-upon definitions, a common understanding amongst all stakeholders, and strong relationships that are based on shared goals and clear accountability structures.

With 23 schools up for renewal in 2023, the Commission has a great opportunity to demonstrate its practices and beliefs in action. The Commission has the tools and has taken the time to attempt to build stakeholder buy-in to make these high-stakes decisions with data, evidence, and high-expectations. There is a commitment to understanding mission-specific impact and a belief in creating a common definition of high-quality that is based on multiple measures – and the patience and willingness to take the time to do this effectively. Yet, there remains disparate beliefs and views amongst school stakeholders, making this difficult work to implement. More time is needed to work with schools to build their understanding of the flexibilities given in Contract 4.0, as well as the autonomy for accountability bargain.

The Commission staff is unique in its cohesiveness, its support and belief in leadership, and its demonstrated strength in team dynamics. The structure of the staff has evolved, and will continue to do so, to meet the needs of the schools and to attempt to best navigate the challenging roles and responsibilities unique to Hawai'i authorizing. There are developing relationships between the Commission staff and school stakeholders, and a commitment to improving dialogue and understanding. Commission members ask great questions, seek training and best practice, and are steadfast in their beliefs of the opportunities charters present.

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The pieces are in place to make challenging decisions and hold schools accountable to their promises.

STRENGTHS AND SPOTLIGHTS

Organizational Capacity and Commitment

A quality authorizer engages in chartering as a means to foster excellent schools that meet identified needs, clearly prioritizes a commitment to excellence in education and in authorizing practices and creates organizational structures and commits the human and financial resources necessary to conduct its authorizing duties effectively and efficiently.

Reference: NACSA's Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing, Standard 1: Agency Commitment and Capacity; and Leadership, Commitment, Judgment: Elements of Successful Charter School Authorizing: Findings from the Quality Practice Project, pgs. 10 –15.

Strength #1: The Commission establishes a clear mission for its work as a statewide authorizer, aligned to Hawaii charter school law, as well as a unique vision for authorizing a portfolio of high-quality, diverse schools.

Strength #2: The Commission has a well-defined strategic plan outlining clear goals with associated strategies and milestones.

Strength #3: The Commission has a strong, well-qualified, conscientious, and committed staff that carries out a wide range of responsibilities on a tight budget for a sizable portfolio of schools.

Strength #4: The Commission has adopted a shared definition of “high-quality” school that articulates specific Characteristics of High-Quality Public Charter Schools and has begun to align its policies and practices with this definition



PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

Commission leadership has demonstrated a commitment to developing and fostering a culture and climate that contributes to strong organizational health. Organizational cultures are created either intentionally or by default, with the latter, unfortunately, being more common. Organizations often underestimate the role culture can play in organizational performance and impact, but it is clear that leadership recognizes its importance and is deliberate and thoughtful about creating a work environment and internal processes and policies that promote psychological safety, a sense of purpose, and high levels of commitment and engagement among staff.

Staff spoke to receiving ongoing, clear, and consistent communication from leadership as well appreciation for having clear expectations and direction combined with autonomy and trust for getting work done without micromanagement. Staff acknowledged that they ask a lot of one another but feel supported in their work and are comfortable asking for help or guidance when needed. This is supported by results from the

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organizational health and team dynamics assessment, which indicate that the Commission staff is a cohesive team with high levels of commitment, trust, and clarity around organizational roles and priorities.

Applications and School Opening

A quality authorizer implements a comprehensive application process that includes clear application questions and guidance; follows fair, transparent procedures and rigorous criteria; includes an interview of all qualified applicants; and grants charters only to applications that demonstrate strong capacity to establish and operate a quality school.

A quality authorizer uses the pre-opening process to build relationships, set expectations, and provide technical assistance to schools, and does not let schools open that have not demonstrated their readiness to serve students.

Reference: NACSA's Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing, Standard 2: Application Process & Decision Making; and Leadership, Commitment, Judgment: Elements of Successful Charter School Authorizing: Findings from the Quality Practice Project, pgs. 16 – 20.

Strength #1: The Commission continues to execute a robust charter application process, including publicly issuing a Request for Proposals aligned to national best practices, using a clear evaluation rubric which is included in the RFP, utilizing external and local expert evaluators as part of application review teams, interviewing all qualified applicants, and providing a public hearing for all applicants.

Strength #2: The Commission's RFP includes a clearly publicized timeline that allows sufficient time for each stage of the application process and clearly explains the review components.

Strength #3: The Commission thoughtfully composes application review teams to include representation from each of its functional areas in addition to utilizing external expert reviewers with relevant professional experience and knowledge of the Hawai'i charter context to evaluate all complete submissions.

Strength #4: Since 2018, the Commission has further bolstered its reviews by bifurcating the process into parallel evaluations with separate teams focused on "applicant capacity" or "application clarifications." Both application review teams evaluate the application components, interview each applicant group, seek follow-up clarification from applicants if needed, and jointly recommend approval or denial to the Commissioners.





PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

The Commission offers guidance to prospective applicants through information sessions prior to application submission to clarify expectations and respond to questions. Full information from the RFP Orientation is posted afterward on the Commission website. This practice demonstrates the Commission's commitment to an intentionally rigorous, but clear and attainable, application process.

School monitoring and Intervention

A quality authorizer defines and incorporates into the charter contract clear, measurable, and attainable academic, financial, and organizational performance standards and targets that the school must meet as a condition of renewal.

A quality authorizer conducts contract oversight that competently evaluates performance and monitors compliance; ensures schools' legally entitled autonomy; protects student rights; informs intervention, revocation, and renewal decisions; and provides annual public reports on school performance.

Reference: NACSA's Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing, Standard 3: Performance Contracting and Standard 4: Ongoing Oversight and Evaluation; and Leadership, Commitment, Judgment: Elements of Successful Charter School Authorizing: Findings from the Quality Practice Project, pgs. 13 – 15.

Strength #1: The Commission provides clarity for the schools in its portfolio, as well as the public, regarding all accountability expectations and measures (ex. Charter Contract 4.0, Performance Framework).

Strength #2: The Commission provides clear and transparent timelines related to key oversight requirements and reporting structures.

Strength #3: Despite the unique geographical context, the Commission has direct lines of communication with the schools in its portfolio and is acutely aware of "on-the-ground" school issues because of the relationships it has fostered, the community connections it has built, and the requirements it has laid out.

Strength #4: Commission staff provides for multiple opportunities for stakeholder engagement as part of its ongoing oversight and monitoring procedures. Evidence of this commitment to ensuring stakeholder buy-in was seen as it relates to the charter contract, renewal timelines and procedures, and Commission staff structure.

Strength #5: The Commission's strategic plan continues to serve as a guiding document that is attempting to connect the strategic pillars, the definition of high-quality, the charter contract (4.0 version), the performance framework, and the related monitoring processes.





PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

The Commission’s mission to authorize high-quality charter schools throughout the state and to do so with “Aloha” and three overarching values: Mohala (our work results in the blossoming of our schools); Pili (we are tied to our schools); and Pono (we do this work for accountability and uprightness at all times) –is a commitment that lives strongly throughout all of the authorizing work. This connection to Akahai (kindness with tenderness), Lōkahi (unity with harmony), ‘Olu’olu (agreeable with pleasantness), Ha’aha’a (humility with modesty) and Ahonui (patience with perseverance) permeate the work and the approach that both Commission members and Commission staff take. This spirit and community connection exist throughout all aspects of the charter lifecycle- from application to renewal. But, more vividly, authorizing aloha has come to mean truly listening to, learning from, and highlighting the uniqueness and beauty of the school communities themselves.

The Commission releases a monthly newsletter that is not only informative, but that highlights and spotlights a school success with each release. Stories from the community, data that tells a compelling story, development wins of school leaders, volunteer awards and recognitions, and other key information is shared and celebrated. Commission meetings not only provide for community input and voice, but also acknowledge these similar stories and trends in a timely and relevant manner. By building this narrative and by bringing aloha into key authorizing decisions, the portfolio at large, and the charter context, are strengthened.

Renewal, Expansion, and Closure

A quality authorizer designs and implements a transparent and rigorous process that uses comprehensive academic, financial, and operational performance data to make merit-based renewal decisions and revokes charters when necessary to protect student and public interests.

A quality authorizer encourages high-performing charter schools to expand through a transparent process based on clear eligibility standards and historical performance records.

Reference: NACSA’s [Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing](#), Standard 5: [Revocation and Renewal Decision Making](#); and [Leadership, Commitment, Judgment: Elements of Successful Charter School Authorizing: Findings from the Quality Practice Project](#), pgs. 16 – 17.

- Strength #1: The Commission has successfully transitioned its portfolio from prior versions of its charter contract to its current version (4.0) which is a more expansive, clear, and strategically aligned accountability document.
- Strength #2: The Commission conducts site-visits for each of the schools going through renewal within any given cycle and provides a detailed site visit summary report as part of the renewal protocol.
- Strength #3: The Commission’s renewal reports are detailed, thorough, aligned to the performance framework, and provide context for decision

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making.

- **Strength #4:** The Commission’s staff is dedicated, resourced, and committed to conduct its authorizing responsibilities and has restructured to align skillsets to accountability structures and school needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS - ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY & COMMITMENT

A quality authorizer engages in chartering as a means to foster excellent schools that meet identified needs, clearly prioritizes a commitment to excellence in education and in authorizing practices and creates organizational structures and commits human and financial resources necessary to conduct its authorizing duties effectively and efficiently.

Evidence and Analysis

The Commission has made progress in critical aspects of organizational capacity and commitment by developing a comprehensive strategic plan and developing a shared definition of a “high-quality” school. The Commission has opportunities to strengthen its organizational capacity and commitment by focusing on three key areas that emerged as themes throughout the evaluation process. The majority of the recommendations outlined below can be generally categorized as opportunities related to 1) Commissioner and staff alignment; 2) clarity around significant organizational definitions and expectations; and 3) continuous improvement. While there are critical recommendations that fall outside these three areas, the recognition that most of the recommendations fall within these three areas suggests they are key levers for growth and improvement.

Commissioner and Staff Alignment

Results from both the Authorizer Self-Evaluation, focus groups with staff, and interviews with Commissioners indicate that while there has been improvement in the relationship between staff and Commissioners, relationship-building for the sake of understanding and alignment remains an area of continued focus. Staff would like to have more interactions with Commissioners, as they believe the more Commissioners have insight into their processes, the more likely they would be to understand the rigor with which they make their recommendations. When responding to the question, “If the organization were to invest in one thing from an internal operations or teamwork perspective, what would have the greatest positive impact on your work?” one staff member responded with “decision-making process of our Commissioners and the link between staff and the Commission.” Follow-up comments by other staff in response to this comment indicated agreement. “Emotions get involved and sometimes our Commissioners respond to the emotions. Less emotion and more alignment with our statutory requirements.”

Commissioners reported that the staff works very hard, and they recognize the work is incredibly complex. While generally Commissioners report that staff does a good job of making sure Commissioners have what they need and that staff is “available and accessible,” some reported that they would like to see “both sides” share information more freely.

Commissioners indicated that some have had more opportunities to interact with



staff than others, and that it would be helpful if there were increased or different types of opportunities for interaction.

Comparing responses from the staff's completion of the Authorizer Self-Evaluation to the Commissioners' responses indicate there is strong alignment between staff and Commissioners in the following areas:

- Consistent monitoring of schools' performance
- Providing transparent and timely information about schools' performance (to the schools)
- Using established intervention policies to communicate unsatisfactory performance to schools
- Encouraging the expansion of high-quality schools

The same comparison indicates that working to create greater alignment in the following specific *authorizing* functions would be beneficial:

- Application decision-making process
- Providing transparent and digestible information to the public about policies, procedures, and portfolio performance
- Establishing and nurturing productive relationships with school communities and other key stakeholders
- Decision-making alignment and support of Commission on staff recommendations regarding the approval, renewal, and revocation of charters
- Respecting the autonomy of schools

Clarity Around Significant Organizational Definitions and Expectations

Staff consistently reported that one of the enabling factors that allow them to do their jobs and accomplish their work goals is ongoing, clear, and consistent communication. They report strong systems in place for internal communication and coordination and believe the strategic plan has helped establish clear priorities. Commissioners also reported that the work done to develop a thoughtful strategic plan provides the Commission with a clear path forward to strengthen Hawaii's charter schools.

To take this strength to the next level, the Commission would benefit from creating the utmost clarity around certain organizational definitions and expectations. Similar to comments made in the previous paragraph, staff reported a desire for the Commission to ensure their decision-making process is clear, that they understand their role in the process of making decisions, and that there is a "clear link between what is being delivered and the decision-making process." There is a desire to hold schools accountable in service of getting better results, and this is not always apparent in how decisions are being made; this was noted by both staff and some Commissioners. Some Commissioners also reported that there is a lack of understanding as to the function of the Commission from some schools as well as some Commissioners, with one Commissioner sharing that, "sometimes I think we have been acting more like staff, overstepping." Comments from some school leaders during focus groups validated that there is a lack of understanding regarding the role of the authorizer, with some indicating that their understanding of an authorizer is that it serves as a support organization.



The Commission has worked hard to develop its Characteristics of High-Quality Public Schools, which is no easy feat. Recognizing that this definition is relatively new, it is not surprising that it has not yet been fully understood or internalized. The next step is to refine it from the lens of measurement. As one Commissioner pointed out, “people bring a lot of their own experiences and backgrounds into reviewing/assessing. When it comes to something like quality, I think you can only go so far in coming up with some objective measures.”

While it is challenging to come up with objective measures, it is critical to connect the dots between the Performance Framework and the Characteristics of High-Quality Public Schools so that constituents understand that they are not different sets of expectations and that ultimately, the Performance Framework is the tool for assessing how schools are living up to the Characteristics of High-Quality Public Schools. It is clear from both Commissioner interviews and school leader focus groups that they are not making this connection, as Commissioners and school leaders had varying responses to questions around defining school quality.

Continuous Improvement

The work that has been done to develop a clear and comprehensive strategic plan has laid a strong foundation for the Commission moving forward as a cohesive organization. It is also clear that despite the challenges that come with interim leadership, leadership has created a climate and culture in which staff feel trusted and committed to doing what is right for students; comments in staff focus groups and the results from the staff organizational health survey were overwhelmingly positive.

To ensure that the Commission continues to build upon its strong foundation, the Commission would benefit from focusing on ensuring there are mechanisms in place to reflect on and evaluate its work on an ongoing basis. Responses from Commissioners to questions on the Authorizer Self-Evaluation indicate inconsistency regarding goals, identifying progress being made toward goals, and recognizing and understanding the Commission’s strengths and areas for improvement. Interviews with Commissioners also indicated differences in perspective on the rigor with which decisions are being made. As previously noted, staff concurred with this assessment.

Commissioner interviews also indicated the need for a clear and objective process for evaluating the Executive Director’s performance, and in turn the office’s performance, on a regular basis. Commissioners’ comments during the interviews suggested they were either unclear on the process for evaluating the Executive Director’s performance or felt the current process was insufficient.

Having standard tools and processes in place for ongoing reflection and assessment of behaviors, actions, and results is critical to ensure organizations do what they say and adhere to agreed-upon expectations, policies, and procedures.



Short-Term Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Obtain a permanent Executive Director. It is clear that having an Interim Executive Director for an extended period of time has been a hinderance for the Commission. Regardless of the strength of any individual serving in an interim leadership role, the uncertainty – for both the individual and the rest of staff – that comes with having interim leadership is detrimental to optimal organizational performance. One of the key components of psychological safety at work is certainty, and the lack of clarity around the status of the timeline for selecting a permanent Executive Director weighs heavily on all staff.

It also detracts from the Commission’s relationship with schools and may be contributing to some schools’ unwillingness to take responsibility for their deficiencies. Stakeholders also tend to become more vocal when there is interim leadership; this is often an attempt to sway the decision-making process.

The Commission needs to develop a strong and transparent selection process and timeline for onboarding a new Executive Director and clearly communicate it to staff and school leaders. While feedback on the Executive Director position profile can and should be obtained from various stakeholders, and various stakeholders should be involved in components of the selection process, it should be made clear that decision-making authority lies solely with the Commission.

Recommendation #2: Develop a process and format for objectively evaluating the Executive Director’s performance on an ongoing basis. As mentioned above, there does not seem to be a clear process or format for evaluating the Executive Director’s performance. Objective performance evaluations are critical for

bridging the gap between expectations and actual outcomes and ensure there is alignment around critical priorities and behavioral expectations. In the case of the Executive Director, performance evaluations also serve to evaluate organizational performance. While “formal” performance evaluations may be necessary for things such as compensation adjustments, ongoing informal performance assessments are critical to ensuring the organization is staying focused on priorities and agreed upon goals and outcomes and helping the organization to be more proactive versus reactive.

Recommendation #3: Develop a process and format to ensure Commissioners are continuously reflecting on and evaluating themselves and their decisions with respect to strategic goals and a clarified definition of school quality and are ensuring that community needs are being met by effectively bringing in community voice. Similar to ongoing evaluation of the Executive Director, the Commissioners should be engaging in continuous reflection and evaluation to ensure they are living up to expectations and holding themselves accountable to commitments and decisions that are aligned with clearly stated performance expectations and criteria. Absent ongoing reflection and evaluation, it becomes too easy to rely on subjective information to assess organizational process and effectiveness and to fall back on undesirable behaviors. Additionally, it requires discipline to follow through on consistently demonstrating behaviors associated with organizational values and employing tools and processes that have been developed for decision-making and other aspects of organizational effectiveness; having mechanisms for assessing the Commission’s fidelity to predetermined processes and effectiveness



in working together greatly increases the probability of consistently applying new practices and processes.

Tools and processes for ongoing reflection and evaluation do not need to be complex or time-consuming, but they do need to be focused and used consistently. Examples of self-reflection and self-evaluation mechanisms include things such as “Exit Tickets” at the end of committee or full Commission meetings or after-action reviews when critical decisions are made. Nexus at NACSA is happy to provide more examples and support in developing such tools.

Recommendation #4: Make organizational values more tangible/observable by Commissioners and staff by co-creating Action Indicators; ensure organizational values are integrated into all aspects of the work.

Organizational values are important as they should be the bedrock of how behavioral norms are defined and how decisions are made to achieve goals and fulfill the mission. Ideally, values need to authentically define how organization members operate, behave, and interact on a day-to-day basis. They should be ingrained into the organization

Long-Term Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Provide consistent and ongoing training for all Commissioners on their role and commitments as Commissioners and quality charter school authorizing. While Commissioners reported they received onboarding and training when joining the Commission and spoke to the Interim Executive Director and other team members taking time to go over information and review documents, the onboarding process has not been developed into a standard experience. Ongoing training and development for Commissioners also seems to be lacking.

through embedding them into team member performance expectations, accountability measures, and organizational processes and policies.

While the Commission operates with the “Aloha Spirit” as defined in Hawai’i Revised Statutes and has also adopted the overarching values of Mohala, Pili, and Pono as descriptors of the Commission’s beliefs and ethos, it would be challenging to use them as organizational values are intended because they are lacking clear indicators of what they look like when being lived out successfully. To strengthen the utility of the Commission’s values, the team should work together to create clear and specific Action Indicators for each organizational value. Action Indicators help make ambiguous concepts more tangible and clearer by outlining observable behaviors that demonstrate that a value is being lived.

Once Action Indicators are developed, work should be done to ensure the values are embedded into organizational processes and policies, such as decision-making matrices, performance management processes, and onboarding and professional development, etc.

To help address challenges related to some Commissioners not fully understanding the function of an authorizer and/or not fully understanding their role and responsibilities as Commissioners, a standard and comprehensive plan for onboarding new Commissioners should be developed and faithfully implemented with all new Commissioners. In addition to focusing on the role of an authorizer and key responsibilities and commitments of Commission members, onboarding should include



components related to the Commission’s organizational values, core authorizing processes, decision-making matrices and other tools or processes for operational effectiveness. An overview of authorizing best practices and resources available to Commissioners should also be included.

A strong onboarding process and content will provide new Commissioners with a strong foundation from which to build, and it is equally important to provide ongoing training and development to reinforce concepts from onboarding, to continue to build Commissioners’ knowledge and expertise, and to support changes and new learnings from the Hawai’i environment and the field at large. Developing a “standard” curriculum for professional development combined with opportunities to explore and address changing, or emerging best practices will help keep critical concepts and practices top-of-mind when making decisions. When possible, it is generally beneficial for staff and Commissioners to participate in such professional development together as it helps ensure that everyone is getting the same information at the same time and will also support trust and relationship-building between staff and Commissioners.

Recommendation #2: Commissioners and staff co-create and align on a decision-making matrix, rooted in the organizational values, to be used by the Commission and staff for all organizational and charter lifecycle decisions.

As discussed in the Evidence & Analysis section, the link between decisions made and the decision-making process is not always clear and there is the perception that decisions are not consistently being made based on objective evidence, data, and clear criteria. To strengthen the Commission’s decision-making, as well as to increase trust, confidence, and transparency in the process, staff and Commissioners should work

together to create a standard decision-making matrix to be used by both the staff and Commission for all organizational and charter lifecycle decisions. While the matrix may need to be modified depending on the decision, a standard set of criteria, rooted in the organization’s values, should serve as the basis for all decision-making. Creating and faithfully employing a matrix will help strengthen decision-making in several ways including, though not limited to:

- Ensuring organizational values and priorities are reflected in decisions
- Providing a measure of objectivity and consistency to all decisions
- Demonstrating how outcomes reached are linked to the decision-making process
- Minimizing time spent debating extraneous information that is not actually relevant to the decision

Recommendation #3: Identify staff members to serve as Relationship Managers for a set of specific schools. Feedback from all parties indicates that there continues to be an “Us versus Them” mentality between the Commission and schools. This tension results from multiple factors but is certainly greatly impacted by (some) schools’ misunderstanding of the role of the authorizer. One way to strengthen relationships, that is also relatively manageable, is to establish Relationship Managers for schools. Relationship Managers serve as points of contact for a set of schools so that the schools have one go-to person for any questions or concerns they have. This does NOT mean that the Relationship Managers need to be experts in all areas. They do need to be “experts” in customer service and know where within the organization to get information or answers they may not have at the ready. This approach also does not



“prohibit” schools from talking to other staff members and vice versa. It does address concerns from schools that they don’t know who to go to or that they don’t get responses from staff. Staff serving in this role must be committed to ensuring that the school’s issue is resolved, question is answered, etc., even if that staff member is not responsible for addressing it him/her/themselves.

A side benefit to this approach is that staff begin to develop a more comprehensive picture of their schools’ strengths, needs, areas of improvement, and challenges. Information can then be shared with all staff in a systematic way.

Recommendation #4: Explicitly connect the dots between the Characteristics of High-Quality Public Schools and the Performance Framework; help all stakeholders make the connection between the two documents. The Commission should be acknowledged and recognized for its work in developing its Characteristics of High-Quality Public Schools. Developing a shared understanding around school quality is a challenging process and creating a “definition” serves as a critical first step. The next step is to clearly connect the “narrative” description of a high-quality school (e.g., Characteristics of High-Quality Public Schools) with the Performance Framework, which should serve as the mechanism for measuring schools’ effectiveness in living out the definition. While the connection between the two documents is called out within the Characteristics of High-Quality Public Schools document, the Commission and its stakeholders would strengthen the synergy between the two documents by creating

specific links. Without explicitly connecting the two documents, and employing various strategies to over communicate the connections, stakeholders will likely remain confused or unclear about the purpose of each document and can continue to cite uncertainty about the Commission’s definition and expectations around quality and performance.

Overcommunication and communication of the connection in a variety of ways will be key to this “sticking” with stakeholders.

Strategies for connecting the dots include:

- Developing an annotated version of the Characteristics of High-Quality Public Schools that references the specific measures in the Performance Framework connected to the various components of the Characteristics document
- Creating visual graphics for each component of the Performance Framework (e.g., academic, organizational, and financial) that highlight connections to the Characteristics document
- Highlighting sections of the Characteristics document and corresponding measures in the Performance Framework through a regular series of newsletters focused solely on this topic

Connecting the dots and “cross-walking” the two documents will also identify any potential areas of misalignment or if critical components are missing from either document.



RECOMMENDATIONS – APPLICATIONS & SCHOOL OPENING

A quality authorizer implements a comprehensive application process that includes clear application questions and guidance; follows fair, transparent procedures and rigorous criteria; includes an interview of all qualified applicants; and grants charters only to applications that demonstrate strong capacity to establish and operate a quality school.

A quality authorizer uses the pre-opening process to build relationships, set expectations, and provide technical assistance to schools, and does not let schools open that have not demonstrated their readiness to serve students.

Evidence and Analysis

The Commission’s new charter application process has consistently been one of the organization’s main strengths. Prior to the pandemic, the Commission generally released an RFP and held a corresponding application cycle each year. This process was temporarily halted for several years during COVID-19 related closures and budgetary uncertainty. In the interim, Commission staff initiated an internal strategic planning process that ultimately informed the 2020 RFP. Going forward, Commission staff intend to continually embed components of the organization’s strategic vision and priorities into annual iterations of its RFP, including feedback from review team members and successful and unsuccessful applicants.

As RFP cycles and timelines are not statutorily prescribed in Hawai’i charter law, the Commission has the freedom to schedule application due dates and review process timelines to best suit its internal workflow.

Short-Term Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Develop an annual timeline for the RFP process to streamline internal planning, balance workflow, and provide a generous amount of lead time to potential applicants to improve quality and completeness of submissions in each cycle. Best practice dictates that applicant groups commit between nine and eighteen months developing a comprehensive proposal for submission; by providing more predictability for RFP release and submission due dates, all potential applicants can backwards plan from their intended cycle.

Recommendation #2: Post the annual RFP and rubric for public comment prior to finalization; summarize changes made/not

made in a posted document to maintain transparency across stakeholder groups. While some may criticize if not all suggestions are adopted, over time, this formal opportunity for review and input will promote increased acceptance and compliance.

Recommendation #3: Provide additional training for reviewers prior to each application cycle to ensure they are appropriately normed on ratings and have a shared understanding about the necessary level of detail in their evaluations. Though this will entail additional time on the front end for the training and may require more time for each reviewer to document their findings more



comprehensively, this practice will allow for greater detail to be shared across internal staff, the Commissioners, and during any appellate actions.

Recommendation #4: Increase the specificity of written documentation of deficiencies for unsuccessful applicants to provide unmistakable clarity as to where they failed to meet expectations. Though this documentation should not exhaustively list every weakness found within the application, and should not prescribe solutions to remedy them, a frank description of how far below the standard the submission rated is helpful for

Long-Term Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Utilize a rotation of all internal staff as application reviewers as professional development to build upon their understanding of the interconnections of authorizing tasks and oversight over the course of the charter life cycle. This not only spreads the additional work across the staff in an equitable and more manageable way, but many authorizers find that the intentional deployment of staff from different departments and backgrounds to evaluate proposals enhances the review panels' understanding of the administrative, financial, and other practical strengths and challenges that applicants are likely to encounter when implementing their school design. Including all staff in the applications process also pays dividends in building institutional knowledge.

Recommendation #2: Require applicants to demonstrate the multiple capacities necessary to meet and exceed proposal expectations and likelihood of operating a successful school; for example, include

applicants in considering the next steps for their application.

Recommendation #5: Create and disseminate an online survey to evaluate applicant groups' experience through the application process after each cycle to collect qualitative feedback on staff communication, timelines, and other components. These results, collected from both successful and unsuccessful applicants, can provide important insight into the process, and help the Commission ensure all of its practices are aligned to its ultimate goals.

performance task components to capacity interview protocols designed to assess groups' commitment to accountability. Over time, application narratives and program designs can become formulaic to meet rubric requirements, but techniques to evaluate skills, attitudes, and group dynamics in-person are an effective strategy to better understand the individuals involved. Paid consultants, vendors, and others who may have helped prepare the application, but who will not play an ongoing role in the operation of the proposed school, should not be present for these interviews to not skew the results.

Recommendation #3: Utilize demographic and school performance data to identify neighborhoods in need of additional choice options (including specific models desired by community stakeholders); prioritize these by listing them in the RFP. While this is a far-reaching strategy, over time, it will ensure that the Commission's portfolio of schools serves the most vulnerable students in the state.



RECOMMENDATIONS – SCHOOL MONITORING & INTERVENTION

A quality authorizer defines and incorporates into the charter contract clear, measurable, and attainable academic, financial, and organizational performance standards and targets that the school must meet as a condition of renewal.

A quality authorizer conducts contract oversight that competently evaluates performance and monitors compliance; ensures schools’ legally entitled autonomy; protects student rights; informs intervention, revocation, and renewal decisions; and provides annual public reports on school performance.

Evidence and Analysis

The Commission continues to carry out its work with the spirit of Aloha and with the values of Mohala, Pili, and Pono, throughout all its oversight activities. Oversight, all the work that an authorizer does between approval and renewal, is eighty percent of an authorizer’s role. It takes time, requires clarity and consistency, and must be conducted with alignment to the authorizer’s overarching contract and performance expectations.

The Commission continues to commit itself to honoring the Aloha spirit with the values of Mohala, Pili, and Pono, while honoring school autonomy, and seeking a high-quality portfolio of schools. This is evident in the Commission’s current strategic plan, in the Contract 4.0, and in the numerous ways in which the Commission communicates with the schools (site visit letters, NOCs, resolutions, etc.). This respect and trust of both the schools’ unique missions and the importance of Hawaiian culture is demonstrated through the written practices and policies the Commission has and in the actions the Commission takes. This often works in a cohesive and collaborative way, for example, in the words of one school leader, “The Commission respects my school’s autonomy, and our engagement is appropriate.” Or, another example, the Mission Aligned Initiatives, which allow for the schools to provide a written narrative describing the effectiveness of their mission.

Yet, the focus on authorizing with aloha has created a difficult environment to establish, adhere to, and act upon a clear, data-driven, and overarching definition of high-quality. In balancing the uniqueness of the schools’ environments, the important value of understanding and navigating the Hawaiian culture, and the critical need for a relentless focus on literacy and numeracy, there is a confluence of challenges in implementing an accountability framework. Albeit different perspectives, this is one thing that school stakeholders, Commission members, and Commission staff could agree upon- “we have multiple measures of school success, yet no one is clear in which one applies where.” This practice, an important piece to keep communities at the center, is creating confusion and tension.

The Notice of Concern (NOC) practice is an example of this conflation. It is being utilized per contractual and legal guidance, but it is not being used to make, inform, or guide high-stakes decisions. NOCs are oftentimes further complicated due to the nature in which the Hawai’i charter school law creates a difficult environment for accountability given the ways charter schools are defined and limited by state law and the lack of clarity between the authorizer and Department of Education roles.



All stakeholders acknowledged an increased commitment to school site visits, both for informational and evaluative purposes. School stakeholders mentioned this as a concern, with one interviewee saying that their school has “only had one Commission visit in 23 years,” and one other saying that “our visits have been top-down and only designed to find something wrong.” This was countered by one interviewee saying that this process has “changed over the last year and that the new structure is clear and aligned to the Contract.” Regardless of each school’s view on the adherence to the process, there needs to be a clear commitment to the purpose of them (and clarity around the type of visit at which time: ex. Evaluative for renewal, informational for NOC, relationship driven for community building) and to the information discussed, gathered, analyzed, and utilized.

Short-Term Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Examine what information is included within the site visit process and reporting procedure; ensure language focuses on data and quantitative information and minimizes room for interpretation. Site visits are an important tool in an authorizer’s toolkit, used to understand what is happening on the ground at a school. This information can be used in multiple ways, and the purpose of the visit should always be clearly communicated to the schools prior to the visit. It is a recommended practice to provide the school with a “summative” document highlighting the findings from the visit. When this is done in relation to a non-high stakes visit, it can be informal, and is important to document. When it is conducted and related to a high stakes visit, such as part of renewal, the documentation should be clear, concise, and based on quantitative data. Data points should not be left up to interpretation and should not include informal observations or summary terms. This change in practice will allow for the site visit report to be a key part of the renewal “story.” It will be an additional data point to triangulate in decision making and it will serve as a document that can be utilized to drive and impact change.

Recommendation #2: Continue to further develop the overall vision, roles and responsibilities, and correlation to each process, expectation, and contract area for

staffing structure. The current staffing structure has evolved over time based on the Commission’s concerted effort to provide clarity of roles and responsibilities internally and externally. This has been observed and acknowledged by multiple stakeholders and has allowed for more direct lines of communication between Commission staff and schools. An example of this is the Frameworks team. In order for this structure and organizational approach to be even more effective and efficient, it is recommended to provide not just an organizational chart for all to utilize, but a chart that reflects roles, responsibilities, and contractual areas of oversight as it relates to contract terms. In doing this, all stakeholders will understand the alignment between the who, the what, the why, and the where of the accountability expectations.

Recommendation #3: Create model Mission Aligned Initiative (MAI) goals or samples to demonstrate the performance expectations, the connection between mission achievement and student performance, and opportunities to measure the effectiveness. The Commission has embraced the spirit of multiple measures of school quality by incorporating the MAI goals into the performance framework. The Commission was an early adopter of this practice and



should be lauded for their work in this area. The next phase of this work is to evolve the understanding of excellence, continuing to emphasize (and measure) student literacy and numeracy, while expanding evaluations to assess other skills and qualities. Using multiple measures is not a tool for keeping open schools that do not serve students well. It is a more comprehensive approach to evaluating the impact schools are (or are not) having. The connectivity between the mission measures and student outcomes needs to be clarified and structured with an inherent connection between the two.

Recommendation #4: Conduct an internal review of the Notice of Concern (NOC) process to evaluate the timelines, expectations, and actions the Commission has taken related to NOC concerns. In reviewing historical data,

Long-Term Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Continue to negotiate with the DOE to make clear lines of authority regarding oversight of non-authorizing, administrative, and federal Staffing and Resources program duties. The Commission and the Department of Education continue to strive for an effective and productive working relationship in which schools and students are at the center. Hawai'i's charter school law is unique in the way that funds are dispersed, charter schools operate, oversight occurs, and authorizing happens. It creates opportunities for confusion if communication is not explicit. It can also create challenges for effective monitoring and oversight if authorizing staff is not equipped with the information or data, or if it is not funded and structured in such a way that the actions can work in collaboration.

An example of this is related to special education. The DOE has direct oversight and responsibilities as it relates to special education services at charter schools. The

look for trends and outcomes. Utilize this data to create NOC guardrails, or criteria, that align issues/concerns with required resolutions and timeframes. The Commission continues to utilize the NOC process as a key part of its accountability system. There is a missed opportunity with the NOC process to truly utilize it as a tool not only for compliance monitoring, but as a tool that helps drive quality, improvement, and outcomes. As such, time spent on reviewing the utilization of the process can demonstrate important data upon which change can occur. Schools need to be provided clear and manageable deadlines, outcomes, and expectations which are not just checklists, but exist to fix the issues that emerged. Schools need to be provided with terms that "best fit" the issues noted and that address the necessary changes in a timely manner aligned to the severity of the concern.

DOE works directly with schools, informs the Commission if there are any issues, and then relies upon the Commission to rectify the concern. The Commission utilizes its NOC process to address the issue but has little authority over how the issue must be addressed, the data needed to understand and navigate the issue, or the ability to work directly with the schools in addressing said concerns. This process then becomes complicated and time consuming when, often, critical changes need to occur to be compliant. Too often, this is putting students and schools at risk. Undergoing this negotiation will be challenging and require policy and practice changes but is critical to address effective monitoring and oversight.

Recommendation #2: Utilize the developed tools, resources, and contract language to align expectations and accountability in a thorough and transparent way. The



Commission has the statutory authority, as well as the foundational tools and resources, strengthened by Contract 4.0, to define accountability expectations. The next step is to create alignment between the expectations and all of the key authorizing practices and policies. This needs to start from a clear definition of high-quality and connect through from application to renewal.

Recommendation #3: Implement Mission Aligned Initiative (MAI) training or partnership opportunities with both applicant (new) and existing schools. Utilize the training to model exemplars and to work in tandem with the schools to determine multiple measures and approaches to successfully align mission to student performance. The Commission’s commitment to utilizing MAIs as part of its performance evaluation is to be lauded.

Evaluating school performance is the heart of authorizing. To do it well, authorizers need to get the right information. Data on student literacy and numeracy is critical and will often come from standardized assessments. AND, more is needed, beyond just stating mission goals. The alignment between MAIs and student outcomes needs to be carefully evaluated and discussed to create the right evaluation methods to see impact on student performance and wellness.

The Commission should work with schools to define these active ingredients, or the ways in which the impact can be measured and aligned. By working with schools that are doing this well, there is an opportunity to study, practice, learn, and share with others and then incorporate lessons learned into the Commission’s accountability expectations.

RECOMMENDATIONS – RENEWAL, EXPANSION & CLOSURE

A quality authorizer designs and implements a transparent and rigorous process that uses comprehensive academic, financial, and operational performance data to make merit-based renewal decisions and revokes charters when necessary to protect student and public interests. A quality authorizer encourages high-performing charter schools to expand while establishing clear eligibility standards for school past performance and a clear process for considering expansion and replication requests.

Evidence and Analysis

In order to make the high-stakes decisions related to renewal, expansion, and closure, an authorizer needs to have an accountability framework that aligns to all of the key pieces of the charter lifecycle, from approval to renewal. This consistency of expectations and actions is critical to ensure the Commission’s mission can be achieved and that charter schools in Hawai’i exist to serve the students, families, and communities of Hawai’i. The Commission is during its current strategic plan which lays out its mission, vision, and key strategies that will be utilized to achieve their goals. This work is commendable and challenging.

In discussions with Commissioners and school stakeholders, there were inconsistencies related to the question of how one recognizes and defines success in schools. While the strategic plan’s reference of high-quality was



mentioned amongst some Commissioners, it was not once referenced by school stakeholders, and no one asked could define it as it related to actual measures or metrics. This lack of clarity was further complicated by the school's desires to define success independently and without any approval or insight from the Commission. An example is one participants' response that success in their school was based on "we've been around for longer than the Commission has existed." These disparate stances are not just barriers of understanding, but also barriers to true accountability and a successful and mission-driven charter landscape. If a common, metric driven, set of measures cannot be established to drive and define quality (and, as referenced, there should be multiple measures with clear goals) then high-stakes decisions can't be made, schools that are doing well cannot expand and grow, and the portfolio cannot demonstrate the uniqueness, the choice, and success it is poised to have.

In the second year of the strategic plan, the Commission has made great strides towards achieving its goals. The new Charter Contract 4.0 is thorough and transparent and, after this upcoming round of renewals, will serve as a foundational accountability document for all Hawai'i charter schools. Although some school stakeholders continue to feel like the contract infringes on their school's autonomy, the Commission conducted a detailed and open process for soliciting and listening to feedback. The "infringement" that a few stakeholders mentioned relates to an issue that came up throughout stakeholder meetings related to a perceived disagreement about the balance of accountability and autonomy.

This challenge is difficult to manage because regardless of the strength and clarity of the legal structure, it crosses over into behavioral and relational, making it difficult for schools to actually see, as one Commissioner stated, "the vast amount of flexibility schools actually have under the Contract." This is a common area of misalignment or perceived disagreement, and it will continue to take time, discussion, and practice to find a more stable "common" ground.

Short-Term Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Continue to refine and communicate clear renewal expectations, process, and timeline(s). Provide opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback and incorporate said feedback, when appropriate, into the process to ensure high-expectations are aligned with stated outcomes, student success, and school-based needs.

Recommendation #2: Set a higher bar for renewal and make the difficult decision to non-renew or revoke the charters of schools that have chronically failed to make sufficient improvement or progress. The Commission has non-renewed one school in its history as an authorizing body but continues to have schools that are not meeting performance

expectations. Renewal is the high-stakes decision that is a crucial lever an authorizer must determine quality. Renewal is a decision informed by both qualitative and quantitative data and which is both an art and a science based upon multiple data points. Renewal work is difficult and critical and must embody evidence collected over time through the performance framework.

The Commission has the tools to define high-quality and hold schools accountable toward meeting the high-quality bar. The Commission must be willing to make difficult decisions when a school is not living up to its expectations. The Commission must trust its processes, its strategy, its



staff, and its vision in order to create a portfolio of high-quality schools for Hawai'i's students.

Recommendation #3: Create a clear path for school expansion requests and criteria for approval. Determine how a school should apply for expansion (amendment request, revised application, etc.) and lay out expectations related to approval. Authorizers should create a clear process for identifying those schools that are meeting or exceeding performance expectations and that may be poised to serve additional students through expansion, replication, or serving additional grades. For those schools that meet the stated expectations and readiness criteria, there should be a clear path for expansion that is not overly bureaucratic or burdensome. Some best practice recommendations are:

- Authorizer's criteria and standards for school operator past performance is exceptionally clear. Schools seeking to replicate or expand know if they should even apply or not.

Long-Term Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Utilize a comprehensive definition of high-quality (aligned with strategic vision) to encompass multiple measures of school quality. This expansive definition should remain committed to excellence in literacy and numeracy, and be

- Replication application is not automatically approved, even for schools that meet past performance criteria and standards. The review for potential replicators is different but never automatic and never without a thorough review. Decisions for replication are based on several factors (e.g., capacity to replicate, potential location), but are most heavily weighted on past academic, financial, and organizational performance.
- Authorizers provide incentives for replication or expansion (e.g., reducing per-student oversight fee and expedited application process, charter amendment process rather than new or expedited application process, access to facilities).

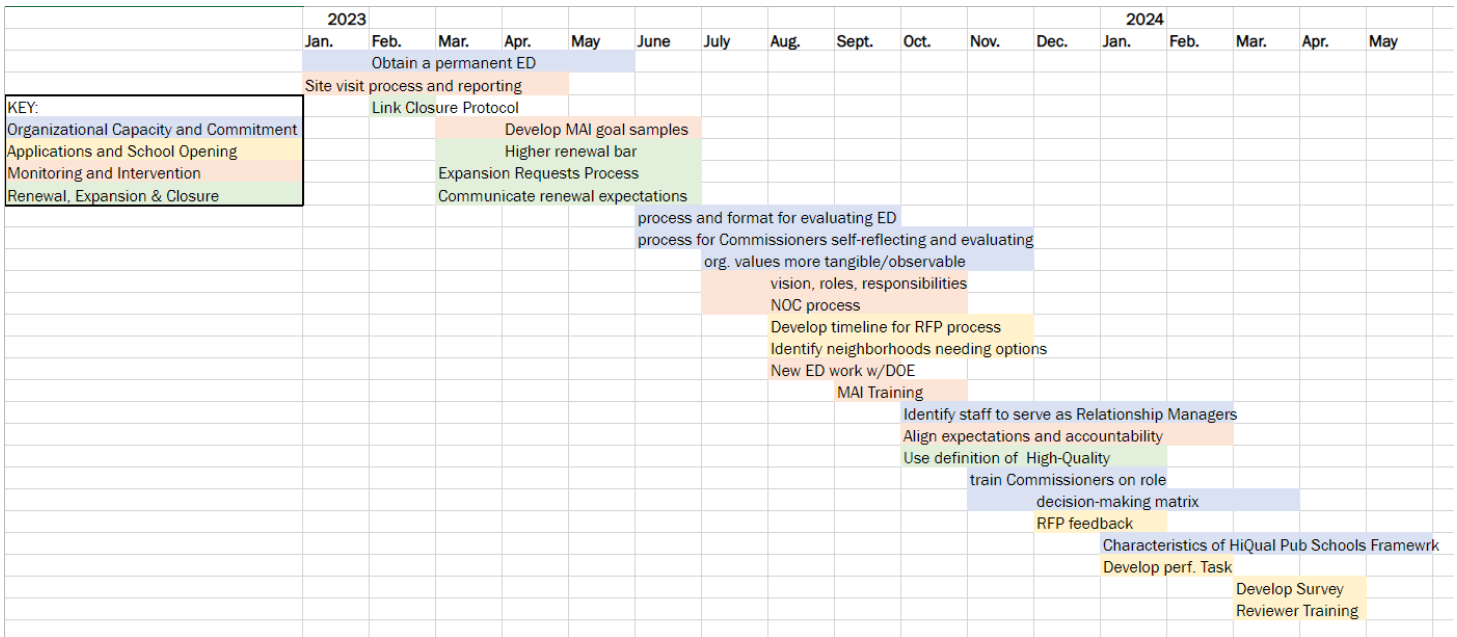
Recommendation #4: Link the Commission's closure protocol as an exhibit referenced within the Charter Contract. As it is a critical part of the overall contractual accountability, it should be included to not only be transparent but connect all aspects of the lifecycle through the overarching contractual language.

inclusive of school, mission, and culturally specific indicators. The definition should then be applied across all authorizing policies and practices.



LOOKING FORWARD

Below is a suggested timeline for implementation of the recommendations made in this report. A more detailed visual and table will be submitted to The Hawai'i State Public Charter School Commission under separate cover. When referring to this suggested timeline, it is important to consider local context and capacity, among other nuances.



Helpful Resources and Programs

- [Communities at the Center](#)
- [Multiple Measures](#)
- [Closure Protocol](#)

APPENDIX

Survey and interview data used to gather information for the creation of this report will be provided separately.

BIOGRAPHIES

Amy Ruck Kagan, Managing Partner, Nexus at NACSA Consulting Services

Amy leads a team that works directly with hundreds of authorizers across the country to strengthen the field and the professionals working within it, so all students have access to quality school options.



Amy has dedicated her career to improving public education. Before joining NACSA, Amy served in leadership roles within the charter sector, including the Director of Portfolio Management at Highmark School Development and as the founding Executive Director of Philadelphia Charters for Excellence, Philadelphia’s leading advocate for quality charter schools. She also served as the Deputy Commissioner of Innovation for the state of New Jersey, where she oversaw all things school choice for the Department of Education: charter schools, interdistrict public school choice, non-public schools, portfolio districts, and all related practices and policies.

She has experience building accountability and performance management systems and finding areas of flexibility and autonomy for quality operators. She firmly believes all education policies must improve education options and outcomes for students.

Amy started her career in public education as a teacher and remains committed to a students-first philosophy. She is determined to see an education landscape that is choice-oriented, reform-centered, and non-discriminatory.

Kasey Miller, Senior Partner, Nexus at NACSA Consulting Services

Kasey Miller works with a diverse portfolio of clients, helping them to strengthen their authorizing practices and policies leading to more great public schools for all kids.

Prior to her current role, Kasey served as NACSA’s Chief of staff, establishing and managing processes, supports, and systems that marry NACSA’s strategy and culture so that all of NACSA’s work is aligned with achieving its mission.

Kasey has also served as NACSA’s Vice President of Talent & Engagement, where she played a vital role in developing, growing, and retaining excellent professionals in the charter school authorizing field through NACSA’s human capital initiatives and programs.

She holds master’s degrees in social work, organizational development, and training and development, all from Loyola University-Chicago. Her bachelor’s degree is from Ohio University’s Scripps College of Communication.

Kasey believes that access to quality educational options is a fundamental right and that until every student is in a quality school, we are not living up to our potential as a society.

Heather Wendling, Project Director, WestEd

Heather Wendling is a Project Director on WestEd’s School Choice Team. She currently leads a three-year grant to establish and operate New York State’s first technical assistance resource center (“NY-RISE”) and provide professional development to its 351 charter schools. Heather previously served as the Director of Learning at the National Association of Charter School Authorizers, and as a Senior School Evaluator and the Director for New Charters at the SUNY Charter Schools Institute. Through these roles, Heather accumulated vast knowledge of the national charter landscape, led a variety of resource-



development initiatives, and developed customized learning solutions that reflected best and evolving practices in the sector to address specific stakeholder challenges.

Earlier in her career, Heather worked in charter and traditional public schools as a Teach for America Corps member in Philadelphia and New York as a special education teacher, coordinator, and instructional coach in both elementary and middle school settings. Heather earned her BA in Political Science from the State University of New York at Stony Brook, her JD from the University of Connecticut School of Law, and her MST degree from Pace University Graduate School of Education.

