



## Request for Proposals

To open in 2023-24 or thereafter

### **District 49 Mission**

*The Mission of School District 49 is to prepare students in a safe and caring environment to be successful, competent, and productive citizens in a global society.*

### **District 49 Vision:**

*We strive to be a place of opportunity and specialized education for every child. We have built our curriculum with the mission to not only graduate all of our students but to fully prepare them for success in college and careers after their time in the District is done.*

### **Process managed by**

District 49 iConnect Zone  
3850 Pony Tracks Drive  
Colorado Springs, CO 80922  
719-494-8910

Dr. Verenice Gutierrez - iConnect Zone Superintendent  
[verenice.gutierrez@d49.org](mailto:verenice.gutierrez@d49.org)

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## ***Request for Proposals Overview***

School District 49 publishes this Request for Proposals (RFP) to provide context and information for those interested in launching new public charter schools in the district. This RFP highlights identified areas of greatest need from a programmatic and geographic perspective. The District invites charter applications that have designed programs aligned with the District's mission, the iConnect Innovation Zone's mission, and D49's identified priority needs. While applicants are strongly encouraged to consider the areas with the highest evidence of need in developing their application, District 49 also welcomes all applicants who demonstrate a high-quality school design and strong community support.

The District 49 Board of Education passed a resolution indicating the district's commitment to meeting the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) *Principles and Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing*. Issuing a Request for Proposals is a best practice identified in the *Principles and Standards*. Specifically, NACSA notes the Request for Proposals states "any *chartering priorities* the district has established."

District 49 is divided into four innovation zones, including three geographic zones (Sand Creek Zone, POWER Zone, and Falcon Zone) and the iConnect Innovation Zone. The iConnect Zone includes the district's charter schools, alternative high schools, homeschool enrichment programs, and virtual schools. The iConnect Innovation Zone manages the new charter school process. Rather than geographical boundaries, the iConnect Zone encompasses schools and programs that are acting on new and innovative ideas in education or that are seeking to serve students in exceptional circumstances. Falcon District School District 49 iConnect Zone schools represent a wide range of approaches to education, but each of them has in common a genuine commitment to student-centered learning environments. The iConnect Zone is a unique part of District 49, serving as a solutions hub that interconnects students, educators, administrators, counselors, parents, families, and the community at large with effective educational systems to maximize the student's learning potential.

### **Vision for the iConnect Innovation Zone:**

*Reinvented educational environments that inspire individuals' peak potential.*

### **Mission for the iConnect Innovation Zone:**

- *To Interconnect effective educational systems that inspire individuals to reach their learning potential*
- *To investigate and implement best educational practices that lead students to success*
- *To invest in students by challenging and developing citizens that compete in a global society*
- *To invent settings and systems that empower individuals' learning, leadership and life*
- *To inspire individuals with meaningful challenges and surround them with nurturing support to achieve ambitious goals*

### **District 49 Mission for Charter Authorizing:**

*The mission of District 49's Charter Authorizing is to promote high quality and effective public charter school options that are autonomous and accountable for improved academic outcomes for a diverse student population. Through our policies, practices, and procedures as a quality authorizer, the district will provide high standards for all schools, protecting student and public interests.*

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### ***Charter School Act and Core Principles of Charter School Authorizing***

The Charter Schools Act (C.R.S. 22-30.5-101 et seq.) allows for the establishment of charter schools to create a legitimate avenue for parents, teachers, and community members to implement new and innovative methods of educating children that are proven to be effective and to take responsible risks and create new and innovative, research-based ways of educating all children within the public education system. District 49 believes that the school district must provide all students with schools that reflect high expectations and create conditions in all schools where these expectations can be met. In addition, the district believes that different pupils learn differently, and public school programs should be designed to fit the needs of individual pupils. To these ends, District 49 authorizes charter schools so that the district upholds the three core principles of charter authorizing as defined by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers and adopted by the Colorado State Board of Education:

1. ***District 49 maintains high standards for schools.*** This includes setting high standards for approving charter applicants, maintaining high standards for the schools the district oversees; effectively cultivating quality charter schools that meet the identified educational needs of the district; and overseeing charter schools that, over time, meet the performance standards and targets outlined in their charter contracts through established measures and metrics; and closing schools that fail to meet standards and targets outlined in law and by contract.
2. ***District 49 upholds school autonomy.*** This includes honoring and preserving core autonomies crucial to school success, including governing board independence from the authorizer, personnel, school vision and culture, instructional programming, and budgeting; assuming responsibility not for the success or failure of individual schools but for holding schools accountable for their performance; minimizing administrative and compliance burdens on schools; and focusing on holding schools accountable for outcomes rather than processes.
3. ***District 49 protects student and public interests.*** This includes making the well-being and interests of students the fundamental value informing all the authorizer's actions and decisions; holding schools accountable for fulfilling fundamental public education obligations to all students; holding schools accountable for fulfilling fundamental public education obligations to the public; and ensuring in its work ethical conduct, focus on the mission of chartering high-quality schools, transparency, effective and efficient public stewardship, and compliance with applicable laws and regulations; and supporting parents and students in being well-informed about the quality of education provided by charter schools.

The district recommends that any charter applicants familiarize themselves with the Colorado Charter Schools Act ([https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/csact\\_part1](https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/csact_part1)) and the NACSA Principles and Standards (<http://www.qualitycharters.org/for-authorizers/principles-and-standards/>). Additional recommended resources for school developers are as follows:

- <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/chintro>
- <http://www.coloradoleague.org/>
- <https://coloradoleague.org/page/nsdsupport>
- <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/charterhbk.asp>
- <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/index.htm>
- <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/grantprograms>

Additionally, the District strongly recommends new applicants avail themselves of the two-step application review process offered by the Colorado League of Charter Schools before applying to the district. Applicants who have undergone a League review of the charter application and made improvements to the application based on the League's recommendations are more likely to have a successful evaluation in the district.

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### ***Choice and Competition Make for a Healthy School System***

The Introduction of free market principles has greatly influenced public school systems over the past twenty years. As noted by Harvard University Associate Professor of Economics, Dr. Caroline Hoxby, competition within our public school has or could have three major effects: 1) improvement in the efficiency of schools (i.e., more achievement for the same amount of money); 2) more innovative schools or schools that are better aligned with individual students' needs; and 3) the potential to impact how students are sorted among schools, potentially leading, for example, to greater racial integration.<sup>1</sup>

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### ***Priority Needs for New School Development***

To inform applicants of this Request for Proposals process, District 49 has reviewed student achievement data and conducted a community-wide survey. The complete summary of results from this work can be found on the district's website at [www.d49.org](http://www.d49.org). Based on analyses of student achievement data and survey results, the district has identified the following priorities for new school development.

- ***Schools that offer a different educational model than is currently available in the district.***  
District 49 has various educational options for students' different learning styles and interests available through its existing district-run and charter public schools. See Appendix B for a summary of the district's existing programs. However, other models may be of interest to the community. The District encourages applicants to consider what is currently available and what may be missing when developing a proposal for a new school.
- ***Secondary schools that offer a military-structured environment.***  
The District believes the existence of a coeducational junior high and/or high school (7- 12 grade) based on a military-structured environment, where daily activities center on academics, leader and character development, and physical fitness, is needed to address an underserved portion of students. The District does not want a reform school or boot camp for at-risk youth.  
The District's goal for this type of school is to produce graduates who are academically prepared for college, the workforce, and life. The graduates will embrace healthy living and avoid high-risk behavior, possess sound decision-making and problem-solving skills, appreciate lifelong learning, accept accountability for their actions and decisions, respect others and appreciate diversity, be leaders of character and honorable individuals, and aspire to be patriotic and productive citizens in their community.
- ***Schools that offer a strong math program with evidence of improved academic outcomes.***  
Regardless of the type of school program being proposed, applicants must provide strong evidence the school will offer a successful math program. Analysis of student achievement data shows the area in which students district-wide are struggling the most is math. In particular, at the middle and high school levels, most students are not meeting adequate median growth percentiles. This means they are not

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<sup>1</sup> PBS Frontline: The Battle Over School Choice. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/vouchers/choice/choice.html>

growing fast enough to reach proficiency within three years or by 10<sup>th</sup> grade, whichever comes first. The gap between the median growth percentile and adequate median growth percentile increases from middle school to high school, indicating students are falling farther and farther behind as they progress through school, making it nearly impossible for them to make adequate growth by the time they reach high school.

- ***Schools that offer a STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) program.***

The need for schools with a strong STEM focus is supported by academic data in math and science, as well as by the community survey results. When parents and community members were asked to choose in which programs they have a high level of interest at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, “Science and Technology” was the top choice at both the middle and high school levels, and the second most popular choice at the elementary level.

- ***Schools that ensure success for students with disabilities.***

The District’s data analysis found significant achievement and growth gaps between students with IEPs (Individualized Education Plans) and those who do not have IEPs. District 49 is interested in charter applications that offer innovative plans for serving all students well, including those with special needs. This might be through a center-based program for students with significant needs, an inclusive model, or other research-based approaches.

The student data analysis was corroborated by the community survey results, which indicated that many parents and community members do not feel that special education students are well served within the district. Addressing this concern is a high priority for the district.

All applicants, regardless of whether the proposed school has a focus on serving students with special needs, must include a comprehensive description of how Response to Intervention (RtI) will be implemented at the school to ensure the effective use of interventions across a spectrum of students.

- ***Schools that ensure success for other disaggregated student groups, including English language learners, students of color, and students eligible for the Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) program.***

The data analysis also noted gaps between achievement and growth for various student groups. The District is firmly committed to serving all students well and, therefore, prioritizes programs with evidence of academic success in serving English language learners, students of color, and students in the FRL program.

- ***High school programs that align with the existing K-8 charter school choices and community/parent/student interest.***

To ensure that the community high school gives district families a compelling reason to enroll, the District encourages applicants to design a school program focused on the Four C’s: Community, Character Education, Rich Content, and Challenging standards for all. Since we desire to authorize a community high school, the District will favor applications that envision a school *of* the community *for* the community that *creates* community.

Finally, District 49 seeks a high school program tightly aligned with Colorado’s new mastery-based graduation standards. The District recommends that applicants explain how the proposed school will allow students to partake in traditional academic learning, including college preparatory, career, and technical education, and have access to concurrent enrollment and multiple forms of community-based

learning. The District believes the students in this school should have access to learning through apprenticeships, entrepreneurial experiences, and community leadership, as well as blended and online learning.

In addition to the six priority areas identified above, the District is strongly committed to using technology and tools for student-centered learning, as well as increasing post-secondary readiness (as demonstrated primarily by ACT performance and graduation rates and post-secondary success).

The community survey results also indicated an interest in “back to basics” school programs that offer high expectations for all students, as well as programs that include challenging curricula for gifted and talented students. A summary of the types of educational programs of interest to parents and community members can be found in Appendix C.

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### ***Charter School Application Timeline***

<b>Date</b>	<b>Task</b>
March 15, 2024, 4:00 pm	Intent to Apply Form submitted in Charter Tools and also due to Dr. Verenice Gutierrez at <a href="mailto:verenice.gutierrez@d49.org">verenice.gutierrez@d49.org</a>
May 3, 2024, 4:00 pm	Charter application due – must be submitted in Charter Tools
May 17, 2024, 4:00 pm	District deadline for reviewing submitted charter applications for completeness Applicants notified of any missing charter application sections. If information is complete, the applicant receives written documentation verifying the completeness.
15 days after the applicant was notified of information missing in the charter school application,	Information missing from the charter application must be submitted to the district. The district provides documentation when the application is complete and will be reviewed.
May 17 – June 3, 2024	The Charter School Subcommittee of the District Accountability Advisory Committee (DAAC) conducts its review and evaluation of charter applications. The committee presents its formal, written evaluation results to the DAAC and Application Review Team no later than June 3, 2024.
May 17 – June 3, 2024	The Application Review Team conducts its review and evaluation of charter applications.
June 10 – 14, 2024	The Application Review Team interviews charter applicants and requests additional written clarification.
June 21, 2024	Applicant's written response due to the Application Review Team.
June 21, 2024	Applicant's presentation for the Board of Education Work Session submitted electronically to <a href="mailto:verenice.gutierrez@d49.org">verenice.gutierrez@d49.org</a>
June 28, 2024	<i>Board of Education Work Session</i> at which charter applicants have 10 minutes to present their school design to the Board and address any Board questions

July 12, 2024	<i>Regular Board of Education Meeting</i> at which community members and parents can express support or concern regarding charter applications. Individuals wishing to make public comments should sign up to do so according to the district's normal procedure.
July 12, 2024	<i>Regular Board of Education Meeting</i> at which the Application Review Team presents its formal recommendations regarding approval or denial of charter applications. The School Board votes on the charter application.

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### ***Intent to Apply Form***

**Instructions:** All District charter school applicants must file this intent to apply form with the District by March 15, 2024, before applying to the Board of Education. This provides formal notice to School District 49 regarding the applicant's intention to submit a new school proposal to open in the 2025-26 school year.

The application deadline is May 3, 2024; therefore, the Intent to Apply form must be submitted no later than the close of business on March 15, 2024. The intent to apply form must be submitted in Charter Tools once the applicant has set up an account. This form should also be the first document in the charter school application.

*The information presented in this Intent to Apply is non-binding.*

Date:	
Name of Proposed School:	
Grade Configuration:	
Model or Focus:	
Primary Contact Person:	
Phone:	
Email:	
Geographic Region:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sand Creek Zone</li> <li>● Falcon Zone</li> <li>● POWER Zone</li> <li>● District-Wide</li> <li>● iConnect Zone</li> </ul>
Proposed Leader (if known):	
Replication:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Contract with ESP/EMO:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Applicant(s) has filed/will file an application to charter this school	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

or a substantially similar school with other authorizers:	If yes, identify the other authorizers:
Applicant(s) submitting this form: <i>Double-click the appropriate box to check it.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Is incorporated in Colorado as a nonprofit <input type="checkbox"/> Has filed application to become a Colorado nonprofit <input type="checkbox"/> Other – identify type of entity:
The proposed charter school will be located within the boundaries of the school district in which this intent to apply form is submitted:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If no, identify the district in which the proposed school would be located:

**Enrollment Projections:** *Provide additional rows and columns if necessary.*

GRADE	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33
ECE								
K								
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								
<b>Total # students</b>								

	FRPL %	SPED %	ELL %
Proposed Demographics			

Mission of School:	
Provide a brief overview of the	



education program of the proposed school:	
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Complete the following table to list Board members for the school at this time.

Name	Current Professional Title and Organization	Board Role	Focus/Expertise

**Charter Application Requirements**

The charter school application is a comprehensive document outlining the plan for the proposed school. As of 2022, all charter school applications must be submitted through [Charter.Tools](#), an online platform now used by District 49 for receiving and reviewing charter school applications. Applicants must access the website, create an account, and may begin working on their application up until the due date when it must be submitted, in addition to the submission in [Charter.Tools](#), TWO hard copies of the application must be submitted, along with a PDF copy of the application and all attachments on a jump drive. The two required hard copies of the application should be printed double-sided, be collated in a binder, and sections should be separated by identifying tabs. The hard copies should be provided to the district by 4:00 p.m. on May 3, 2024, for consideration for the 2025-26 school year. Additional hard copies (5-10) may be requested.

The (2) hard copies of the application and the jump drive containing the PDF attachments and appendices should be delivered to

**Dr. Verenice Gutierrez,**  
**iConnect Zone Superintendent**  
District 49  
3850 Pony Tracks Drive,  
Colorado Springs, CO 80922.

The complete application, including all appendices and attachments, must be completed in [Charter.Tools](#) by 4:00 p.m. on May 3, 2024.

**Please note that submissions must be on time to be accepted.**

These application requirements are based on the Colorado Charter School Standard Application, Checklist, and Review Rubric developed by the Colorado Department of Education Schools of Choice Unit, the Charter School Institute, and the Colorado League of Charter Schools. This standard application is divided into 19 application components. The components appear in this document in the same order as in the Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S. § 22-30.5-106.1). See the application for more details.

**To apply for a new charter school with District 49, utilize the guidance of the New Charter School Application & Rubric**