

Utah State Charter School Board

Strategic Advisory Partnership Proposal

Purpose:

The Utah State Charter School Board (“SCSB” or the “Board”) is entering an important period of transition and opportunity. With new leadership, an emerging strategic plan, and the continued evolution of Utah’s charter sector, the Board is well positioned to define its next chapter as a statewide authorizer.

Leadership transitions often create opportunities not only to revisit priorities, but also to strengthen alignment between vision, governance, operations, and stakeholder expectations. As the Board moves from strategic planning to implementation, it will face important questions about organizational priorities, oversight practices, board development, stakeholder engagement, and the role it seeks to play within Utah’s broader public education landscape.

The National Charter Schools Institute (“Institute”) team proposes serving as a strategic advisor and thought partner to the SCSB through an annual retainer engagement designed to support this next phase of organizational development. Through ongoing consultation, facilitation, implementation support, and access to national expertise, the Institute will help the Board translate its vision into practical action while building the systems, relationships, and organizational capacity necessary to achieve long-term success.

While the Institute has identified several priority areas for support, the purpose of the retainer is to provide flexibility. Board leadership may direct support toward strategic planning implementation, governance development, communications, policy refinement, authorizing practices, stakeholder engagement, or emerging priorities as needs arise throughout the year.

1. Strategic Direction and Organizational Effectiveness

As the Board finalizes and begins implementing its strategic plan, the Institute will support leadership in translating broad goals into practical action. This work is intended to help ensure that strategic priorities become integrated into the Board’s daily operations, decision-making processes, and organizational culture.

Support may include facilitation of strategic planning and retreat discussions, development of implementation roadmaps and annual priorities, creation of progress-monitoring tools, and periodic reviews of implementation progress. The Institute may also assist leadership in identifying organizational strengths, addressing barriers to implementation, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and aligning committee structures, staff work, and board priorities around shared goals.

Throughout the engagement, executive leadership will have access to ongoing consultation and strategic problem-solving support related to organizational challenges, emerging opportunities, legislative developments, and other issues affecting the Board's work.

Examples of support may include strategic planning facilitation, implementation tracking tools, annual work planning, organizational assessments, retreat design and facilitation, leadership consultation, strategic issue briefs, succession planning discussions, organizational benchmarking, and access to practices employed by leading charter school authorizers nationwide.

2. Authorizing Excellence and Continuous Improvement

As Utah's charter sector continues to mature, the Board has an opportunity to further refine its oversight systems and authorizing practices. The Institute will support leadership and staff in examining how performance framework results, school quality indicators, governance practices, and organizational risk factors can be used to inform increasingly differentiated approaches to oversight and accountability.

This work may include reviewing existing monitoring practices, identifying opportunities to streamline oversight for high-performing schools, developing additional supports or interventions for schools demonstrating persistent challenges, and ensuring that accountability systems remain transparent, fair, and aligned with the Board's mission. The Institute can also provide a national perspective on emerging authorizing practices and help the Board evaluate which approaches may be most appropriate within Utah's unique context.

In addition, the Institute may assist in identifying, reviewing, and developing policies, procedures, guidance documents, and decision-making frameworks necessary to support consistent implementation of the Board's authorizing responsibilities across the charter lifecycle. This includes helping to codify practices, clarify expectations, and ensure continuity as the Board's work evolves over time.

When needed, the Institute can also provide experienced authorizing professionals to supplement Board capacity during high-volume or resource-intensive activities. Team members can support new charter application reviews, proposal evaluations, site visits, comprehensive reviews, governance assessments, renewal activities, and other processes requiring objective analysis, evidence synthesis, and independent recommendations.

Examples of support may include differentiated oversight models, accountability and intervention frameworks, comprehensive review process refinement, performance framework implementation guidance, policy and procedure development, charter lifecycle mapping, governance oversight tools, school quality review practices, and targeted capacity support for major review and evaluation activities.

3. Governance Development and Board Capacity

Effective authorizing requires a governing board with a strong understanding of its unique responsibilities, decision-making authority, and oversight role. The Institute will

provide ongoing support to strengthen board governance practices and build capacity among both current and future board members.

Support may include orientation and onboarding for new board members, development of governance resources, facilitation of board retreats and work sessions, and customized training on topics such as charter school accountability, academic oversight, financial oversight, renewal decision-making, governance best practices, conflict of interest considerations, board-staff relationships, and the evolving national charter landscape.

As board membership evolves and new challenges emerge, the Institute can also provide just-in-time learning opportunities and governance consultation to support informed decision-making.

Examples of support may include onboarding materials, governance handbooks, retreat facilitation, board self-assessment processes, customized workshops, governance resource development, committee effectiveness reviews, board development plans, and ongoing consultation regarding board roles and responsibilities.

4. Stakeholder Engagement and Strategic Communications

The Board has developed strong internal communications capacity and is well positioned to communicate effectively with schools, policymakers, families, and other stakeholders. The Institute's role would not be to replace those efforts, but rather to serve as a strategic thought partner that brings a national perspective on authorizing, public accountability, and charter sector leadership.

The Institute can support the Board in articulating and advancing a clear, unified vision for high-quality authorizing across Utah. This may include helping to develop and disseminate a set of authorizing principles, priorities, or pillars that reinforce consistent expectations, strengthen alignment across the sector, and communicate what effective charter oversight looks like in practice.

Drawing on our work with authorizers, charter school boards, and state agencies across the country, the Institute can provide comparative insights, emerging practices, and strategic counsel regarding how other leading authorizers are navigating common challenges and opportunities. This national lens can help inform decision-making, strategic planning, and stakeholder engagement efforts.

The Institute can also help elevate Utah's authorizing practices and charter school successes to a broader national audience. Through presentations, publications, professional networks, and thought leadership opportunities, the Institute can help position Utah as a leading example of effective charter school governance, accountability, and innovation.

Examples of support may include development of statewide authorizing principles, facilitation of stakeholder engagement discussions, strategic messaging around major initiatives, identification of opportunities for national visibility, and thought partnership on emerging issues affecting charter school authorizing and oversight.

Partnership Structure and Staffing

The Strategic Advisory Partnership will provide the SCSB with access to a multidisciplinary team of national charter school authorizing, governance, accountability, communications, and organizational leadership experts.

The Institute will designate Heather Wendling, Vice President of Professional Services, as the primary relationship manager and lead advisor for the engagement. Heather will coordinate all services, serve as the primary point of contact for Board leadership and staff, and ensure continuity across all areas of support.

Heather will be supported by a senior advisory team that will include, but is not limited to:

Jim Goenner, President and CEO

Providing strategic consultation related to governance, leadership, organizational effectiveness, stakeholder engagement, and emerging issues affecting the charter school sector. Jim may support executive leadership, facilitate strategic planning discussions and retreats, assist with organizational development efforts, and provide national perspective on issues facing charter school authorizers.

Mary Bradley, Chief Operating Officer

Providing expertise in board governance, leadership development, organizational effectiveness, strategic planning, and board-staff relationships. Mary may support board onboarding and development, governance practices, strategic planning implementation, committee effectiveness, leadership transitions, and efforts to strengthen organizational culture and capacity.

Don Cooper, Advisor

Providing specialized expertise related to strategic communications, stakeholder engagement, facilitation, governance, public trust, and leadership communication. Don may support communications planning, message development, stakeholder engagement strategies, leadership retreats, and efforts to communicate the Board's priorities and impact to diverse audiences across the state.

The Institute will determine the appropriate mix of team members based on the nature of each request, ensuring that the Board receives timely access to the most relevant expertise while maintaining a single point of coordination through the engagement lead.

Proposed Retainer Structure

The Strategic Advisory Partnership could be provided through an annual retainer agreement designed to offer flexible access to consultation, facilitation, training, research, and implementation support throughout the year.

As scoped here, the retainer will include up to twenty four (24) hours of support per month. Services may include executive consultation, participation in Board meetings and retreats, strategic planning support, governance training, policy review and

development, communications advising, document review and development, research and benchmarking, and responsive support related to emerging issues and opportunities.

To provide flexibility throughout the year, unused hours may be carried forward for up to one calendar quarter and utilized during periods of increased activity, such as strategic planning retreats, policy development initiatives, Board training sessions, or major organizational projects.

Regular support may include monthly leadership consultation meetings, periodic planning sessions, participation in selected Board meetings, document review and feedback, and on-demand access to Institute expertise as priorities emerge.

Expected Outcomes

Through this partnership, the SCSB will be better positioned to:

- Successfully implement and operationalize its strategic plan.
- Strengthen governance practices and support effective board leadership.
- Develop increasingly differentiated and sophisticated authorizing and oversight practices.
- Identify and implement policies and procedures aligned to strategic priorities.
- Build organizational capacity during a period of leadership transition and growth.
- Strengthen communication, transparency, and stakeholder understanding.
- Access timely national expertise and strategic counsel as new opportunities and challenges emerge.

The Institute looks forward to partnering with the SCSB as it continues to strengthen its role as a leading statewide charter school authorizer and advance high-quality educational opportunities for Utah students and families.