



VIRTUAL AUTHORIZER BOOT CAMP

WINTER 2021 SYLLABUS

The Virtual Authorizer Boot Camp seeks to provide new authorizers with a grounding in the fundamentals of authorizing and orient them to core resources and tools to support their work.

COURSE OVERVIEW

Background

Since 2016, NACSA has offered a pre-conference session for authorizers new to the field. Due to the high level of demand, and in an effort to provide this one-of-a-kind experience to authorizers who are hired midyear or otherwise unable to attend conference, NACSA decided to launch a virtual version of its Boot Camp in 2018. This is the fourth offering of the Virtual Authorizer Boot Camp.

Expectations

- Attend all four live sessions and a mid-program check-in.
- Complete all required modules before live sessions.
- Participate in session discussions and activities.
- Complete all assignments: pre-work, discussion posts, final project, and surveys.
- Fully collaborate with peers to extend learning and complete project work.
- Keep in touch with NACSA.

Materials

All materials listed below will be provided to attendees prior to the start of the first session:

- Access to AuthoRISE, NACSA's learning platform
- Boot Camp Participant Guide

Attendance

You get out of Boot Camp what you put into Boot Camp. You are expected to complete all online modules and attend all live sessions. If you are unable to attend a live session, they will be recorded and you must confirm that you have watched the recording to receive credit. **To receive your certificate of completion you must complete all components of coursework.**

Calendar

All sessions will begin at 1:00 p.m. CST. Live session lengths range from one hour to ninety minutes, depending on the content.

Session	Pre-Work	Session Focus	Date	Time
Live Session #1	Module 1: Overview of Authorizing Module 2: Applications Part I Discussion Post #1 & 2 Comments	Applications Part II	December 9	90 Minutes
Live Session #2	Module 3: Autonomy & Accountability Discussion Post #2 & 2 Comments	Problems of Practice	December 16	75 Minutes

Mid-Program Check-In	Schedule a check-in time. Identify group questions or needs for NACSA staff to discuss during this time.	Final Project Updates	January 4 - 15	45 Minutes
Live Session #3	Module 4: Ongoing Evaluation Module 5: Charter Renewal Part I Discussion Post #3 & 2 Comments	Renewal Part II	January 13	75 Minutes
Live Session #4	Module 6: Ensuring Access for ALL Finalize Project Presentation	Final Presentations & Wrap-Up	January 27	90 Minutes
Complete the course evaluation prior to January 31 st to receive your certificate of completion.				

SESSION OVERVIEW

Module 1: Welcome & Overview

This session will provide an introduction to NACSA, some historical background to the charter school movement, and the historical transitions that have made authorizing what it is today.

Walk away from this session being able to...

- Articulate the history of charter school authorizing.
- Define authorizing.
- Identify other new authorizers in the field and the offices in which they work.

Module 2: Applications Part I

This session explores how authorizers communicate their priorities to potential applicants and the importance of quality application review processes, including high-level discussion of proposal requirements and guidance, fair and transparent quality-focused procedures, rigorous approval criteria and merit-based decision making. Participants will review their first of two charter applications.

Walk away from this session being able to...

- List the basic requirements necessary for a high-quality application.
- Describe the key elements of a quality application review process.
- Evaluate a charter application with an orientation to quality.

Live Session #1 - Applications Part II

The first part of this session will focus on introducing participants to their peers and the program. Time and space will be provided to answer any questions regarding program and final project expectations. The second half of the session will be spent putting learnings from Session 2 into practice. Participants will review a second, more complex, charter application, identify any red flags that are present, reach consensus with their peers, and determine if the applicant should be granted a capacity interview.

Walk away from this session being able to...

- Describe the course requirements and expectations.
- Evaluate a charter application with an orientation to quality.
- Determine if an application is a high-quality application.
- Identify strengths, deficiencies, and “red flags” within an application.

Module 3: Autonomy & Accountability

This session will discuss the authorizer's responsibility to establish, maintain, and enforce high performance standards for all schools in their portfolio, including not only holding schools accountable for the academic performance of all of their students, but also for financial and organizational performance.

Walk away from this session being able to...

- Explain the meaning of the autonomy and accountability bargain and describe the authorizer's role in ensuring a balance.
- Describe the purpose of a strong charter contract.
- Identify the three components of performance frameworks (academic, financial, organizational) and list the measures within each.
- Reflect on your office's practices of balancing autonomy and accountability.

Live Session #2: Problems of Practice

This session will provide participants the space to pose a current challenge that they are grappling with in their office to their peers and NACSA staff. Participants will walk through a structured discussion that will result in the delivery of at least one suggested strategy to proceed. This session is optional due to mid-winter break.

Walk away from this session being able to...

- Recognize challenges that your peers face and relate your context to your peers'.
- Utilize your learnings from the course to develop and justify a recommendation for an identified challenge.
- Compare and contrast your recommendation with your peers'.

Module 4: Ongoing Evaluation

This session will look at ways authorizers conduct oversight activities that enable them to fulfill their statutory responsibilities, such as collecting evidence, measuring progress, and using established criteria to evaluate school performance data in transparent ways, including desk audits, site visits, and annual reporting.

Walk away from this session being able to...

- List strategies for continuing evaluation of a school.
- Explain the benefit of transparency in ongoing evaluation and provide examples where transparency can be implemented.

Module 5: Charter Renewal Part I

This session delves into the renewal process, and how authorizers utilize performance criteria, the charter contract, and summative evaluations to make high-stakes, merit-based renewal decisions. Possible outcomes include probationary, short-term, or full-term charter renewal; authorizers can also recommend non-renewal or revocation when necessary to protect student and public interests. Participants will review their first of two renewal scenarios.

Walk away from this session being able to...

- Define renewal and list the three types of renewal decisions.
- Explain the purpose of renewal decisions and what it means to make a merit-based decision.
- Describe the timeline of renewal decisions.

- Make a preliminary renewal recommendation based on performance criteria, contract terms, and evaluations provided.

Live Session #3: Charter Renewal Part II

This session requires participants to put their learnings from Session 6 into practice. Participants will review the performance of a charter school, identify any red flags that are present, determine the steps that should be taken, and make a preliminary recommendation – renewal or not?

Walk away from this session being able to...

- Determine if a school should be renewed based on performance criteria, contract terms, and evaluations provided.
- Describe the steps an authorizer should take when non-renewal is decided.

Module 6: Ensuring Access for ALL & Closing

This session will explore the authorizer's responsibility to ensure that all students and families have fair and equitable access to charter schools, that their schools offer programs for students with disabilities and English learners that comply with the requirements of the charter law, and also embody its spirit. We will wrap-up by sharing your biggest takeaways from the course.

Walk away from this session being able to...

- Utilize the EL and SpEd Toolkits.
- Identify at least one step your office can take to maximize student access to high quality charter schools.
- Reflect on your learnings from the course.

Live Session #4: Final Presentations, Reflections, and Wrap-Up

We learned a lot together during the last two months. This session will provide the space for groups to present their final projects and reflect on key takeaways from the cohort.

Walk away from this session being able to...

- Articulate how you will stay connected to your peers.
- Identify one key takeaway from the program.

FINAL PROJECT

Background

The [Quality Practice Project \(QPP\)](#), conducted by NACSA, found that high performing authorizers embrace the spirit of continuous improvement.

CONTINUOUS CREATION, IMPROVEMENT, AND DISSEMINATION	
<i>Strong Portfolios Only</i>	<i>Both Strong and Average Portfolios</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avidly seek out new/best practices from other authorizers (and at times other sectors), and modify to fit their context.• Structured, cyclical opportunities for staff reflection and self-critique on practices and systems.• Continually (typically annually) review policies and procedures, and roll back unneeded paperwork or compliance burdens on schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Entrepreneurial in creating new authorizing practices or new ways of executing existing authorizing practices.• "Open-source" culture; share practices with other authorizers.

Regardless of where you are in your authorizing journey, a problem-solving orientation is critical to this work because the functions, processes, and tasks are all iterative. Similar to a teacher's lesson plans, authorizer practices can always be strengthened to make an even greater impact on students and families.

That being said, context is key. This can make learning about authorizing and problem solving on your own quite challenging as you try to determine the nuances. Authorizer Boot Camp is a unique opportunity for you to connect with your peers that operate in similar contexts but may also bring a different and perhaps, fresh, perspective.

Key Information

You have been preassigned to a group based on your context and will be given access to an experienced authorizer from the field to act as a mentor and coach. Together, you will learn about each other's contexts and identify a common problem of practice and work to come up with an action plan to determine short and long term solutions that you will present during the final session. Your action plan can and should include the necessary fact-finding/research you must complete as well as the experts and key stakeholders that you must collaborate with or bring in.

Topics you may want to explore to identify your problem of practice include:

- Internal Policies & Procedures
- Equity & Access
- Application Process & Decision Making
- Monitoring & Oversight
- Renewal
- Community Engagement

We will reserve 15-30 minutes after every live session for you to connect with your group. In addition, the mid-program check-in, to be scheduled by your group, will be used as time for you and your team to connect with NACSA staff and your mentor to discuss your project and any questions that you may have.

Please note that you may need to connect with your peers and mentor outside of scheduled program times to complete the project.

Presentations

You and your team will have 7-10 minutes to present your findings during our final session on January 27th, 2021. You will need to cover the following items:

- A SWOT analysis of your contexts – what are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that you share?
- What was your problem of practice?
- What are the short and long-term solutions to your problem of practice?