



**Request for Proposals to Conduct Strategic Communications Work**

**April 10, 2018**

**INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE RFP:** The Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board is requesting written proposals to provide professional services. The Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board will receive proposals from firms having specific experience and qualifications in the areas identified in this solicitation. For consideration, proposals for the services must contain evidence of the firm's experience and abilities in the specified area and other disciplines directly related to the proposed services. Other information required by the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board may be included elsewhere in the solicitation. Unless otherwise stated, all offerors shall provide references, illustrative examples of similar work performed, and any other information that clearly demonstrates the offeror's expertise in the area of the solicitation.

**SCOPE OF SERVICES:** There are several services being requested: branding guidelines and public relations training, MCSAB website updates, charter school information test campaigns, and any necessary project management. The Independent Contractor shall perform and render these professional services in compliance with Board direction, its laws, rules and regulations. The tasks to be performed by Independent Contractor shall include but not be limited to the work described in the recommendations in Mississippi First's Strategic Recommendations Report: Communications Planning attached to this Request for Proposals. Independent Contractors may propose a work that addresses all or portions of the scope of work detailed on pages three through five of the report.

**INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED BY RESPONDING ENTITIES:** The following information must be provided in the proposal:

**Executive Summary** – Provide a summary of the respondent's qualifications and ability to meet the overall requirements. It must include specific authorization to contact all references.

**Place of Incorporation or Formation and Years of Experience** - The proposer must provide the firm's date and state of incorporation or formation, years in business, and the years of firm's experience.

**Statement of Qualifications** - Describe the qualifications and experience that demonstrate the respondent's capability to provide the requested services. The following minimum information must be included:

- The qualifications, including licenses, certifications, education, skills and experience of all persons who would be assigned to provide the required services;
- A listing of other contracts under which services of a similar scope, size or discipline have been performed or undertaken;
- Sample of previous work

### **Work Plan**

Provide a work plan which details the tasks to be performed, the methodology for completing the tasks performed, the timeframe for each task, and other information which will describe the services to be provided.

## **Budget**

A detailed budget and budget narrative shall be included. The budget shall include an offer that encompasses all requirements of this Request for Proposals. To be considered, offers must submit a budget that addresses all costs for services and expenses. Each component should be priced individually.

## **Time Frame**

The anticipated initial contract period will be from the date the contract is signed by all parties through June 30, 2019.

## **Contract**

A contract will be awarded to the vendor whose offer is determined to be the most advantageous to the Board, based on the evaluation factors set forth below.

Attachment A of this RFP contains a list of the clauses that will be required in any executed contract.

## **Proposal Evaluations**

A selection committee shall review and evaluate all replies. The selection committee will have only the response to the solicitation to review for selection of finalists. It is, therefore, important that respondents emphasize specific information pertinent to the work. Evaluation of the responses will be based on the following criteria.

- Demonstrated Experience and Ability in Communications / Public Relations Campaigns 25%
- Demonstrated Experience and Ability in Website Development 20%
- Knowledge of charter school policy and law 15%
- Work Plan 15%
- Price 25%

Inquiries regarding this Request for Proposal must be directed in writing to:

Marian Schutte, Executive Director  
Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board  
239 N. Lamar, Suite 207  
Jackson, MS 39201  
charterschools@mississippi.edu

## **Submission of Responses**

Written proposals subject to the conditions herein stated and attached hereto, will be received at this office until May 15, 2018 at 4:00 pm Central Standard time for furnishing the services as described above for the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board. Any proposal received after the deadline will not be considered and will be returned unopened to the proposer. Proposals submitted by facsimile or by electronic mail will not be accepted. Proposals and attachments must be submitted to:

Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board  
239 N. Lamar Street, Suite 207  
Jackson, MS 39201

1. The vendor is required to submit one (1) clearly marked original response with a signed proposal cover sheet and signed Statement of Compliance. Four additional copies must be submitted with the original response.
2. Responses are strictly limited to a *total of ten (10) pages*, not including attachments. References must be made to the specific section of the RFP to which the offeror is responding.
3. To prevent opening by unauthorized individuals, all submittals must be sealed in the package marked, "PROPOSAL FOR STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS WORK".
4. Number each page of the proposal.
5. Respondent should allow sufficient mail and internal delivery time to ensure timely receipt.
6. As a guideline, the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board anticipates the following tentative timetable for the selection of management services:

DATE	ACTIVITY/EVENT
April 10, 2018	Request for Proposals Issued
April 19, 26 and May 3 2018	Newspaper Advertisement
April 28, 2018	Deadline for Written Questions (12:00 p.m. CST)
May 1, 2018	Published Response to Written Questions
May 15, 2018	Proposals Due Prior to Deadline (4:00 p.m. CST)
June 4, 2018	Award Contract*

\* Estimate only; subject to change.

## **Questions and Answers**

Questions concerning the RFP should be sent to: [charterschools@mississippi.edu](mailto:charterschools@mississippi.edu). The deadline for submitting written questions by email is April 28, 2018 at noon. Copies of all questions submitted, and the responses will be posted on the Board's website: <http://www.charterschoolboard.ms.gov>

Proposers shall acknowledge receipt of any amendment to the solicitation and return the Acknowledgement Form (Attachment B to this RFP) with their proposal. Questions and responses shall be considered amendments to the Request for Proposals.

## **Responsibility of The Offeror**

The offer must meet the following conditions to ensure the submitted proposal will be considered:

- Ensure the proposal is delivered by the deadline and assume all risks of delivery as late proposals will not be accepted.
- Provide the appropriate response as required under the Statement Regarding Contingent Fees clause on page 8 of this RFP.
- Ensure all responses are complete as incomplete proposals will not be returned for revisions and will not be evaluated.
- Ensure the required number of copies are provided.

## **Right to Reject, Cancel and/or Issue Another RFP**

The Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received in response to the RFP, cancel the RFP in its entirety, or issue another RFP.

## **Withdrawal of a Proposal**

A proposer may withdraw a submitted proposal by submitting a written notification for its withdrawal to the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board, signed by the proposer, and emailed, or mailed to the address provided in this RFP. No amendments, revisions, or alterations to proposals are accepted after the due date unless requested by the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board.

## **Additional Information Regarding the RFP**

The Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board is committed to diversity and equal employment opportunities among its contractors and encourages all firms, including firms that are minority-owned or women-owned, to submit responses to this RFP.

News releases pertaining to the RFP or any part of the RFP shall not be made without prior written approval from the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board.

### **Duration of Proposal**

Within the introduction section of the proposal, you must state that the proposal is valid for a period of at least 90 days subsequent to the date proposals are due. The proposal shall become part of the contract in the event that the contract is awarded to your organization.

### **Disposition of Proposals**

All submitted proposals become the property of the State of Mississippi.

### **Acknowledgment of Amendments**

Bidders shall acknowledge receipt of any amendment to the solicitation by signing and returning the amendment with the bid, by identifying the amendment number and date in the space provided for this purpose on the bid form, or by letter. The acknowledgment must be received by the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board by the time and at the place specified for receipt of bids.

### **Proprietary Information**

The bidder should mark any and all pages of the response considered to be proprietary information which may remain confidential in accordance with Mississippi Code Annotated Sections 25-61-9 and 79-23-1 (1972, as amended). Each page of the response that the bidder considers trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information should be on a different color paper than non-confidential pages and be marked in the upper right-hand corner with the word "CONFIDENTIAL." Any pages not marked accordingly will be subject to review by the general public after award of the contract. Requests to review the proprietary information will be handled in accordance with applicable legal procedures. Failure to clearly identify trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information will result in that information being released to a public records request.

### **Certification of Independent Price Determination**

The bidder certifies that the prices submitted in response to the solicitation have been arrived at independently and without, for the purpose of restricting competition, any consultation, communication, or agreement with any other bidder or competitor relating to those prices, the intention to submit a bid, or the methods or factors used to calculate the prices bid. Note: The following clause shall be completed and conspicuously placed within the response bid or proposal.

### **Prospective Contractor's Representation Regarding Contingent Fees**

The prospective Contractor represents as a part of such Contractor's bid or proposal that such Contractor has/has not (use applicable word or words) retained any person or agency on a percentage, commission, or other contingent arrangement to secure this contract.

**Representation Regarding Gratuities**

The bidder, offeror, or Contractor represents that it has not violated, is not violating, and promises that it will not violate the prohibition against gratuities set forth in Section 7-204 (Gratuities) of the *Mississippi Personal Service Contract Review Board Rules and Regulations*.

**Procurement Regulations**

The contract shall be governed by the applicable provisions of the Mississippi Personal Service Contract Review Board Rules and Regulations, a copy of which is available at 210 East Capitol, Suite 800, Jackson, Mississippi 39201 for inspection, or downloadable at <http://www.mspb.ms.gov>.

**Certification Statement**

Carefully review the Certification Statement. At least one (1) original copy of the proposal must contain the original signature of a company official or agent duly authorized to sign proposals or contracts on behalf of the organization. Failure to submit a signed Certification Statement may result in your proposal being eliminated from further consideration.

## CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

The undersigned hereby acknowledges she/he has read and understands all requirements and specifications of the Request for Qualifications (RFP), including attachments, if any.

### OFFICIAL CONTACT

The Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board requires that the proposer designate one person to receive all documents and the method in which the documents are best delivered. Identify the Contact name and fill in the information below:

Date	
Official Contact	
Name	
Phone Number with Area Code	
Email Address	
Facsimile Number with Area Code	
U.S. Postal Service Address (Mailing)	

Proposer certifies that the above information is true and grants permission to the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board to contact the above-named person or otherwise verify the information provided.

By its submission of this proposal and authorized signature below, proposer certifies that:

- (1) The information contained in its response to this RFP is accurate;
- (2) Proposer complies with each of the mandatory requirements listed in the RFP and will meet or exceed the requirements specified therein;
- (3) Proposer accepts the procedures, evaluation criteria, mandatory contract terms and conditions, and all other administrative requirements set forth in this RFP;
- (4) Proposer's fee and expense quote is valid for at least 90 days from the date of submission of proposal;
- (5) Proposer understands that if selected as the successful proposer, he/she will have five (5) business days from the date of delivery of the final contract in which to execute final contract document; and
- (6) Proposer provides authorization for The Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board to verify work performed for prior clients of the proposer.

Authorized Signature					
Typed or Printed Name:					
Title:					
Company Name:					
Address:					
City		State		Zip	



## ATTACHMENT A – REQUIRED CONTACTUAL CLAUSES

**APPLICABLE LAW:** The contract shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of Mississippi, excluding its conflicts of laws, provisions, and any litigation with respect thereto shall be brought in the courts of the State. Contractor shall comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

**AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS:** It is expressly understood and agreed that the obligation of The Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board to proceed under this agreement is conditioned upon the appropriation of funds by the Mississippi State Legislature and the receipt of state and/or federal funds. If the funds anticipated for the continuing fulfillment of the agreement are, at any time, not forthcoming or insufficient, either through the failure of the federal government to provide funds or of the State of Mississippi to appropriate funds or the discontinuance or material alteration of the program under which funds were provided or if funds are not otherwise available to The Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board, The Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board shall have the right upon ten (10) working days written notice to Contractor, to terminate this agreement without damage, penalty, cost or expenses to the [State] of any kind whatsoever. The effective date of termination shall be as specified in the notice of termination.

**REPRESENTATION REGARDING CONTINGENT FEES:** The contractor represents that it has not retained a person to solicit or secure a State contract upon an agreement or understanding for a commission, percentage, brokerage, or contingent fee.

**REPRESENTATION REGARDING GRATUITIES:** The contractor represents that it has not violated, is not violating and promises that it will not violate the prohibition against gratuities set forth in Section 7-204 of the Mississippi Personal Service Contract Procurement Regulations.

**PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS:** The contract shall be governed by the applicable provisions of the Personal Service Contract Review Board Regulations.

**TRADE SECRETS, COMMERCIAL AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION:** It is expressly understood that Mississippi law requires that the provisions of this contract which contain the personal or professional services provided, the price to be paid, and the term of the contract shall not be deemed to be a trade secret or confidential commercial or financial information and shall be available for examination, copying, or reproduction.

**COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS:** Contractor understands that the State of Mississippi is an equal opportunity employer and therefore, maintains a policy which prohibits unlawful discrimination based on race, color, creed, sex, age, national origin, physical handicap, disability, genetic information, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state, or local laws. All such discrimination is unlawful and Contractor agrees during the term of the agreement that Contractor will strictly adhere to this policy in its employment practices and provision of services. Contractor shall comply with, and all activities under this agreement shall be subject to, all applicable federal, State of Mississippi, and local laws and regulations, as now existing and as may be amended or modified.

**STOP WORK ORDER:** *Order to Stop Work:* The Board, may, by written order to Contractor at any time, and without notice to any surety, require Contractor to stop all or any part of the work called for by this

contract. This order shall be for a specified period not exceeding 90 days after the order is delivered to Contractor, unless the parties agree to any further period. Any such order shall be identified specifically as a stop work order issued pursuant to this clause. Upon receipt of such an order, Contractor shall forthwith comply with its terms and take all reasonable steps to minimize the occurrence of costs allocable to the work covered by the order during the period of work stoppage. Before the stop work order expires, or within any further period to which the parties shall have agreed, the Board shall either:

- Cancel the stop work order; or,
- Terminate the work covered by such order as provided in the Termination for Default clause or the Termination for Convenience clause of this contract.

*Cancellation or Expiration of the Order:* If a stop work order issued under this clause is canceled at any time during the period specified in the order, or if the period of the order or any extension thereof expires, Contractor shall have the right to resume work. An appropriate adjustment shall be made in the delivery schedule or Contractor price, or both, and the contract shall be modified in writing accordingly, if:

- The stop work order results in an increase in the time required for, or in Contractor's cost properly allocable to, the performance of any part of this contract; and,
- Contractor asserts a claim for such an adjustment within 30 days after the end of the period of work stoppage; provided that, if the Procurement Officer decides that the facts justify such action, any such claim asserted may be received and acted upon at any time prior to final payment under this contract.

*Termination of Stopped Work:* If a stop work order is not canceled and the work covered by such order is terminated for default or convenience, the reasonable costs resulting from the stop work order shall be allowed by adjustment or otherwise.

**E-PAYMENT:** Contractor agrees to accept all payments in United States currency via the State of Mississippi's electronic payment and remittance vehicle. The agency agrees to make payment in accordance with Mississippi law on "Timely Payments for Purchases by Public Bodies," which generally provides for payment of undisputed amounts by the agency within forty-five (45) days of receipt of invoice. Miss. Code Ann. § 31-7-305 (1972, as amended).

**E-VERIFICATION Mississippi Employment Protection Act:** Contractor represents and warrants that it will ensure its compliance with the Mississippi Employment Protection Act, Section 71-11-1, et. seq. of the Mississippi Code Annotated (Supp 2008), and will register and participate in the status verification system for all newly hired employees. The term "employee" as used herein means any person that is hired to perform work within the State of Mississippi. As used herein, "status verification system" means the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act of 1996 that is operated by the United States Department of Homeland Security, also known as the E-Verify Program, or any other successor electronic verification system replacing the E-Verify Program. Contractor agrees to maintain records of such compliance and, upon request of the State and approval of the Social Security Administration or Department of Homeland Security, where required, to provide a copy of each such verification to the State. Contractor/Seller further represents and warrants that any person assigned to perform services hereunder meets the employment eligibility requirements of all immigration laws of the State of Mississippi. Contractor/Seller understands and agrees

that any breach of these warranties may subject Contractor/Seller to the following: (a) termination of this Agreement and ineligibility for any state or public contract in Mississippi for up to three (3) years, with notice of such cancellation/termination being made public, or (b) the loss of any license, permit, certification or other document granted to Contractor/Seller by an agency, department or governmental entity for the right to do business in Mississippi for up to one (1) year, or (c) both. In the event of such termination/cancellation, Contractor/Seller would also be liable for any additional costs incurred by the State due to contract cancellation or loss of license or permit."

**TRANSPARENCY:** Proposals submitted, including any accompanying exhibits, attachments, and appendices, is subject to the "Mississippi Public Records Act of 1983," and its exceptions. See Miss. Code Ann. §§ 25-61-1 et seq., (1972, as amended) and Miss. Code Ann. § 79-23-1 (1972, as amended). In addition, this contract is subject to the provisions of the Mississippi Accountability and Transparency Act of 2008. Miss. Code Ann. §§ 27-104-151 et seq. (1972, as amended). Unless exempted from disclosure due to a court-issued protective order, a copy of this executed contract is required to be posted to the Department of Finance and Administration's independent agency contract website for public access at <http://www.transparency.mississippi.gov>. Information identified by Contractor as trade secrets, or other proprietary information, including confidential vendor information, or any other information which is required confidential by state or federal law or outside the applicable freedom of information statutes, will be redacted.

**PAYMODE:** Payments by state agencies using the State's accounting system shall be made and remittance information provided electronically as directed by the State. These payments shall be deposited into the bank account of Contractor's choice. The State may, at its sole discretion, require Contractor to electronically submit invoices and supporting documentation at any time during the term of this Agreement. Contractor understands and agrees that the State is exempt from the payment of taxes. All payments shall be in United States currency.

**TERMINATION FOR CONVENIENCE:** The Agency may, when the interests of the State so require, terminate this contract in whole or in part, for the convenience of the State. The Agency shall give written notice of the termination to the Contractor specifying the part of the contract terminated and when termination becomes effective.

The Contractor shall incur no further obligations in connection with the terminated work and on the date set in the notice of termination the Contractor will stop work to the extent specified. The Contractor must complete the work that is not terminated by the notice of termination.

**TERMINATION FOR DEFAULT:** If the Contractor refuses or fails to perform any of the provisions of this contract with such diligence as will ensure its completions within the time specified in this contract, or any extension thereof otherwise fails to timely satisfy the contract provisions, or commits any other substantial breach of this contract, the Agency may notify the Contractor in writing of the delay or nonperformance and if not cured in ten days or any longer time specified in writing by the Agency, the Agency may terminate the Contractor's right to proceed with the contract or such part of the contract as to which there has been delay or a failure to properly perform.

In the event of termination for default, in whole or in part, the Agency, after due written notice, may procure the services from other sources and hold the Contractor responsible for any resulting additional

administrative costs associated with the procurement. This remedy shall be in addition to any other remedies that the Agency may have.

**TERMINATION UPON BANKRUPTCY:** The contract may be terminated in whole or in part by the Board upon written notice to Contractor, if Contractor should become the subject of bankruptcy or receivership proceedings, whether voluntary or involuntary, or upon the execution by Contractor of an assignment for the benefit of its creditors. In the event of such termination, Contractor shall be entitled to receive just and equitable compensation for satisfactory work performed under this contract, but in no case, shall said compensation exceed the total contract price.

**ATTACHMENT B – Acknowledgement of RFP Amendments**

Proposer acknowledges all amendments to the RFP. Responses to questions will be treated as amendment to the RFP and require acknowledgment.

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Offeror's Signature

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Date

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RFP Title



**STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT: COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING**

Prepared for the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board

Presented January 24, 2018

**Background:** The Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board (MCSAB or Board) enlisted Mississippi First (MSF) to develop a communications strategy to increase charter school visibility and understanding in the state. In Phase 1 (Initial Meetings & Assessment) of this process, MSF surveyed Board members to determine goals; reviewed public perception feedback from recent focus groups and a statewide phone survey; assessed MCSAB’s past and current communication efforts, needs, and capacity; prepared an outline of needs and goals; and presented all of the above to MCSAB for approval before moving into Phase 2. In Phase 2, MSF drafted the communications strategy including communications goals, an analysis of audiences and how to reach them, preliminary recommended messages, and a recommended timeline for implementation.

**Purpose of Report:** This report contains the plan for communicating effectively to, and affordably with, key audiences in service of long-term organizational goals.

**MCSAB Goal:** Increase the number of new, high-quality charter schools launching in Mississippi over the next five years for a total of 17,250 new high-quality charter school seats.

As outlined in this report, MCSAB identifies parents as the primary audience for communications efforts in 2018, in order to ensure that seats created will be filled. This work should be viewed as *the beginning* of efforts to stoke demand and provide for healthy enrollment or over-enrollment (waitlists) at all existing and future charter schools. Other tandem efforts are underway to recruit single-site founders as well as charter management organizations to the state.

**Contents of This Report:**

Section	Overview
<b>High-Level Strategic Recommendations</b>	MCSAB Communications Roadmap for 2018—Recommendations for how to develop an organizational communications plan across all audiences
<b>Recommendations re: Campaign Targeting Potential Parents</b>	Because potential parents of charter school students in target markets are the #1 priority audience for MCSAB communications efforts, this section dives into who they are, how to reach them, and what to convey to them.
<b>Deep Dive: Campaign Audiences</b>	Clarity on <b>WHO</b> to reach
<b>Deep Dive: Campaign Channels</b>	Clarity on <b>HOW</b> to reach them
<b>Deep Dive: Campaign Messages</b>	Clarity on <b>WHAT</b> to communicate to them

## Strategic Recommendations

Having a strong communications plan defines for MCSAB how to leverage strategic communications across numerous audiences in order to achieve the Board’s goals and outcomes. **This document contains two key components:** 1) a communications roadmap for 2018 and 2) a deep dive into a communications plan targeting potential charter school parents in key markets selected by the Board.

The roadmap will help the Board align staff, Board members, and other stakeholders on the mission, purpose, and purview of the organization. The communications plan targeting potential charter school parents outlines how the Board should begin conducting appropriate outreach in key communities. In effect, the Board must build awareness of charter schools in local communities to ease the path to healthy enrollment numbers if/when a charter school opens.

### **COMMUNICATIONS ROADMAP FOR 2018**

**1) Adopt a universal charter school definition.** It is imperative that the Board adopt a charter school definition to not only as a part of this targeted communications strategy but also for communications strategies the Board will develop in the future. We recommend that the definition explains what charter schools are and includes a theory of action. Below is a proposed definition based on recommendations from the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS).

<b>WHAT IS A CHARTER SCHOOL?</b>
Charter schools are unique public schools that are allowed <i>flexibility</i> to make decisions that best meet the needs of the students they serve. Because they are public schools, they do not charge any tuition, they do not have special admissions requirements, and they are rated A-F annually according to the state accountability system for all public schools.

**2) Establish MCSAB brand guidelines.** MCSAB is maturing into an established entity in the state. As a part of that maturation process, the MCSAB should establish a clear brand driven by brand guidelines—a delineation of key aspects of organizational personality, positioning, visuals (e.g., logo and colors), and language (e.g., tagline, approved messages, and more).

While brand guidelines are very useful in guiding the Board’s decisions and actions, they are equally if not more so important in managing perceptions of the Board. A key goal of brand guidelines is to ensure that your brand—i.e., your organization—presents, communicates, and acts predictably and consistently so that it can be trusted. That trust is critical for charter management organizations choosing to come to the state, charter operators having faith in the evaluative system to which they are subjected, charter supporters believing that they are investing in a winning team, and more. Every time you communicate with state offices, partners, supporters, potential school founders, potential school staff, journalists, and the community, it is essential to build and reinforce a consistent perception of MCSAB. Brand guidelines help achieve that goal. Moreover, MCSAB has a very ambitious goal of growing the sector rapidly. When MCSAB succeeds, it will receive national attention from media, policymakers, state associations, and more. Strong brand guidelines developed at this point in the Board’s maturation ensure readiness for national attention at a later date. They will set the groundwork for any future campaigns the organization launches as well as ground your organization in a common understanding about your work and how you can better serve your audiences.



Developing branding guidelines typically range in cost from \$15,000-\$50,000 depending on the extent of the services provided. At this time, we are not recommending a multi-month project on the MCSAB brand. Rather, we recommend hiring branding experts to help develop a two-pager (front/back) of the fundamentals of the MCSAB brand: who you are, what you stand for, what you do/do not do, what stances you take publicly and why, and your brand attributes (organizational personality descriptors in the form of adjectives). These brand guidelines will direct future decision-making about all communications from what to feature on MCSAB's website to who/what entity should be the "voice" of outbound communications to parents. **We estimate this smaller engagement, including some public relations training for MCSAB staff, to cost \$10,000-\$15,000.**

**3) Annually adopt an organizational communications plan.** Communicating effectively with parent audiences in target communities is *only one component of organizational communications by MCSAB*. An organizational communications plan would include strategies and goals for effective communication with a multitude of key audiences: Mississippi Department of Education (MDE); the Governor/Lt. Governor's staff; other policy stakeholders; Board members and their networks; interested, aspiring, applying, approved, opening, and operating charter schools; existing parents (in addition to prospective parents); and so on. Naturally, MCSAB may adopt no organizational communication with a specific audience (e.g., existing charter school parents), but explicitly stating this decision in a strategy helps make the overall communications approach clear.

This annual plan should be no longer than 20 pages outlining organizational goals for the year, communications strategies to support accomplishing the goals, and audience-by-audience tactics.

**4) Prioritize communication strategies from the communications plan.** MCSAB's organizational communications plan should contain goals, strategies, milestones, tactics, and metrics for key communications across all audiences, as listed above. Annually, MCSAB will need to prioritize and reprioritize which aspects of its communications plan are most critical. This step cannot be skipped—in some years, potential charter school parents in communities where charter schools are opening or may open could be the top priority; in other years, if MCSAB faces a shifting legal landscape, communicating effectively with political and/or policy audiences may become the Board's top priority to preserve and promote the sector.

Our current assumption, based on conversations with the Board prior to moving to Phase 2, is that the organizational communications plan referenced in #3 above will take as its top priority in 2018 generating awareness among potential charter school parents in communities where the Board expects or seeks new charter schools.

The Board's rationale was discussed in-depth at the October 30 meeting: growing to 17,250 new high-quality charter school seats requires an increase in both supply and demand in the state. The supply side (recruiting high-quality school leaders and operators to apply for and open charter schools) is not directly addressed within this communications campaign. (The Board recently accepted responses to an RFP requesting Technical Assistance for those express purposes.) To generate increased demand, the Board must increase understanding of what charter schools are, which will lead to parent interest in enrollment (demand) if/when schools open (supply). There is no entity better positioned to raise basic awareness of what a charter school is, how it functions, and what it offers to families than MCSAB.

**5) Determine annual investment MCSAB is willing and able to make in generating awareness (leading to demand) among potential parent audiences.** One of the realities of the charter school sector is that schools must actively recruit students to attend new and existing schools. This is often not the case for traditional public schools (though in

communities with numerous high-performing charter schools, we are beginning to see local public school systems conduct expensive public relations campaigns to keep or re-attract students).

Student recruitment for public charter schools is both costly and challenging—and all the more so in communities where there is little to no awareness of what a charter school is and what it offers to families. Student recruitment costs include activities such as generating a school brand and website, printing and mailing materials to families, and hosting events and giving out promotional items. Recruitment also requires staff time, which is the most critical aspect of student recruitment because families need to trust in the people, not just the idea, of the school. The recruitment line item in many charter schools' budgets does not include staff time and, as a result, underestimates the full cost of recruitment.

Across different communities, the cost for a school to *recruit* a student through to matriculation in week one—also referred to as "cost per student recruited" or "cost per student enrolled"—varies. Recently, the Charter School Growth Fund estimated that the cost per student enrolled across their portfolio, which includes well-known national CMOs, is \$500-\$600. **For Mississippi, our estimate for recruitment is \$300-\$500 per student enrolled, based on our team's previous experience with recruitment in numerous states under various market dynamics.**

The Board can significantly support statewide growth of high-quality seats by running consistent, effective campaigns in new/target communities to build early parent awareness of and interest in charter schools. These awareness campaigns will also help approved schools fully enroll on time for opening, rather than having to wait another year to generate sufficient applications. Lastly, high-performing charter management organizations expect to see proof of demand in new communities before they are willing to take a risk on expansion. The proposed awareness campaigns are the primary tactic for ensuring we, as a state, can provide qualitative and quantitative proof of demand to networks and individuals we are recruiting.

**6) Kick off a campaign targeting potential charter school parents by creating initial messaging and testing the campaign in three communities before refining the approach and expanding to four communities.** Launch the parent-focused campaign throughout Fall 2018 with an initial investment up to \$70,000:

- \$5,000-\$20,000 for overhauling the MCSAB website, and
- \$50,000 total media buy for three initial test markets.

These fees do not include project management associated with overseeing and conducting the campaign across the numerous recommended channels; they only include costs for a web contractor, production, and ad buys. If project management is outsourced, we estimate an additional cost of \$25,000 for the full scope of the project.

**Summary:** In total, we recommend the following budget to complete this communications roadmap for 2018:

<b>Item</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Branding Guidelines and Public Relations Training	\$10,000-\$15,000
MCSAB Website Updates	\$5,000-\$20,000
Test Campaigns	\$50,000
Project Management	\$0-\$25,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$65,000-\$105,000</b>

**Note:** The remainder of this report is focused on strategic recommendation #6. Please continue reading with that lens, while keeping in mind the foundational (and preceding) work we strongly recommend in #1-5 above. The success of #6 depends heavily on the Board's thoughtful consideration of #5.

### Campaign Targeting Potential Parents

Using the targeted audiences, channels, and the messages we identify in subsequent sections of this proposal, we have developed four recommended strategies for testing. We have also included examples from other charter organizations who have used similar channels and messages. The latter three strategies are tied back to a revamped website that includes strong branding and a charter definition geared towards parents. We recommend spending dollars on your website *first* so digital campaigns can be linked back to one central location. This will also keep messaging consistent across all targeted communities. Lastly, we strongly recommend spending a small amount of dollars upfront as part of a “test” to determine if these strategies are reaching all the targeted audiences in the most cost-efficient way.

**Rationale for Strategy 1:** When launching digital media campaigns, you must have a centralized place to send your audience for detailed information. In this case, we are recommending a new MCSAB website with pages that use branding and messaging that will resonate with parents in Mississippi.

Strategy #1—New Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board Website							
This strategy re-designs the MCSAB website. As an example, we cite the DC Public Charter School Board website which targets parents and has a clear definition of charter schools. The visuals of this example are not ideal, but the messages are on point. We have also cited EdConnect. This is a strong example of messaging to parents with visuals. We recommend breaking up information into a horizontal scroll [similar to what you see on the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools website ( <a href="https://www.publiccharters.org/">https://www.publiccharters.org/</a> )] instead of large boxes of colors. Finally, we recommend using a user-friendly content management system that will allow MCSAB staff to update when needed. An example of a common user-friendly content management system is WordPress.							
Targeted Audience	Channels	Collateral	Messenger	Messages	Examples	Action & Cost	Timeline
Mississippi Parents	MCSAB Website	Photos, Videos, Text	MCSAB	Charter Definition, Parent Empowerment	<a href="http://www.dcpsb.org/">http://www.dcpsb.org/</a> (authorizer)  <a href="http://www.edconnectnow.org/">http://www.edconnectnow.org/</a> (parent-focused nonprofit)	Redesign site to specifically address parent audience. Cost varies based on site capabilities (\$5,000-\$20,000).	6 months (This is based on the organization having branding guidelines that will be used to build content.)

**Rationale for Strategies 2 and 3:** Strategies 2 and 3 are digital media campaigns that include video and graphics. For these strategies, we recommend creating a variety of photo ads and at least two short 30-60-second video ads using parents as messengers for each audience. These ads should then be promoted on Facebook. At this time, spending the bulk of your dollars on digital marketing makes the most sense because you get the biggest “bang for your buck.” Facebook allows you to target very specific audiences within your overall audience and set a budget per post. If an ad is performing well amongst your target audience you can increase your dollars spent on that specific ad. Digital ads also will provide high-quality analytical data that can be used to help inform campaigns in the future.

Strategy #2—Jackson Metro Test Campaign							
This strategy is focused on the Jackson metro area and is a digital media campaign that includes video and graphics. This is a short-term campaign that will run no longer than one month. We have included two months in the timeline for preparation of the campaign, including collecting images and producing short videos that can be used in the campaign. Some of the video and photos collected can also be used on the website if needed. We recommend using Jackson parents as the messengers of this campaign. When launching the campaign, consider the time of year. When are parents making choices about where their child is going to go school?							
Targeted Audience	Channels	Collateral	Messenger	Messages	Examples	Action & Cost	Timeline
Jackson Metro Parents	Digital Advertising on Facebook (MCSAB Facebook site as messenger)	Video, Photography	Jackson Parents	Parent Empowerment; Definition of Charters (can also include messages 3, 4, & 5)	<a href="https://vimeo.com/159556732">https://vimeo.com/159556732</a> (8:40 and 5:36)  <a href="https://vimeo.com/159536059">https://vimeo.com/159536059</a> (4:50 - 5:37)	Produce content and promote ads through social media. We estimate the cost of production and promotion to be \$17,500.	3 months

### Strategy #3—Clarksdale Test Campaign

This strategy is focused on Clarksdale parents, but it is similar to the Jackson Metro strategy. This is a short-term campaign that will run no longer than 1 month. We have included 2 months in the timeline for preparation of the campaign, including collecting images and producing short videos that can be used in the campaign. Some of the video and photos collected can also be used on the website if needed. We recommend using Clarksdale parents as the messengers of this campaign. We propose launching Jackson first and then Clarksdale. If this campaign is launched at the beginning of 2019, then you will have a pool of charter school parents in Clarksdale you can use as messengers.

Targeted Audience	Channels	Collateral	Messenger	Messages	Examples	Action & Cost	Timeline
Clarksdale Parents	Digital Advertising on Facebook (MCSAB Facebook site as messenger)	Video, Photography	Clarksdale Parents	Parent Empowerment; Definition of Charters	<a href="https://vimeo.com/159556732">https://vimeo.com/159556732</a> (8:40 and 5:36)  <a href="https://vimeo.com/159536059">https://vimeo.com/159536059</a> (4:50-5:37)	Produce content and promote ads through social media. We estimate the cost of production and promotion to be \$17,500.	3 months

**Rationale for Strategy 4:** This strategy focuses on a community that has had very little interaction with charter schools. Hattiesburg is also a retirement community and college town. We believe testing different ad buys other than Facebook will help build knowledge for future awareness campaigns in other targeted communities. We also recommend two new strategies to see how they perform. After the test phase, analytics can be compared with the strategies identified in Strategy 2 and 3 to determine the best way to reach Mississippi parents.

<b>Strategy #4—Hattiesburg Test Campaign</b>						
This strategy is focused on Hattiesburg parents. We recommend using web banners (this includes mobile web banners) and a radio ad as your initial ad buys to acquire audience data. Similar to a Facebook campaign, a web banner can link the audience back to an updated MCSAB website that should be easy to navigate and provide detailed parent-focused information about public charter schools in Mississippi.						
<b>Targeted Audience</b>	<b>Channels</b>	<b>Collateral</b>	<b>Messenger</b>	<b>Messages</b>	<b>Action &amp; Cost</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Hattiesburg Parents	Web Banners click through to MCSAB website parent pages	Photos and updated website (can potentially use similar content from the two Facebook campaigns)	Parents	Parent Empowerment; Definition of Charters	\$5,000 (clicks and production)	3 months
	Radio	30-second script	Parents, Friendly female trustworthy female voice	Definition of Charters	\$10,000 (production and ad buy)	3 months

## Audiences

### Methodology

In order to identify audiences for this campaign, we surveyed members of the Board. We then followed up with Board members as needed with telephone interviews to ask clarifying questions when responses were unclear. The survey relied on data from our 2017 public opinion poll report, *Mississippi Voices: Public Perception of Pre-K-12 Education in Mississippi*, as well as four focus groups of public school parents in Jackson, Mississippi. The data referenced in the survey is as follows:

- 57.5% of respondents were not at all familiar with charter schools.
- Nearly half (47%) of respondents who were familiar with charter schools incorrectly identified charter schools as private schools, and 7% said they did not know if charters were public or private.
- Respondents of a higher socioeconomic status and those of a higher educational attainment reported greater familiarity with charter schools than those of a lower socioeconomic level and those of a lower educational attainment.
  - Specifically, among those respondents earning \$10,000 - \$15,000 per year, 95.7% were not familiar with charter schools. Among those with less than a high school education, 90% reported “no familiarity at all” with charter schools.
- A larger proportion of respondents of color (33.5%) reported opposition to charter schools than did white respondents (21.8%).
- In our parent focus groups (composed of Jackson parents), many charter-supporting parents (with children in both traditional and charter schools) believed that charter schools were for struggling students.
- In the focus groups, parents could not accurately identify how students were selected to attend charter schools.
- In the focus groups, JPS parents believed that charter schools were a part of a bigger conspiracy to undermine public education.

### Identified Audiences

According to the MSF Board survey, 5 of 7 Board members ranked parents as the most important or second-most important audience to this communications campaign (rank of 1 or 2). When asked what subgroup of parents was most important, 6 of 7 Board members ranked “parents of school-aged children in D- and F-rated districts” as the most important or second-most important audience to this campaign. At a board convening on October 30, 2017, MCSAB members formally selected parents of school-aged children in D- and F-rated districts as the target audience.

During the same October Board convening, Board members discussed the scope for this communications campaign as covering communities with no approved charter schools as well as the two communities with approved charter schools. In the universe of communities with no approved charter schools, Board members wanted to target communities with both a large student population and need. These parameters helped the Board narrow its focus to four communities: two communities with approved charter schools (Jackson and Clarksdale) and two communities with no approved charter schools (Hattiesburg and Columbus). In Attachment A, we provide demographic information and other characteristics to contextualize each community.



## Channels

A communications channel is the pathway through which an organization reaches its audience. Channels can include print media, television, radio, and digital marketing. For effective messaging, channels must be targeted to the audiences with whom you are trying to communicate. We are recommending a variety of channels for each community based on our research. We highly recommend running test campaigns using “personas” and the recommended channels in order to identify which of these channels is most effective. A test campaign is a short-term, focused campaign that will yield data used to launch a full campaign. Using “personas” is a standard practice in marketing through which you identify people who live in your target market and meet your criteria as your test sample.

The table below identifies potential channels, explains how each channel works, describes potential costs associated with each channel, and notes our prioritization and rationale for each channel. We also included a table of channels not currently recommended that could prove helpful in the organization’s overall communication strategy or in future campaigns.

CHANNELS RECOMMENDED AT THIS TIME			
Channels	Description	Cost Information	Prioritization and Rationale
<b>MCSAB Website</b>	This is an existing website that is not user-friendly for parents.	Website upgrades vary in cost depending on if you overhaul the current site or just update it. Costs could range from \$5,000-\$20,000.	<b>HIGH PRIORITY:</b> The MCSAB website is where parents looking for more information will go. Updating the current site will answer questions of targeted communities.
<b>MDE Website</b>	This is an existing website operated by a third-party partner.	\$0	<b>HIGH PRIORITY:</b> MCSAB should work with MDE to link to MCSAB's messaging documents (including the charter definition) to make sure there is alignment between MDE and MCSAB. It will help bolster the message that charter schools are public schools.
<b>Partners' Social Media (MSF, MSEA, Empower, etc.)</b>	These are existing social media accounts operated by third-party partners.	We estimate it will cost \$1,500 to create a toolkit for use by partners.	<b>HIGH PRIORITY:</b> Partners already have audiences through their social media accounts. Providing a toolkit to partners with universal messaging about charter schools can leverage these audiences in a cost-effective way.
<b>Digital Advertising: Facebook/Instagram</b>	Facebook and Instagram are popular social media outlets. You can promote ads that appear directly in your target audience's personal account.	For this type of advertising, you pay per impression, which is the number of users who see an ad. For example, in 2016 Q3, 1,000 impressions cost \$7.19. You select a budget and the platform runs the ad until the budget is exhausted.	<b>HIGH PRIORITY:</b> MCSAB should target communities using this channel due to its low cost and highly sophisticated targeting abilities.
<b>Digital Advertising: Twitter</b>	Twitter is a social media outlet that allows you to promote ads in your target audience's personal account, similar to Facebook and Instagram.	Promoted tweets range in cost like Facebook. We cannot provide an exact price for the cost of Twitter ads, since this is based on your budget as well as the bid selected in the Twitter campaign setup process.	<b>HIGH PRIORITY:</b> MCSAB should target communities using this channel due to its low cost and highly sophisticated targeting abilities.

CHANNELS RECOMMENDED AT THIS TIME			
Channels	Description	Cost Information	Prioritization and Rationale
<b>Radio (including FM, Pandora, Spotify, iHeartRadio)</b>	Radio advertisements are primarily audio clips that play on a specific station. Online radio may also allow graphics to accompany the audio clip.	Pricing ranges based on time of day. A 30-second commercial spot for radio in the Jackson area is \$200.00-\$500.00.	<b>HIGH PRIORITY:</b> The spoken word can prove more memorable to audiences, and these platforms allow good targeting.
<b>Digital Advertising: Web banners</b>	Web banners are large graphic ads that appear in the headers or side bars of websites. Their purpose is to get the audience member to “click through” to your website or take another desired action. These can show up on mobile web browsing or personal computer.	Clients pay per impression. For example, \$30 could yield 3,000 impressions. Cost varies, with higher traffic websites costing more.	<b>HIGH PRIORITY:</b> This channel is low cost and has highly sophisticated targeting abilities. However, many in the target audience may access the internet through mobile phones rather than desktop or laptop computers.
<b>Local Billboards</b>	Billboards are large, elevated signs located within the community. You can select the sign/street for your ad.	Prices range depending on the community and the location of the sign. Lamar Advertising places billboards across the state. In Jackson, a billboard can range from \$500-\$1,000 for 4 weeks.	<b>MEDIUM PRIORITY:</b> Billboards can be a cost-effective way for large numbers of people to see an ad.
<b>Advertising: Parents &amp; Kids Magazine</b>	<i>Parents &amp; Kids</i> is a Mississippi magazine with regional content that is sent home with public school students. These would be graphic advertisements.	The cost ranges based on region and the size of ad. We can request rate cards from the magazine.	<b>MEDIUM PRIORITY:</b> <i>Parents &amp; Kids</i> produces a different magazine for different regions (4-5 across state); it is an easy, affordable way to get content into the hands of all kids/families (if distributed per protocol by school). It would be a “blanket” approach to awareness. We cannot be sure if it would be read.
<b>Advertising: Local Newspaper<sup>1</sup></b>	This is graphic advertising that	Newspaper ads range by the newspaper and	<b>LOW PRIORITY:</b> Many in the target audience

<sup>1</sup> Examples of newspapers MCSAB can advertise in include *Clarion-Ledger*, *Northside Sun*, and *Jackson Free Press*. Also, every community identified as a target community has their own local newspapers.

CHANNELS RECOMMENDED AT THIS TIME			
Channels	Description	Cost Information	Prioritization and Rationale
	appears in print form or on the newspaper's website.	the ad's size. Based on the ad guidelines of the newspaper, you commit to spending a specified dollar amount over a period of time, usually a year or pay by how frequently your ads appear in the newspaper. A small, local paper will charge roughly \$12 per inch for a black-and-white ad.	may not have a newspaper subscription and many local papers have an online paywall. While we do not recommend prioritizing this method, it can be helpful in targeting specific audiences within communities if there are additional dollars that can be devoted to this channel.
<b>Advertising: Local Magazines<sup>2</sup></b>	This is graphic advertising that appears in print form or on the magazine's website.	Magazine ads range based on the magazine and ad's size. Based on the ad guidelines of the magazine, you commit to spending a specified dollar amount over a period of time, usually a year, or pay by how frequently your ads appear in the magazine.	<b>LOW PRIORITY:</b> Many in the target audience may not have a local magazine subscription. While we do not recommend prioritizing this method, it can be helpful in targeting specific audiences within communities if there are additional dollars that can be devoted to this channel.
<b>Advertising: Local Television<sup>3</sup></b>	This is video advertising that appears on a specific television channel.	Television ads range in price depending on the channel, ad length, and time of day. A 30-second commercial spot rate for television in the Jackson area is \$500.00 to \$3,000.00.	<b>LOW PRIORITY:</b> Television is a valuable medium, but the cost may outweigh its benefits because production costs for a television spot must be added to airtime. While we do not recommend prioritizing this method, it can be helpful in targeting specific audiences within communities if there are additional dollars that can be devoted to this channel.

<sup>2</sup> An example of a magazine that MCSAB can advertise in is *Boom Jackson* magazine.

<sup>3</sup> Each community has access to its own television station. You can also run ads on cable stations.

<b>CHANNELS NOT RECOMMENDED AT THIS TIME</b>			
<b>Channels</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Cost Information</b>	<b>Prioritization and Rationale</b>
<b>Google Ads</b>	Google offers four different types of ads: search ads, display ads, video ads, and app ads.	You pay when someone clicks on your ad. The cost ranges greatly depending on if you are in a market where a lot of other businesses are willing to pay a high price to advertise on a certain keyword.	We do not recommend this channel at this time due to cost.
<b>Email Marketing</b>	With email marketing, you send personalized email content to your audience.	Buy an email list, cost of software (some are free up to a certain amount of email addresses). The cost of a mailing list depends on the type of list you purchase. An occupant list starts at \$12.00 per thousand records. A consumer list starts at \$33.66 per thousand records. A business list starts at \$45.00 per thousand records.	The success of email marketing is based on the strength of your email list. Building an effective email list is time-intensive and locally driven.
<b>Search Engine Optimization (SEO)</b>	This increases your placement in search engine searches. For example, when someone searches “charter schools in Mississippi,” you can pay to move MCSAB’s website to the top of the search.	Average hourly SEO costs between \$80 and \$130 per hour. The average monthly retainer lies between \$750 and \$1,500 per month. If you revamp your website, you can include this in your proposal.	We do not recommend this channel at this time due to cost.
<b>Robocalling</b>	Robocalling is often used in political campaigns to reach a large group of people by landline telephone.	Buy phone numbers, cost is determined by how many calls, the length of the message, and when the call is made.	This could be an interesting strategy specifically in communities where charter schools already exist, but we do not recommend it as this time as it may be perceived as too aggressive.
<b>YouTube/Vimeos</b>	These are video-sharing platforms.	Cost of production and then you can spend additional dollars promoting your videos.	Currently, we do not have access to enough video content, original or otherwise, that would be appropriate to share.

<b>CHANNELS NOT RECOMMENDED AT THIS TIME</b>			
<b>Channels</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Cost Information</b>	<b>Prioritization and Rationale</b>
<b>Sponsored Events</b>	MCSAB would partner with hosts of community events to increase awareness.	This ranges based on type of event.	We do not recommend this because it is too time-intensive. It would increase MCSAB awareness, but it might not engage the target audience.
<b>Car Flyers</b>	These would be flyers that can be placed on cars to increase awareness.	Costs include design, publishing, and distribution.	This tactic may be perceived as too aggressive.
<b>Shop Front Posters</b>	These would be posters that can be placed in high-traffic shops to increase awareness.	Costs include design, publishing, and distribution.	This tactic may be perceived as too aggressive.
<b>Community Influencers (Word-of-Mouth)</b>	MCSAB would identify active community members to be ambassadors for charter schools in their communities.	Costs would include identifying influencers, training them, and providing materials.	We do not recommend this as it may be a premature strategy (especially prior to more approvals).
<b>Advertising: Mississippi Public Broadcasting</b>	MPB is the statewide public television and radio station that reaches all communities in Mississippi.	Costs would vary based on television and radio production. MCSAB also potential partner with alignment to their education mission.	We do not recommend this as it may be a premature strategy (especially prior to more approvals). It may also not reach the target audience.

# Messages

## Identifying Messages

In accordance with the Board-selected campaign scope, goals, and target audience, MSF identified messages that positively resonate with parents according to national studies and testimony from organizations in other states. In identifying these messages, we examined messaging documents from several states including Tennessee and Arizona, and we heavily relied on data from the following sources:

- first-hand data from our statewide representative poll on public perceptions of education in Mississippi,
- first-hand data from our focus groups composed of traditional public school parents and charter school parents in Jackson, Mississippi,
- research conducted by the Glover Park Group for NAPCS, and
- internal messaging documents from NAPCS.

In many cases, we adapted messages to better reflect the Mississippi context. We have included each recommended message in the section below.

## Recommended Messages

In drafting these messages, we were guided by three main tenets, aligned to national best practice:

- **Keep it simple.** Best practice has shown that simple messaging highlighting points that resonate with the target audience is the most effective strategy for large-scale communications campaigns. Most audiences are not well-informed about education reform. As a result, we were careful to exclude jargon and confusing language from our recommended messages. Furthermore, while we recognize that the concept of charter schools is highly complex, a common pitfall is attempting to explain complex ideas through messaging, especially for controversial topics. To be effective, the messaging for this campaign must remain simple to resonate across a large audience and prompt parents to learn more about charter schools.
- **Use audience-specific language.** Effective messaging strategies have a clear target audience. In all of the research we examined, many messages resonated differently across audiences, based on parent status, socioeconomic status, political affiliation, race, etc. For this campaign, MCSAB has defined the target audience as parents of school-aged children in D- and F-rated districts. In identifying messages most likely to be successful, we have taken into account the messages that have been effective among parents as opposed to other groups. Furthermore, we consider market dynamics when determining how to address our target audiences—as indicated below, we recommend deploying some but not all messages to the target audience in communities with no approved charter schools (yet!).
- **Avoid language that attacks or alienates traditional public schools.** According to the Glover Park national focus group studies, many parents feel that traditional public schools are failing; however, they strongly care for traditional schools and would like to see them improve. In focus groups with parents from Jackson, Mississippi, parents echoed this sentiment, stating beliefs that traditional schools might be fixed with more resources. In our message recommendations, we have avoided using language that references the traditional district in any way.

Our recommended messages are below. **For communities with NO approved charter schools, we recommend only deploying messages 1 and 2.** These messages educate parents and build will towards supporting charter schools. This type

of education and support will make it easier for charter operators to garner community support and meet student recruitment goals. **For communities with approved charter schools, we recommend the use of all messages below:**

Message #1—Definition
<b><i>Mississippi charter schools are unique public schools that are allowed flexibility to make decisions that best meet the needs of the students they serve. Because they are public schools, they do not charge any tuition, they do not have special admission requirements, and they are rated A-F annually according to the state accountability system for all public schools.</i></b>
As mentioned previously in this report, we highly recommend integrating the above charter school definition in this communications campaign as well as future campaigns. This definition is an adapted version of the one recommended by NAPCS. Having a universal definition in place is the top priority for this communications campaign.
<b>Audience:</b> Communities with NO approved charter schools; Communities with approved charter schools

Message #2—Empowerment
<b><i>When a charter school opens in a community, more parents can experience the empowerment that comes from choosing a school that meets the needs of their child.</i></b>
This message focuses on the parental empowerment derived from gaining access to school choice. States where charter legislation was only recently passed, such as Washington and Kentucky, use similar parent empowerment messages.
<b>Audience:</b> Communities with NO approved charter schools; Communities with approved charter schools

Message #3 and Message #4—Responsiveness
<b><i>Charter schools provide families with schools that tailor the classroom to the needs of their child.</i></b> <b>&amp;</b> <b><i>Charter schools can be more responsive to every child’s needs. Charter schools use proven practices to support their students.</i></b>
Research commissioned by NAPCS from the Glover Park Group found that messages focusing on the responsiveness of charter schools are among the top four messages that resonate with parents as well as voters and opinion leaders regardless of party, race, age, or geography. Overall, they found that the message, “Charter schools are responsive,” resonated with 80% of their overall sample. This finding is supported by data from our focus group study, where charter school parents expressed repeatedly that they chose charter schools because of the small, catering environment they perceived them to offer.
<b>Audience:</b> Communities with approved charter schools

Message #5—Options
<b><i>Charter schools provide families with another free public school option. Families can choose the best school that fits their child’s needs.</i></b>
The Glover Park Group study also found messages focusing on charter schools as offering options to be among the top four messages resonating with parents as well as voters and opinion leaders regardless of party, race, age, or geography. Messaging regarding charters as options resonated with 78% of the overall sample. We found this to be true of Mississippi parents as well. According to our research, 76% of statewide survey respondents stated that the quality of the local school district is an important factor in choosing where to live, indicating that many parents across the state consciously exercise choice. Additionally, in our focus groups, parents talked extensively about utilizing school options available to them to meet the needs of their children. These options included attending private schools or magnet schools, and/or moving to suburban areas or other states. Parents who felt they did not have access to these options expressed the desire to have them.
<b>Audience:</b> Communities with approved charter schools





## ATTACHMENT A

During our preliminary survey, interviews, and conversations with the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board (MCSAB), the Board identified four target communities for the initial charter school awareness campaign. Below, we include data points for each of the communities. The chart provides data by county and school district.

Data on Targeted Audiences				
Key Information	Clarksdale (Coahoma)	Columbus (Lowndes)	Hattiesburg (Forrest)	Jackson (Hinds)
<b>Total Population in Mississippi</b>	2.99 Million	2.99 Million	2.99 Million	2.99 Million
<b>Total Population (County)</b>	17,314 (23,809)	23,360 (59,699)	76,267 (46,762)	245,874 (173,212)
Demographics (county, unless otherwise noted)				
<b>Race</b>	22.6% white; 75.9% black	53.8% white; 43.8% black	59.8% white; 36.6% black	27.3% white; 70.3%
<b>Gender</b>	46.3% male; 53.7% female	47.7% male; 52.3% female	47.6% male; 52.4% female	46.9% male; 53.1% female
<b>% of Adults (#)</b>	71.6% (18,075)	75.9% (45,301)	76.6% (58,421)	74.6% (183,403)
<b>% of School-Age Children (#)</b>	28.4% (7,180)	24.1% (14,398)	23.4% (17,846)	25.4% (62,471)
<b>Median Household Income</b>	\$29,175	\$33,072	\$36,416	\$37,324
<b>Per Capita Income</b>	\$15,393	\$21,410	\$19,897 (\$42,062 Hattiesburg Metro)	\$20,598
<b>% of Children in Single-Parent Household</b>	68.50%	45.30%	48.80%	58.60%
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	8.80%	6.20%	5.70%	5.40%
<b>Average Level of Education (district)</b>	79.3% high school or higher; 19% bachelor's or higher	82.4% high school or higher; 24.7% bachelor's or higher	84.4% high school or higher; 31.6% bachelor's or higher	87.4% high school or higher; 28.3% bachelor's or higher
<b># of Consumers with 1 or Fewer Wired Internet Options Available</b>	3,000 people or 15.7% of consumers in Clarksdale have 1 or fewer wired Internet options. In Coahoma County, approximately 6,000 people do not have access to 25mbps wired broadband.	11,000 people or 23.7% of consumers in Columbus have 1 or fewer wired Internet options. 100% of residents in Lowndes County have access to fixed wireless Internet service.	13,000 people or 16.6% of consumers in Hattiesburg have 1 or fewer wired Internet options. Approximately 8,000 people in Forrest County do not have access to any wired Internet.	7,000 people or 4.3% of consumers in Jackson have 1 or fewer wired Internet options. Approximately 96% of Jackson residents are serviced by multiple wired providers.

## Data on Targeted Audiences

### District Information (2017-2018, unless otherwise noted)

Key Information	Clarksdale Municipal	Columbus Municipal	Hattiesburg Public	Jackson Public
<b>Enrollment</b>	2,624	3,826	4,452	28,019
<b>Accountability (2016-2017)</b>	D	D	D	F
<b>Estimated # of K Students</b>	208	269 (+11 special ed K)	309 (+78 special ed K)	2,075 (+224 special ed K)
<b>Estimated # of 1st Grade Students</b>	205	263	334	2,102
<b>Estimated # of 2nd Grade Students</b>	228	291	361	1,985
<b># of Elementary School Students (pre-K-5)</b>	1,372	1,951	2,481	14,365
<b># of Middle School Students (6-8)</b>	575	848	823	5,902
<b># of High School Students (9-12, including Special Education Students)</b>	666	1,027	1,141	7,749
<b>Graduation Rate (2015-2016)</b>	82.7%	80.8%	72.90%	70.20%
<b>ACT Composite Score (2017)</b>	14.3	14.7	15.6	15.5
<b>Dropout Rate (2015-2016)</b>	10.80%	9.80%	16.20%	18.30%
<b>School District Poverty</b>	71%	34%	48%	35%
<b>Kindergarten Readiness Fall 2018 (530 is ready)</b>	554	497	476	494
<b>% Passing the 3rd Grade Gate (2016-2017)</b>	87%	86%	89%	88%
<b>Average Daily Attendance (2016-2017)</b>	2,420	3,662	3,886	24,578
<b>Chronic Absence (missed <math>\geq</math> 10% of school year) (2014-2015)</b>	14.40%	10.70%	14.00%	15.20%

## Sources for Data on Targeted Audiences

### Total Population in Mississippi

"Mississippi." DataUSA. <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/mississippi/> (Retrieved 1/17/2017).

### Total Population (County)

"Clarksdale, Mississippi." DataUSA. <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/clarksdale-ms/> (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

"Lowndes County." DataUSA. <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/lowndes-county-ms/> (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

"Hattiesburg Metro Area." DataUSA. <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/hattiesburg-ms/> (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

"Jackson." DataUSA. <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/jackson-ms/> (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

### Race

"Data Center." Kids Count. <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/7692-total-population-by-race?loc=26&loct=5#detailed/5/3931,3938/false/1572/107,133,10,172,670,4,185,13/14855,14856> (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

### Gender

"Data Center." Kids Count. <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/7690-total-population-by-gender?loc=26&loct=5#detailed/5/3931,3938/false/1572/14,15,112/14851,14852> (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

### % of Adults (#)

"Data Center." Kids Count. <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/7691-children-and-adults?loc=26&loct=5#detailed/5/3931,3938/false/1572/2121,2120,872/14853,14854> (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

### % of School-Aged Children (#)

"Data Center." Kids Count. <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/7691-children-and-adults?loc=26&loct=5#detailed/5/3931,3938/false/1572/2121,2120,872/14853,14854> (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

### Median Household Income

"Quick Facts." Census.gov. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/hindscountymississippi,lowndescountymississippi,coahomacounty-mississippi,forrestcountymississippi/PST045216> (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

### Per Capita Income

"Data Center." Kids Count. <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/7577-per-capita-income?loc=26&loct=5#detailed/5/3931,3938/false/1572/any/14723>; [https://datausa.io/profile/geo/hattiesburg-ms-metro-area/#category\\_age](https://datausa.io/profile/geo/hattiesburg-ms-metro-area/#category_age) (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

### % of Children in Single-Parent Household

"Data Center." Kids Count. <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/6204-children-living-in-single-parent-families?loc=26&loct=5#detailed/5/3931,3938/false/1572/any/12922> (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

### Unemployment Rate

"Data Center." Kids Count. <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/3735-unemployment-rate?loc=26&loct=5#detailed/5/3914-3995/false/870,573,869,36,868/any/10237> (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

### Average Level of Education (district)

"Clarksdale Municipal School District." CensusReporter.org. <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/97000US2801050-clarksdale-municipal-school-district-ms/> (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

"Columbus Municipal School District." CensusReporter.org. <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/97000US2801200-columbus-municipal-school-district-ms/> (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

"Hattiesburg Public School District." CensusReporter.org. <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/97000US2801800-hattiesburg-public-school-district-ms/> (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

"Jackson Public School District." CensusReporter.org. <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/97000US2802190-jackson-public-school-district-ms/> (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

### # of Consumers with 1 or Fewer Wired Internet Options Available

"Mississippi." Broad Band Now. <https://broadbandnow.com/Mississippi/> (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

## Sources for Data on Targeted Audiences

### Enrollment

"Enrollment." Mississippi Department of Education. <http://mdereports.mdek12.org/data/> (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

### Accountability (2016-2017)

"Data Center." Kids Count. <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/customreports/7509/any> (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

### Estimated # of K Students

"Enrollment." Mississippi Department of Education. <http://mdereports.mdek12.org/data/> (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

### Estimated # of 1st Grade Students

"Enrollment." Mississippi Department of Education. <http://mdereports.mdek12.org/data/> (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

### Estimated # of 2nd Grade Students

"Enrollment." Mississippi Department of Education. <http://mdereports.mdek12.org/data/> (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

### # of Elementary Students (pre-K-5)

"Enrollment." Mississippi Department of Education. <http://mdereports.mdek12.org/data/> (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

### # of Middle School Students (6-8)

"Enrollment." Mississippi Department of Education. <http://mdereports.mdek12.org/data/> (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

### # of High School Students (9-12, including Special Education Students)

"Enrollment." Mississippi Department of Education. <http://mdereports.mdek12.org/data/> (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

### Graduation Rate (2015-2016)

"Data Center." Kids Count. <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/custom-reports/7509/any> (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

### ACT Composite Score (2017)

"2017 Student Assessment Information." Mississippi Department of Education. <http://mdereports.mdek12.org/report1/r2016-17.aspx> (Retrieved 1/17/2017).

### Dropout Rate (2015-2016)

"Data Center." Kids Count. <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/custom-reports/7509/any> (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

### School District Poverty

"SAIPE School District Estimates for 2016." Census. <https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/2016/demo/saipe/2016-school-districts.html> (Retrieved 1/17/2017).

### Kindergarten Readiness Fall 2018 (530 is ready)

"Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Results." Mississippi Department of Education. [http://reports.mde.k12.ms.us/pdf/a/2017/2017\\_KRA\\_Results\\_KG\\_FY2018\\_Pre-test.pdf](http://reports.mde.k12.ms.us/pdf/a/2017/2017_KRA_Results_KG_FY2018_Pre-test.pdf) (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

### % Passing the 3rd Grade Gate (2016-2017)

"3rd Grade MAP ELA Assessment Results." Mississippi Department of Education. [http://mdereports.mdek12.org/pdf/a/2017/3RD\\_GRADE\\_MAP\\_ELA\\_RESULTS\\_2017%20Public.pdf](http://mdereports.mdek12.org/pdf/a/2017/3RD_GRADE_MAP_ELA_RESULTS_2017%20Public.pdf) (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

### Average Daily Attendance (2016-2017)

"Superintendent's Annual Report." Mississippi Department of Education. <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/MBE/R2018> (Retrieved 12/3/2017).

### Chronic Absence (missed $\geq$ 10% of school year) (2014-2015)

"Data Center." Kids Count. <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/custom-reports/7509/any> (Retrieved 12/3/2017).