

Tennessee Public Charter School Commission

Executive Director

JOB DESCRIPTION

Background

In 2019, Governor Bill Lee proposed the creation of a public commission to serve as both an authorizing agent and appellate body for charter schools across Tennessee. The state's legislature subsequently enacted Public Chapter 219 ([codified in Tenn. Code Annotated § 49-13-105](#)) establishing the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission (the "Commission"). The statute set a timeline for the transfer of the charter appellate and authorizer duties currently held by the State Board of Education to the newly established Commission in 2021.

The Commission will be comprised of nine members selected by the governor and representing a broad geographic cross-section of the state. The Commission's focus on the authorization of quality charter schools will enable deeper engagement with local districts and stakeholders and in turn ensure that decisions impacting students' and families' access to high-quality charter schools are made based on a full appreciation of communities' specific educational needs. The Commission will commence hearing appeals in January 2021, followed by its assumption of responsibility for supervision of charter schools in the 2021-22 school year.

The law creating the Commission also specified that the Commission's daily work be overseen by a full-time director of schools (Executive Director) empowered with authority comparable to those of directors of schools in other Tennessee school districts. The Executive Director is entrusted with responsibility for the staffing and organization of the Commission, subject to oversight by the nine voting members.

To that end, the Commission is seeking a knowledgeable, visionary, and driven leader to formulate and implement the strategies and systems that will establish the Commission not only as a trusted arbiter in the charter authorization process, but also as an exemplar for authorizing entities across the state and nation of thoughtful and student-focused governance.

Position Summary

As its first-ever leader, the Executive Director will simultaneously perform critical functions as an architect of the Commission's long-term vision, a builder of its infrastructure, and an ambassador for its efforts both within the state and beyond. These concurrent demands will necessitate an individual possessing demonstrated acumen in project and time management, interpersonal skills, building effective teams, flexibility, creativity, and resilience.

The Executive Director must also enter the position with both a deep base of professional expertise in the K-12 arena and an appreciation of the unique role that charter schools can play in advancing student achievement when cultivated and supported with fidelity and forethought. He/she should demonstrate a thorough grasp of the tenets of effective governance, management and finance, campus and system-level leadership, assessment, curriculum and instruction, and educational law. Most importantly, he/she must appreciate that their fundamental remit as the Commission's Executive Director is to empower its members so they can in turn make thoughtful and informed decisions.

In addition, the Executive Director should bring expertise and a proven track record to their execution of the following essential functions:

Work in close partnership with the Commission's members and counterparts on the state and local levels to mobilize all aspects of the organization in advance of the 2021 start dates mandated in statute. Specific responsibilities in this period will include but are not limited to:

- Develop and build the Commission's organizational structure, including identification of and budgeting for personnel that will be required for its immediate, medium, and long-term future.
- Lead a cross-departmental project management committee comprised of representatives of the Commission, Tennessee Department of Education and Tennessee State Board of Education responsible for ensuring the seamless transfer of responsibilities and information between the respective entities.
- Recruit and hire a high-caliber team invested in setting the Commission on a path toward lasting impact.
- Engage with appointed Commission members individually and as a unit to build collective understanding of the work they are undertaking and foster a shared vision of how they will seek to operate as a cohesive body.
- Conduct a thorough review of authorizing entities in other states to inform recommendations to Commission members on its future policies and best practices.
- Manage the activities of external consultants and/or researchers to align most fully to the immediate needs identified by the Commission.
- Establish internal protocols and operational procedures to ensure efficiency and precision of the Commission's day-to-day operations.

Facilitate the efficient, well-informed, and strategic activities of the Commission in both its mandated domains of charter school oversight and appellate review, and its long-term platform as an agent for continuous advancement of academic outcomes and opportunities in charter schools across the state of Tennessee. Specific responsibilities related to these functions include but are not limited to:

- Guide the Commission in its formulation of rules, policies, standards, and procedures that align with its own organizational mission and vision, state goals, priority objectives, legislative mandates, and procedural directives related to Tennessee's charter schools.

- Manage the thorough and efficient dispensation of authorization applications, appeals, and supervisory activities for charter schools, ultimately leading to timely decisions by Commission members.
- Support and empower commissioners in their utilization and refinement of performance frameworks in both their consideration of charter school applications and ongoing oversight of academic performance.
- Provide tailored policy analyses and/or research in anticipation of or in response to issues deemed to be pertinent to the work of the Commission.
- Maintain consistent and constructive dialogue between and among both the Commission staff and its members in order to leverage the respective strengths of both parties to advance strategic priorities.
- Advise the Commission on best practices in charter school authorization and oversight based on both prior knowledge and the current context affecting Tennessee schools and students. This counsel should seek to consistently reinforce the Commission's simultaneous aims to both expand statewide access to high- quality charter schools and inspire other authorizing entities to emulate its tenets of thoughtful governance.
- Facilitate oversight activities alongside commissioners and staff in order to inform recommendations related to the renewal, revocation, targeted support, or closure of charter schools.
- Serve as the Commission's key liaison in the establishment and maintenance of productive working relationships with partners in the state (e.g. TDOE, SBOE, THEC, Office of the Attorney General, legislative and executive leaders) and nationally that ensure the sustainability and lasting impact of the Commission's work.
- Represent the Commission and serve as its key liaison with advocacy groups, constituents, legislators, and media.
- Manage Commission finances, budget, and resource allocation, including the oversight and administration of awarded grants.
- Ensure compliance with relevant federal and state legal requirements by both commissioners in their official duties (e.g. expenditure of public funds, transparency of Commission activities) and staff in their daily professional duties (e.g. risk management, information security, fiscal controls).
- Maintain consistent sharing of information, current challenges, and lessons learned with relevant counterparts representing both the Tennessee State Board of Education and Tennessee Department of Education to promote alignment and collaboration in each entity's ongoing provision of support and/or technical assistance to charter schools and LEAs. Oversee fulfillment of public information requests and responses to internal or external complaints/concerns.
- In conjunction with counterparts from TDOE and SBOE, employ monitoring and policy compliance systems to facilitate academic and financial accountability for schools operating under the auspices of the Commission.
- Act in the official capacity of an LEA director in the imposition of sanctions based on unacceptable academic performance, financial or operational mismanagement, issues

impacting student health or safety, unlawful conduct, or lack of compliance with directives issued by the Executive Director or Commission.

- Travel as needed to monitor the activities and/or educate the public about the administration, monitoring, and evaluation of charter schools supervised by the Commission or the overarching work of the Commission as a whole.
- In conjunction with counterparts from TDOE and SBOE, oversee the provision of targeted technical assistance to prospective and current charter schools operating under the auspices of the Commission.
- Direct and evaluate staff members.
- Perform other related duties and responsibilities as deemed appropriate and necessary by the Commission.

Required Qualifications

A successful candidate will bring significant experience in educational administration or policy to the role, with particular preference to the areas of school reform, public school choice, or charter schools. He/she will possess a breadth of knowledge of education policy issues that will optimally equip them to advise commissioners on a wide range of topics, while also exhibiting a depth of understanding of the fundamental issues of educational leadership, governance, instructional quality, assessment, and educator development that will undoubtedly remain consistent areas of emphasis in the Commission's efforts.

In addition, successful candidates should be equipped with the following assets and skills:

- An advanced degree in areas immediately relevant to the work of the Commission (e.g. educational policy, educational leadership, law, finance, public policy, etc.)
- A demonstrated deep understanding of the national charter school landscape
- Preference of having served in a charter school or for a large-scale (20 or more schools) charter authorizer.
- Highly effective communication skills in both written and inter-personal mediums.
- A demonstrated record of professional achievement within complex or entrepreneurial organizations, with preference given to the education field.
- Knowledge of financial analysis techniques, public education funding structures, and budgetary best practices.
- Proficiency & demonstrated impact in grant solicitation, design, or implementation.
- Understanding of the tenets of effective public education governance.
- Proficiency and proven performance in data analysis and application.
- Experience successfully managing multiple projects in a timely manner producing high-quality outcomes.
- Understanding of the tenets of effective teaching and learning in the elementary and secondary school arenas.
- Understanding of how those tenets are manifested differently in effective teaching and learning for adults.

- Proficiency and comfort with diverse technological platforms and software tools.
- Demonstrated ability to present data clearly and in a compelling and accessible manner to a variety of audiences.
- Demonstrated commitment to continuous professional development and learning in areas relevant to the Commission's work, including trends in education, school choice, educational reform, academic accountability structures, assessment, and state and federal education policy.
- A personal work ethic and professional track record that inspires confidence in his/her unwavering commitment to promoting optimal outcomes for Tennessee charter school students through his/her leadership of the Commission.

Required Travel

This position requires a moderate amount of travel on the state and local level, with some travel beyond the state of Tennessee also required. The frequency of in-state travel will increase as the total number of charter schools supervised by the Commission grows.

Salary & Benefits

Salary is competitive and commensurate with qualifications. In addition, a comprehensive benefits package is included.

Application Process

Interested candidates should submit a resume, letter of intent, and a minimum of three professional references via e-mail to judy.spencer@tn.gov. Candidates should be aware that their names may appear in public documentation as applicants or candidates for the position.