

Sponsor Agency FAQ**1. What is a sponsor agency?**

A *sponsor agency* is an organization that agrees to apply for, accept, disburse, and administer grant funds on behalf of a charter school founding group/developer. Eligible sponsor agencies for this grant program include not-for-profit, tax-exempt organizations or governmental entities, including currently operating charter schools that have had their charter renewed or public school districts (for prospective Horace Mann Charter Schools). The sponsor agency must have at least \$25,000 of annual operating revenue.

2. How does a founding group find a sponsor agency?

Founding groups should identify organizations that serve their communities and/or have demonstrated interest in programs/projects that are related to the proposed charter school's mission and vision. It may be easier to find a sponsor agency if the charter school proposal aligns with the organization's goals and objectives or if the organization would partner with the charter school. A searchable database on non-profit organizations can be found at <http://www.guidestar.org/>. A database of public school districts, charter schools, and other public educational organizations can be found at <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/>.

3. What are the responsibilities of the sponsor agency during the grant application process?

All sponsor agencies must sign an assurance document ([see: hyperlink](#)). Sponsor agencies that are 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations or public governmental entities other than public schools/districts must provide a copy of the organization's most recent financial audit, review, or IRS Form 990 (depending on the level of financial review required by the organization's primary state/federal oversight agencies). The founding group is responsible for preparing all other parts of the grant proposal, though it is advisable for the sponsor agency to review the budget portion of the proposal in particular, to ensure that the organization is comfortable with the spending that is being proposed.

The sponsor agency may want to consider adopting a written agreement with the founding group to establish agreed-upon monitoring and accounting procedures if a grant is awarded, unless the organization already has policies in place governing these kinds of arrangements.

4. What are the responsibilities of the sponsor agency if it receives a grant award?

The sponsor agency is legally responsible for administering the grant project in accordance with state and federal guidelines. Full details about how to administer a Department grant can be found at <http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/grants/procedure/manual.html>, but general responsibilities include:

- a. accounting for all grant revenues and expenditures within the sponsor agency's financial records in accordance with the appropriate accounting standards that govern it;
- b. drawing down grant funds (a monthly process) through the Department's electronic grant drawdown system (though this task can be delegated to a member of the founding group if mutually agreed upon);
- c. processing procurements, requisitions, contracts, and invoices related to the charter school project; and
- d. submitting a final financial report certifying the expenditure of grant funds within 60 days after the close of the grant period.

A brief grants administration orientation will be conducted for sponsor agencies after grants are awarded.

5. Who can a sponsor agency contact with questions?

If you have questions, please contact Emily Lichtenstein (781-338-3226 or elichtenstein@doe.mass.edu) or Ruth Hersh (781-338-3217 or rhersh@doe.mass.edu) in the Charter School Office of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.