
Things to Know:



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Welcome, School Leaders!

The ERCO team is proud to partner with you in education. Public community schools serve a significant and powerful role in providing meaningful, high-quality choices for students and families in the state of Ohio. We enjoy working with you.

As members of the national charter school authorizing profession, we commit that our policies and practices will:

- **Maintain high standards for schools**
- **Uphold school autonomy**
- **Protect student and public interests**

The following “Things to Know” briefly outlines important:

- **Reporting expectations and requirements**
- **Statutory and contractual deadlines**
- **Sponsors’ and schools’ core role and responsibilities**
- **Processes to be followed in fulfilling responsibilities**

Clear mutual understanding will ensure a strong, positive, and productive working relationship between your school and ERCO for years to come.

The best additional means of fostering that relationship is, of course, keeping the lines of communication open. Please contact ERCO with questions or concerns at any time, and we will also regularly communicate with you.

We sincerely thank you for choosing ERCO as your sponsor.

The ERCO Team

Roles, Responsibilities, Expectations

Sponsors' Role and Responsibilities:

- **Monitor and evaluate** compliance with applicable law and contract terms, including: academic performance; financial performance; operations; and governance.
- **Ensure** appropriate fiscal control, records creation, and records maintenance.
- **Report results of evaluation** annually to the Department of Education.
- **Report other required information** to stakeholders.
- **Provide technical assistance** to schools in complying with applicable laws and contract terms. (Assistance does not, however, include providing legal counsel, operating the school, etc.)
- **Intervene as needed** when sponsor deems necessary to alleviate performance concerns that threaten public interest and student outcomes.
* Intervention may take the form of: informal communication, formal communication, offers of assistance, mandatory corrective actions, probation, suspension, contract termination and/or closure.
- **Prepare and assist** with contingency plans in the event the school experiences financial difficulties or closes before the end of the school year.
- **Follow** applicable Ohio laws and contract terms.

Schools may expect ERCO to also:

- **Communicate clearly**
 - **Operate transparently**
 - **Respond in a timely manner**
 - **Strive to be proactive**
 - **Hold high performance expectations**
 - **Make data-based decisions**
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Schools' Role and Responsibilities:

- **Follow** applicable law and contract terms, including: academic performance; financial performance; operations; and governance.
- **Ensure** appropriate fiscal control, records creation, and records maintenance.
- **Report required and requested information** to sponsor, other public entities in a timely manner.
- **Report school performance** to parents annually.
- **Request -- and accept -- needed technical assistance** in complying with applicable laws and contract terms. (Assistance does not include providing legal counsel, operating the school, etc.)
- **Cooperate positively with intervention** when sponsor deems necessary to alleviate performance concerns that threaten public interest and student outcomes.
* Intervention may take the form of: informal communication, formal communication, offers of assistance, mandatory corrective actions, probation, suspension, contract termination and/or closure.
- **Prepare and execute effective, meaningful plans** to avoid and/or correct financial difficulties or other issues that may force closure of the school.
- **Attend sponsor meetings**, which include an annual mandatory Administrators meeting, and additional meetings if needed.

ERCO also expects sponsored schools to:

- **Communicate clearly**
 - **Operate transparently**
 - **Respond in a timely manner**
 - **Strive to be proactive**
 - **Hold high performance expectations**
 - **Make data-based decisions**
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Intervention, Probation, Suspension and Termination

If ERCO finds that any of the conditions in the Community School contract or conditions prescribed in section 3314 of ORC is violated, ERCO may place a school on probation, suspend the school's operation, or terminate the school's contract.

In lieu of termination of a contract or suspension of the operation of a school as provided for in sections 3314.07 and 3314.072 [3314.07.2] of ORC, respectively, after consultation with the governing authority of sponsored school, if ERCO finds that any of the conditions prescribed in division (B)(1) of section 3314.07 of ORC apply to the school, ERCO may declare in written notice to the governing authority that the school is in a probationary status which shall not extend beyond the end of the current school year per.

ERCO's notice shall specify the conditions that warrant probationary status.

ERCO may declare a school to be in such status only if it has received from the governing authority reasonable assurances to the satisfaction of the sponsor that the governing authority can and will take actions necessary to remedy the conditions that have warranted such probationary status as specified by ERCO.

ERCO shall monitor the actions taken by the governing authority to remedy the conditions that have warranted probationary status and may take over the operation of the school as provided in the contract, suspend operation of the school or take steps to terminate the contract if ERCO at any time finds that the governing authority is no longer able or willing to remedy those conditions to the satisfaction of ERCO.

While specific interventions will depend upon circumstances that are unique to each situation, ERCO acknowledges that intervention will fall into certain categories and are not limited to the following: parental, community, employee and vendor complaints, fiscal, academic and governance deficiencies, site visit and fiscal audit concerns.

If ERCO receives written or verbal allegations or complaints, ERCO's Regional Representative is contacted to review the allegation or complaint for schools in their perspective area. Depending on the nature of the allegation/complaint, the schools administrator may be contacted to address the

issue or ERCO may/will provide, in writing, the Board of Directors assistance in addressing the issue. ERCO request that any resolution be in written format. If the issue is not resolved, ERCO may hold an informal meeting between all parties to work out a resolution.

In addition to the categories above, ERCO acknowledges that interventions can usually be placed on a continuum from less invasive to more invasive as follows: verbal intervention, request Corrective Action Plan (CAP), request technical assistance from school personnel or governing authority, request informal administrative and or fiscal intervention, require and/or provide replacement of a treasurer when warranted by circumstances, require and/or recommend the services of an Educational Management Company to assume control of the school's operation, assume total control of the school's operation per applicable ORC sections, issue letter of intent to put on probation, declare a school on probationary status, remove of governing authority, issue letter of intent to suspend school's operation, suspending school's operation, and or terminating a school's operation/contract.

Section 3314.07 Expiration, termination, or non-renewal of contract; rights of attendees where school closed; immunity of sponsor. ERCO shall adhere to pertinent part section 3314.07 which states as follows: (A) the expiration of the contract for a community school between a sponsor and a school shall be the date provided in the contract. A successor contract may be entered into pursuant to division (E) of section 3314.03 of ORC unless the contract is terminated or not renewed pursuant to this section. (B) A sponsor may choose not to renew a contract at its expiration or may choose to terminate a contract prior to its expiration for any of the following reasons:

Failure to meet student performance requirements stated in the contract;

Failure to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management;

Violation of any provision of the contract or applicable state or federal law;

Other good cause.

ERCO may choose to terminate a contract prior to its expiration if ERCO has suspended the operation of the contract under section 3314.072 of ORC. No later than first day of February in the year in which ERCO intends to terminate or take actions not to renew the contract, ERCO shall notify the school of the proposed action in writing. The notice shall include the reasons of the proposed action in detail, the effective date of the termination or non-renewal, and a statement that the school may, within 14 days receiving the notice, request an informal hearing before ERCO. Such request must be in writing. The informal hearing shall be held within fourteen days of the receipt of a request for the hearing. Not later than fourteen days after the informal hearing, the sponsor shall issue a written decision either affirming or rescinding the decision to terminate or not renew the contract. ERCO's decision to terminate a contract may be appealed to the state board of education. The notice of appeal shall be filed with the state board no later than 14 days following receipt of ERCO written decision to terminate. Within 60 days of receipt of notice to appeal, the state board shall conduct a hearing and issue a written decision on the appeal. The decision by the state board pertaining to an appeal under ORC 3314.07 (B) (4) is final.

The termination of a contract under division (B)(5) 3314.07 of ORC shall be effective upon the occurrence of the later of the following: the date ERCO notified the school of its decision to terminate

the contract as prescribed in division (B)(3) of 3314.07 of ORC; (b) If an informal hearing is requested under division (B)(3) of 3314.07 of ORC and as a result of that hearing ERCO affirms its decision to terminate the contract, the effective date of the termination specified in the notice issued under division (B)(3) of 3314.07 of ORC, or if that decision is appealed to the state board under division (B)(4) of 3314.07 of ORC and the state board affirms that decision, the date established in the resolution of the state board affirming ERCO's decision.

If a sponsored school does not intend to renew their contract with ERCO, the school shall notify ERCO in writing of that fact at least 180 days prior to the expiration of the contract. The school may enter into a contract with a new sponsor in accordance with section 3314.03 of ORC upon expiration of the previous contract.

Renewal Applications

The policy environment for both community schools and sponsors has been challenging recently, as school leaders know. All stakeholders agree that students deserve high-quality educational opportunities; consensus on how to best assess the performance of schools, and their leaders, teachers and sponsors has proved more elusive.

The Ohio Department of Education has rolled out not only a new **Local Report Card** for schools, but also a **Sponsor Performance Review**, in the pilot of which ERCO volunteered and participated. The assessment proved a rewarding experience for the ERCO team, confirming the value and merit of previously adopted best practices, and shedding light on areas for growth.

In spring 2013, ERCO implemented a new **Renewal Assessment Rubric** for contract renewal decision-making. We have since refined that process. ERCO will consider all relevant performance metrics with clear, fair assessment, and will also provide schools an opportunity to demonstrate success achieving academic, financial, operations and governance goals in the form of a **Renewal Application**.

Renewal Process Timeline	
Renewal application distributed to schools	October 15
Reminder of renewal application and due date distributed to schools	November 1
Renewal applications due from schools	November 30th
High Stakes Review submitted to schools	October 30th
Advisory board recommends renewal of schools to Executive Board	December 15th
Governing authority and ODE Office of Community Schools notified of application disposition (renewal/non-renewal)	December-January
Statutory deadline to issue notice of non-renewal	January 15

Reporting Responsibilities

Information	(By) When:	To:
School Calendar	June 1-July 31	Upload into EPICENTER
Calamity Day form	July 31	Upload into EPICENTER
SOES Profile Form New schools-----> Continuing schools----->	July 31 (Send) July 31 (Input) July 31	Upload into EPICENTER
Satisfactory Opening Assurances Site Visit	A minimum of 10 business days prior to school start	By appointment with Regional Representative
Fall Site Visit	October-November	By appointment with Regional Representative
School Annual Report	October 30	Upload into EPICENTER
Annual Budget Report and Approved Board Resolution	October 31	Upload into EPICENTER
Renewal Application (If contract term ends June 30 of previous yr.)	November 15	Upload into EPICENTER
5 Year Forecast Report and Approved Board Resolution	November 20 th	Upload into EPICENTER
Contract modifications	Immediately	admin@ercoinc.org Attn. Sonya Lunsford
Board agendas and approved/signed meeting minutes for each regular, emergency or special board meeting	Agenda: at least 24 hours prior to meeting Minutes: within 48 hours of board approval	Upload into EPICENTER
Attendance/enrollment reports	Monthly, on the 5 th	Upload into EPICENTER
Financial reports	Monthly, on the 10 th	Upload into EPICENTER
GAAP reports	November 30	Upload into EPICENTER
Spring site visit	February –March	By appointment with Regional Representative
5-year forecast	May 31 st (spring)	Upload into EPICENTER
Forwarded news and events	Ongoing basis	admin@ercoinc.org

Site Visits:

Site visits include opening assurances and comprehensive site visits.

- The opening assurance site visit and required documentation are statutorily required to be satisfactorily completed no less than 10 business days prior to the school start date.
- Comprehensive site visits take place at least twice per year, in fall and spring. The ERCO representative for your region will contact you to schedule dates.
- Please avoid cancellations and rescheduling of the date whenever possible, and provide immediate notice of any need to do so.

Audit Reports

- Audit reports are received and reviewed by community school sponsors.
- Corrective action plans and documentation may be requested for adverse findings.
- All New Start-up Schools must secure a Surety Bond. **ORC 3314.50**
 - \$50,000 in cash registered with Auditor of State
 - Contracted Operator provides written guarantee of payment up to \$50,000.

Other Stakeholder Input

Sponsors occasionally receive communication regarding their schools from other stakeholders, including, but not limited to:

- Insurance companies, such as if payments and/or coverage lapse
- SERS/STRS, if payments lapse
- Auditors
- Attorney General
- Bureau of Workers Compensation
- Jobs and Family Services
- Tax agencies
- ODE departments
- Educational Service Centers
- Vendors

ERCO will contact you as soon as possible to address and resolve any concerns communicated to us. Prompt attention and resolution are vital to protect the interests of all stakeholders. Corrective action plans may be required to address the concern, depending on its nature and duration.

Parent Complaints

Sponsors sometimes receive complaints, written and/or verbal, from parents, etc. Our complaint resolution process is to:

- Encourage the complainant to contact the school superintendent, principal, and/or governing board with their concerns, if they have not yet done so.
- Note the complaint, requesting a written complaint if feasible for the complainant.
- Send a memo of complaint, including any written complaint submitted, to school stakeholders including the governing board, schools leaders, etc., with a deadline for response, usually in one business week.
- If the complaint remains unresolved, ERCO may facilitate a meeting of concerned parties to achieve resolution.
- ERCO will forward the response and/or resolution to the Ohio Department of Education if deemed appropriate or if the state has been involved.
- Maintain a record of all correspondence and communication about complaints in each school's file.

