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CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

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CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

Navigating Your Community Needs Analysis

When planning to open, expand, or replicate a charter school in California, or when an authorizer is considering a petition to do so, it is essential to assess and document the needs of the community the school is intended to serve. Whether you are a developer team, district authorizer, or support partner, engaging stakeholders and using data-driven analysis can clarify demand, strengthen the petition, and promote equitable outcomes.

Though these tools are not required by the California Department of Education (CDE) or state law, they provide valuable insights that support robust petition development and informed authorizer review. They are especially relevant if you are seeking federal Charter Schools Program (CSP) funding or preparing a petition aligned with [California Education Code \(EC\) 47605](#).

Key Resources for a Community Needs Analysis

These data gathering resources can help lay the groundwork for the analysis:

1. Demographic & Academic Data Collection Template

Use a worksheet to analyze the demographics and academic performance of the target area. Data points may include race/ethnicity, English Learner status, socioeconomic indicators, and standardized assessment results.

2. Community Needs & Preferences Survey

Gather input from families, educators, and community members to understand unmet needs, barriers in current educational offerings, and interest in specific instructional models, e.g., Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), dual language, or Career and Technical Education (CTE). [Attachment A: [SAMPLE SURVEY](#)]

3. Charter School Interest Survey

If your educational model is defined, this tool helps gauge enrollment interest. This can support [EC Section 47605\(c\)\(7\)](#) petition requirements regarding the demonstration of “reasonably comprehensive descriptions” of target population and outreach. [Attachment B: [SAMPLE SURVEY](#)]

4. Community Asset Mapping Guide

Identify local organizations, partnerships, and resources that can support or enhance the proposed school. Include health services, after-school programs, workforce development links, and cultural organizations.

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Drawing on the data collected using the above resources, the community needs assessment could be structured around the following inquiries:

SECTION I: STATEMENT OF NEED

- A. What unmet educational need exists in the proposed community or region?
 - 1) Describe challenges or opportunity gaps in academic performance, access, equity, or innovation.
 - 2) Use data to support your claim (e.g., California School Dashboard indicators, graduation rates, chronic absenteeism, discipline data).
- B. Why is the charter school model the best solution to address this need?
 - 1) Highlight how charter flexibility, innovation, or specialized programs address the identified gaps.
 - 2) Briefly describe the educational model (e.g., project-based, dual immersion, Montessori, STEM, etc.) and how it responds to the need.

Purpose: To demonstrate that the school's design and mission are rooted in a well-defined, data-supported local need.

SECTION II: COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS AND CONTEXT

- A. Describe the community you intend to serve.
 - 1) Include population trends, cultural diversity, income levels, primary languages spoken, and any other relevant demographic data.
- B. Why was this specific location and/or enrollment area selected?
 - 1) Explain the connection between your educational model and this community's characteristics.
 - 2) If applicable, describe whether other locations were considered.
 - 3) Describe the target student population.
 - 4) Identify anticipated grade levels, enrollment size, and key characteristics of the students (e.g., English learners, foster youth, students with disabilities).

Purpose: To ensure alignment between the school's intended program and the needs of the surrounding population.

SECTION III: EVIDENCE OF DEMAND AND COMMUNITY INPUT

- A. What evidence suggests that parents, students, and the broader community support this school?
 - 1) Include results from surveys, focus groups, or letters of support.

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- 2) Note any community forums or outreach conducted and summarize key findings.
- 3) Attach summaries or data visualizations where possible.
- 4) Describe how the school has engaged stakeholders in the planning process.
- 5) Include community organizations, educators, parents, and students.
- 6) Describe strategies to engage diverse and representative populations in the community and/or targeted communities, and the rationale for this choice of strategies.
- 7) Explain how community input has shaped your design.

Purpose: To show that the community is not only being served but has had a voice in designing the school.

SECTION IV: CHARTER PETITION ALIGNMENT

- A. How does this needs assessment support your charter petition under California law (e.g., EC Section 47605)?
 - 1) Explain how this evidence supports enrollment projections, curriculum choices, and your approach to serving underserved groups.
 - 2) Tie your findings to any required components in your petition, such as measurable pupil outcomes or outreach strategies.

Purpose: To strengthen the petition, in both its function as the application for the charter and its continued relevance as a guiding document for the school if approved by the authorizer.

SECTION V: COMMUNITY ASSET MAPPING (OPTIONAL BUT ENCOURAGED)

- A. Identify local resources that could support the success of your school and students (e.g., nonprofits, service providers, other educational institutions, business partnerships, enrichment programs).
- B. Consider creating a simple map or spreadsheet that aligns potential partners to school goals (e.g., mental health services, STEM partners, CTE links).

Purpose: To leverage important institutional capacities and supports to strengthen the school and its ties to the community.

SECTION VI: DISTRICT COLLABORATION STRATEGY

- A. How will the proposed school maintain a collaborative relationship with the district or authorizer?
 - 1) Describe how the proposed school will strengthen the overall local public school system and contribute to community-wide aspirations for its public schools.

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- 2) Describe communication plans, data-sharing agreements, or other practices that foster transparency and goodwill.
- 3) If part of a multi-school system, note any established partnerships or MOUs.

Purpose: To reflect CCAP's commitment to healthy district-authorizer relations and mutual accountability and a vision for charter schools that make overall public education stronger in California.

SECTION VII: SUMMARY STATEMENT

A. Craft a brief (300–500 word) narrative summarizing:

- 1) The need identified;
- 2) The voices and data that validate it;
- 3) How the proposed school addresses it; and
- 4) Why the school is well-positioned to succeed.

Purpose: This summary can serve as a stand-alone artifact in your charter petition or grant submission.

APPENDIX: SUGGESTED ATTACHMENTS

- Community Needs Survey Summary
- Interest Survey Results
- Demographic Data Table (from CDE, Ed-Data, DataQuest)
- Letters of Support
- Meeting/Focus Group Summaries
- Community Asset Map or List
- Outreach Timeline

ATTACHMENT A: NEEDS SURVEY SAMPLE TEMPLATE

Community Needs & Preferences Survey

Please take a few minutes to fill out this assessment. Your information will help us in determining our next steps as we consider looking at the creation of a new school in our community. Your thoughts and voice on this matter are important!

1. What community do you live in?
2. List surrounding communities here
3. How do you describe yourself or your family?
 - ☐ Latino (Mexican, Latin American, Puerto Rican)
 - ☐ African American (Black)
 - ☐ White (Caucasion)
 - ☐ Asian
 - ☐ Native American
 - ☐ Pacific Islander
4. Would you like to see a new public school option for students in our community?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
5. What kinds of learning activities and services do you think would help your child(ren) have greater success in school? (check all that apply)

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Reading Improvement Programs
- ☐ Math and Science Programs
- ☐ Authentic Learning (real-world)
- ☐ Health and Nutrition Services
- ☐ Personalized Learning for each child
- ☐ Behavior Management programs for all students
- ☐ Learning outside the classroom
- ☐ Experiential (Hands-on) Learning
- ☐ Mental Health Services
- ☐ Life Skills programs for students
- ☐ Opportunities for parents & teachers to work together for student success
- ☐ College and Career Readiness programs
- ☐ English Learner Programs
- ☐ Other:

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6. What skills do you think all students should have before they graduate with a K-12 education? (check all that apply)

Check all that apply:

- ☐ Critical thinking and problem-solving
- ☐ Collaboration across networks
- ☐ Leading by influence
- ☐ Basic math skills
- ☐ Agility and adaptability
- ☐ Initiative and entrepreneurialism
- ☐ Basic reading skills
- ☐ Financial literacy
- ☐ Effective communication
- ☐ Curiosity and imagination
- ☐ A sense of self and community
- ☐ Observe and attend at high levels
- ☐ High levels of plant and animal identification
- ☐ Other:

7. If you were to choose a new school for your child, what would you be looking for? (Check all that apply)

Check all that apply:

- ☐ Students enjoy going to school
- ☐ High test scores
- ☐ To have something to do after school for all students
- ☐ The school is safe
- ☐ High family engagement
- ☐ College preparatory
- ☐ There is a focus on building friendships
- ☐ Smaller Class Sizes
- ☐ Sports and Clubs
- ☐ Increased Technology Education (CNC, AutoCAD, Programming, etc.)
- ☐ Curriculum is Innovative
- ☐ There is homework each night
- ☐ There is no homework
- ☐ Other:

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8. What kinds of challenges do children who you know (in our community) face that make success in school difficult that all schools should address?

Check all that apply:

- ☐ Difficulty with basic reading skills
- ☐ Difficulty with basic math skills
- ☐ Strategies to control behavior
- ☐ Physical health issues
- ☐ Lack of school interest
- ☐ Mental health issues
- ☐ Family stress
- ☐ School anxiety
- ☐ Need for positive adult role models
- ☐ Lack of motivation
- ☐ Improved relationships with teachers
- ☐ Improved relationships with other students
- ☐ Difficulty with self-monitoring and self-management
- ☐ Positive decision-making
- ☐ Other:

9. What other ideas do you have that should be part of a new school design?

10. As you think about student achievement across the district, what long term planning or ideas do you have for supporting higher student achievement in the schools?

11. Would you be willing to sit on a focus group to develop programming & services to ensure student success?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

12. Please provide name/email if you are interested in us reaching out to you:

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13. What else should we know or be thinking about as we work on educating our young people in our community?

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ATTACHMENT B: INTEREST SURVEY SAMPLE TEMPLATE

Charter School Interest Survey

[GROUP NAME] is considering the possibility of opening a charter school. We'd like to gather your thoughts and feedback and share some information with you. We want to continually challenge ourselves to explore and improve and try new research-based ideas. Starting a new and different smaller-scale school from scratch could be a unique opportunity for students. The proposed school is focused on the **[SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY/GOALS X]**

For more information, **[SEE X]**

We would like your input as we continue with the planning process. Thank you in advance for taking the time to complete the following questions.

1. Please list the schools your children attend and/or planned to attend
2. In the fall, my child(ren) will be in the following grades:

Check all that apply:

- ☐ 4K
- ☐ 5K
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5
- ☐ 6
- ☐ 7
- ☐ 8
- ☐ 9
- ☐ 10
- ☐ 11
- ☐ 12
- ☐ If you will have a child(ren) who will be younger than 4 in the fall, please check this box.
- ☐ If you will NOT have a child who will be birth to grade 12 in the fall, please check this box.

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Educational Model

The proposed school is focused on **[SCHOOL MODEL X]**

3. After reading about this model for the proposed school, would you support this model?

Mark only one:

Yes No Maybe

4. What comments or questions do you have about this model?

5. If given the opportunity, I am interested in enrolling my child(ren) in the proposed school:

Mark only one:

Yes No Maybe Not Applicable