Chicago Public Schools
2013 Request for Proposals
to Open New Schools

Neighborhood Advisory Council
HANDBOOK
A Resource Guide
Parents and communities are essential partners in developing new schools in the city of Chicago.

The District, in partnership with New Schools for Chicago, will facilitate the formation and training of Neighborhood Advisory Councils (NAC) in identified priority communities where CPS receives proposals to open new schools. NACs are the central component of parent and community engagement in the New Schools Request for Proposal (RFP) to open new schools. NAC members serve as liaisons between Chicago Public Schools (CPS), their communities, and the applicant design teams to ensure that new school proposals offer high quality educational options.

While the primary role of NACs is an advisory function, NACs are critical in reporting to Chicago Public Schools on the match between a proposed new school and the needs and preferences of the community.

The NACs will ideally be comprised of at least 51% parents of school-aged children or students (in the case of high school proposals) who reside within the respective priority community and various other residents who are invested in providing quality options for students within the priority community. The role of a NAC member is to review proposals for its community – including by soliciting input from other stakeholders in the priority community – and to make recommendations to the Chief Executive Officer of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) on which proposal(s) best meet the needs and preferences of the community within which (s)he resides. The District and New Schools for Chicago will provide technical assistance and training to ensure that each NAC member is and feels prepared to play this critical role in the school selection process.

**Membership**

Individuals interested in participating in a NAC must live in the priority community and complete a brief application. CPS estimates that each NAC will be comprised of between 7 to 25 members; however there is no maximum limit on the number of participants.

If CPS receives more than 25 applications for a priority community, everyone will have an opportunity to take part in the NAC. CPS will not deny individuals who live in the priority community in which the NAC is formed and who are interested in participating in the NAC process.

The following individuals may serve as NAC members:

**1. Families**

The following individuals may serve as members on NACs:

- Individuals who have school-aged children and live in the priority community
Individuals who live in the Northwest or Southwest side more broadly\(^1\) and wish to review proposals for high schools to which their student(s) may be able to commute.

- The term “parent” includes, in addition to a natural parent, a legal guardian or other person who acts as the primary caregiver with whom the child resides (such as a grandparent or stepparent, or a person who is legally responsible for the child’s welfare).
- High school students who reside in a priority community in which a NAC is being formed or on the Northwest or Southwest side broadly may participate in a neighboring NAC to help evaluate proposals to open new high schools.

2. Community Members

Community members are identified as individuals who have an interest in the educational options available in the priority community.

Individuals must reside in the priority community to evaluate all school proposals (both elementary and high school proposals). Individuals who live on the Northwest or Southwest side broadly may participate in a neighboring NAC and review only high school proposals.

3. Political Representatives

Elected officials or their representatives, including aldermen, state representatives, and Local School Council members who represent the community, may serve on NACs. Elected officials must reside in the neighborhood to participate.

**Voting**

NAC decisions are made by formal vote. In order to be allowed to vote, a member must not have missed more than two meetings throughout the NAC evaluation process, including the final retreat.

**NAC Responsibilities and Roles**

**Duties and Responsibilities of Neighborhood Advisory Councils**

- Organizing and conducting elections for NAC officers
- Maintaining active, two-way communication with stakeholders
- Holding at least one community meeting after reviewing the full and complete Tier 2 proposal (due to Chicago Public Schools by December 3, 2013) to share information with parents, students, and community members about the new school proposals, and to get feedback from those stakeholders

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\(^1\) For the purposes of the 2013 New Schools RFP, the Northwest Side is bounded by the area beginning at Fullerton and the western city limit, east to Western, and north to the city limit. Similarly, the Southwest Side is bounded by the area west of Western Avenue, South of the Stevenson Expressway, and the city limits.
• Working with community partners to disseminate information on the work of the NAC and solicit input from stakeholders

• Attending an orientation, six professional development sessions, and a two-day retreat.

• Preparing for weekly meetings by reading and commenting on the appropriate section of all proposals in order to contribute thoughtfully to the NAC discussion

• Making a recommendation to the CEO of Chicago Public Schools that includes the outcomes of both votes (taken by all NAC members and the subset of parents of school-aged children) and cites the proposed operator(s) that best fit the needs of the community

NAC Officers

Each NAC must identify and elect two officers: a NAC Chair and a NAC Co-Chair. NAC officers will be the point of contact for the District and New Schools for Chicago staff members.

Duties and Responsibilities of NAC Officers

1. Chair

• Assisting with compiling and disseminating the weekly agenda

• Notifying NAC members of meetings/events by phone or email at least three (3) days before the meeting/event

• Collecting copies of agendas, sign-in sheets, and meeting notes for each NAC meeting, including the names, addresses, and affiliations of members in attendance

• Ensuring that all NAC members are knowledgeable of and fulfilling their roles and responsibilities as members

• Maintaining a current roster of NAC members that includes name, address, phone/email and affiliation and share these with the facilitator and coordinator

• Keeping the minutes of all meetings

• Maintaining records of attendance and summary reports

2. Co-Chair

• Assuming the duties of the Chair in his/her absence

• Performing other duties as assigned by the Chair or the NAC
Assisting in providing notice by phone or email to NAC members in advance of meetings/events

Duties and Responsibilities of NAC Facilitator and Coordinator

Please note these positions are not held by NAC members; Facilitators and Coordinators are hired by CPS and New Schools for Chicago.

1. Facilitator
   - Facilitating initial group goal setting and team building
   - Leading the process to elect officers
   - Facilitating the weekly sessions
   - Facilitating discussions at the final evaluation retreat
   - Supporting the formulation and documentation of the group's recommendation to the CEO of CPS

2. Coordinator
   - Assisting with reminder calls for NAC weekly meetings
   - Compiling and distributing meeting materials
   - Coordinating snacks and beverages for weekly meetings
   - Organizing school tours for individual NAC members
   - Supporting NAC facilitators as needed

Structure of NAC Meetings

How are NAC meetings run and managed?
1. Begin and end on time.
2. Use written agendas with time schedules.
3. Involve all members of the group.

Guidelines for NAC Meetings
   - The focus of the meeting should be on real differences in opinions, not technicalities;
arguments should be avoided if they are only for the sake of arguing.

- Debate should be limited to concise statements and not lengthy orations, which have little or nothing to do with the question at hand.
- One person should not dominate the discussions.
- The problem-solving process should be used to its fullest capacity.
- Brainstorming, work groups, and debate all add to intelligent decision-making.
- The average person has an attention span of 23 minutes or less. Remember to keep the meeting moving. **Review decisions made.** At the end of the meeting, all agreements made, such as tasks assigned, chairs appointed, and committees formed, should be verified.
- Most of all, meetings should be interesting, exciting, and fun.

**What are the guidelines for voting?**

1. All members who have not missed more than two training sessions, including the orientation training session and the final retreat, are able to vote.

2. In the case of a tie in a vote by all NAC members, the chairperson will cast a second vote to break the tie.

**Research Based Decision-Making Guidelines**

NAC members should consider the following guidelines for decision-making:

- Focus decisions based upon the community's vision, especially what is best for ALL families and students.
- Seek involvement by other stakeholders rather than limiting discussions to the NAC. The community meeting is designed to involve other stakeholders in discussing educational priorities.
- Take risks and learn from mistakes. Seek solutions outside of tradition.

If NAC members have any questions or feedback during the NAC process, please contact Office of New Schools at 773-553-1530 or newschoolapplicants@cps.edu.