



THE NEW HAMPSHIRE SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION



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*NHSBA  
SUPERINTENDENT  
SEARCH SERVICES*



## *What leads to a Successful Superintendent Search?*

Three factors determine whether any search will be successful:

### **1) Valid and Measurable Performance Criteria.**

- The NHSBA approach is unique and generates measurable role and competency performance standards, to include those “chemistry” attributes typically hard to quantify, such as initiative, relationship building, sense of urgency, board compatibility, and so on.

**2) A Rigorous Candidate Evaluation Methodology.** The evaluation methodology employed surfaces capabilities and valid behavioral data (thoughts, feelings, and behaviors) that are scored against the position performance criteria.

- The approach employed looks at multiple sources of performance data to include applications, telephone screening interviews, reference checks, and so on. Of particular note is the application of the Guided Storytelling Interview™ (GSI), which is used to evaluate and screen the final two or three candidates. The GSI is the gold-standard for measuring leader and manager capabilities and to conduct qualitative research. Only the NHSBA has the ability to use this rigorous evaluation methodology.

**3) Qualified Candidates.** This is a big challenge in most superintendent searches, as there isn't enough top talent to go around, particularly in New Hampshire and neighboring states. NHSBA puts significant effort into sourcing qualified candidates with the goal of having two-to-three highly qualified candidates make it to the final screening.

# *What Capabilities Underpin NHSBA's Ability to Conduct an Effective Search?*

As an organization that is established for the purpose of assisting school boards across the state, our superintendent search is one of our primary services. NHSBA's large network allows us to explore each candidate's background more thoroughly than otherwise might be doable, which results in a better assessment of candidate's fit with the district. We work with most superintendents across New Hampshire and are able to contact colleagues at other state school boards associations relative to out-of-state applicants.

With regard to the specifics of the search process, our ability to address all three of the search requirements described above is due to our extensive experience with NH districts and a partnership with the Center for Secondary School Redesign (CSSR) headquartered in Rhode Island. CSSR has many unique and proven methodologies and tools that enhance the search process. In addition, CSSR has partnered with with districts throughout NH in support of student personalization efforts, strategic planning, board development, and searches for both school leaders and superintendents. While NHSBA maintains the formal contractual relationship with district search clients, the work is conducted in close partnership with CSSR. Additional capabilities include:

- The NHSBA Executive Director is closely involved throughout the process with oversight responsibilities of the CSSR consultants and NHSBA staff.
- The NHSBA Administrative Assistant oversees the posting of advertisements, announcements, and other correspondence. NHSBA assists in the development of the advertisement, posting the advertisement online, and developing other pertinent documents.
- The NHSBA Staff Attorney is active with all legal matters and is available to answer questions regarding Right to Know law considerations, interview protocols, human resources matters, contract negotiations, and so forth.

# What are the Primary Search Process Steps & Timeline?



*The time needed to conduct an effective search is typically about four months. It will be longer if the sourcing of candidates doesn't result in an adequate number of qualified candidates. It can be done in less time if the logistics can be streamlined and a pool of qualified candidates is readily available.*

## MONTH 1

1. Engagement parameters are determined and agreed upon. A formal letter of agreement (LOA) is drawn up which details the mutual NHSBA-district client accountabilities, to include an agreed upon timeline.
  - *NHSBA employs a standard set of search activities, which are outlined here. However, NHSBA will conduct fewer than the standard activities, or more - whatever best meets the district's needs (please see Optional Search Activities).*
2. To the degree required, the creation of the search committee is completed. (Please see the Establishing the Search Committee Section below, and the Search Committee Formulation Guidelines document.)
3. A performance criteria identification meeting with the search committee is conducted to identify measurable performance standards in terms of roles, competencies, leadership styles, and derailers (failure factors). The criteria are customized to ensure fit with district short and long-term goals and needs, e.g., fit with the board, the community, academic/student college and career readiness goals, and district values, vision, mission, and guiding principles.
  - *It is recommended that community forums and/or online surveys of a mix of stakeholders are conducted to solicit input into what the public wants to see in the new superintendent. The input is utilized in the performance criteria committee meeting.*
  - *Another approach is to hold the committee meeting first, and present to the community the committee findings for review and refinement. These community forums focus on establishing performance criteria, based on empirical research, that indicates what top-performing superintendents demonstrate in terms of roles, competencies, and leadership styles.*
  - *If yours is a multi-district SAU, it is advised that surveys and forums be conducted with each town in the SAU.*
4. Application elements/requirements are established.
5. A candidate sourcing plan is finalized.
6. All sourcing strategies are initiated, e.g., job postings are created based on the performance criteria, and placed on appropriate sourcing sites.

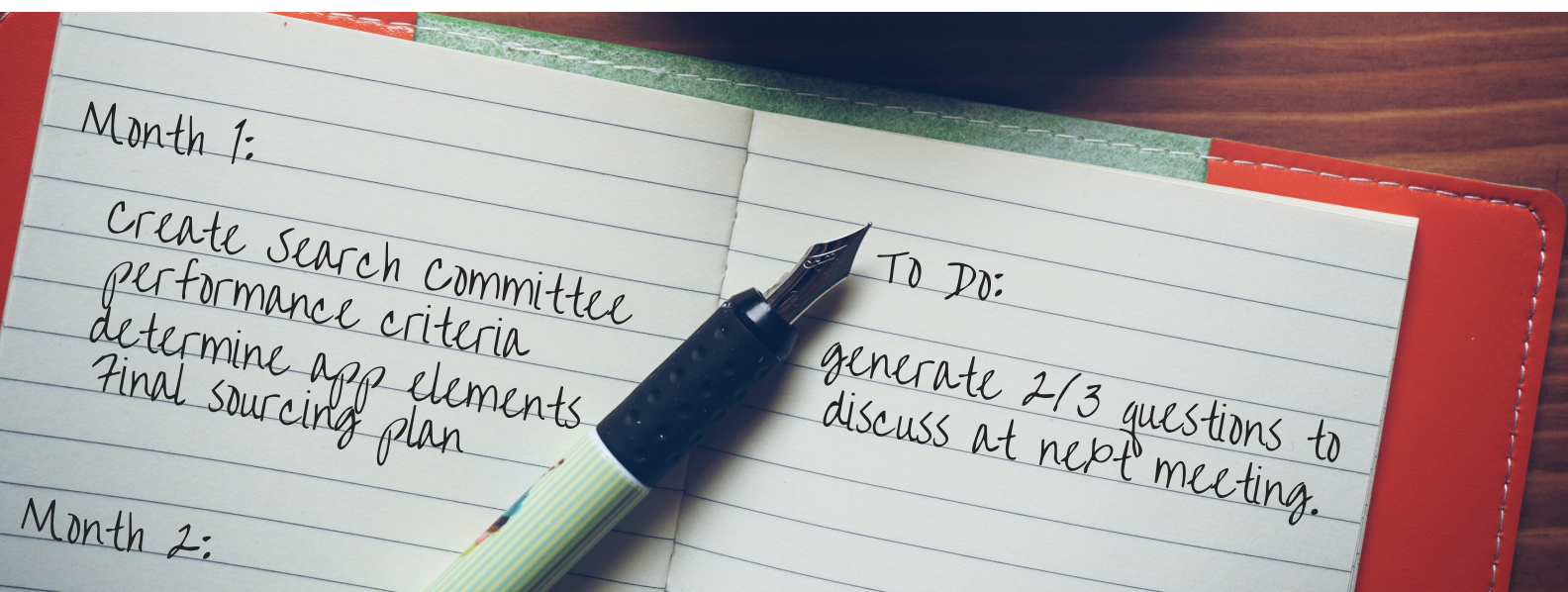
# Steps & Timeline

## MONTH 2

1. Applications are accepted and screened.
2. Sourcing/recruitment efforts continue.
3. Application period closes at the end of the month.
4. Initial/paper-screening is completed with the goal of identifying 6-8 qualified candidates.

## MONTH 3

1. A telephone screen is conducted with the 6-8 candidates.
2. From the telephone screen, 2-3 finalists are identified.
3. The final candidates (internal & external) are screened by participation in the Guided Storytelling Interview (GSI) - conducted by teleconference (Zoom)
  - Zoom allows the interviews to be video recorded.
  - The committee reviews the recorded interviews and scores them against the performance criteria with the guidance of the NHSBA consultant.
  - If the committee is not a sub-committee of the board, it is recommended that board members join the committee to review and score the interviews.
  - Those considered a good fit are identified and invited to participate in the final screening activities.



# Steps & Timeline

## MONTH 4

1. Candidates participate in additional screening activities, e.g., one-on-one and constituent group “chemistry/fit” interviews, panel interview, and work samples.
  - *If the committee is not a sub-committee of the board, it is recommended that board members join the committee in the additional screening activities, or at this point, dismiss the committee and conduct all remaining activities.*
  - *Board members also may wish to visit the candidates’ home districts to conduct interviews of key stakeholders who are very familiar with the candidates.*
2. The final candidate is selected.
3. Reference and criminal background checks are conducted for the final candidate.
4. The position is offered to the final candidate.
5. The contract is negotiated and finalized.



## How Much Does the Search Cost?

1. The fee for a standard search – those activities described above - is \$15,000 with the first third due at the signing of the LOA. The second third is due one month from the first, and the third is due two months from the first.
2. Should additional activities be requested of NHSBA, such activities are charged at a rate of \$1,000 per day.
3. Out of pocket expenses, e.g. travel, materials/copies, and advertising are charged back to the district at cost.
  - *Most advertising is done via websites. The cost of the advertisements is generally between \$500-\$800 per website for a 5-6 week run/posting. NHSBA recommends posting the advertisement on at least two well-known advertising sites.*



## *What Happens if a Qualified Candidate is not Found?*

NHSBA is committed to providing high-quality service to its members, to include the search process. Given the challenge of having less qualified superintendent candidates available than needed, it is possible that the first round of sourcing will not result in a qualified candidate, or one that will accept the offer – the competition for good performers is intense! Should this occur, in keeping with our commitment to members, NHSBA will conduct a second round of sourcing and GSI screening at no charge (except for out of pocket expenses) as a service to the district. Should the second round also not generate a qualified candidate, NHSBA will conduct a third round at a reduced fee for the activities required.

## WHAT MAKES FOR A GOOD SEARCH COMMITTEE?

1. NHSBA recommends that a sub-committee of the school board be established to conduct the steps of the search described above.
2. If the district chooses to create a committee that is made up of a mix of community stakeholders, e.g., board member, administrator, teacher/union rep, student, parent, business rep, town official, etc., it is recommended that it not exceed 12 members.
  - *It is made clear from the start that the committee has an advisory role only, and it is the SAU Board that will make the final decision.*
  - *It is strongly recommended that committee member substitutes not be employed when a member cannot make a meeting or conduct an assigned task. This is for the purpose of continuity and confidentiality. Committee members should be committed from the start to make themselves available for all meetings and assigned activities.*

# WHAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE APPLICATION PACKET?

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The following are typical components of the application packet, which are determined by the client:

- *Letter of application/cover letter*
- *Current resume*
- *Statement of educational and leadership philosophy*
- *Verification of educational degrees and certifications*
- *Three current references*

It should be made clear in the packet that all information will be held in confidence. Typically, the name of a candidate is not released until the candidate has been identified as a finalist and agrees to his/her references being called or visited. At this point, the district may wish to make an announcement of the names of the finalist and invite the public to watch their video and/or to participate in events scheduled that provide stakeholders with the opportunity to meet with the finalists.

## Is There Anything Else that Should be Kept in Mind?

1. From the beginning of the process, the board should have in hand general parameters regarding salary and benefits.
2. Given the needs of the district, it is important to have a clear picture of how long a commitment the district is willing to make to the new superintendent. It is essential to realize that making major changes in a district takes time, and that having a competent superintendent in place for 5-7 years is critical to ensure that goals can be met and made sustainable.
3. NHSBA has templates and examples of documents for many of the activities that it will share freely, e.g., contracts, candidate evaluation protocols, community surveys, etc.
4. NHSBA is flexible, and can customize the search process to fit district needs, which may mean reducing or expanding the search activities, and/or utilizing unique activities or tools in place of those considered standard.