

QUARTERBACK ROLE *in* FACILITIES STRATEGY



Education Cities

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All errors are our own.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The north star of quarterback organizations is to increase the number of high quality schools serving low-income students. Quarterbacks, and the schools in which they invest, consistently point to a lack of affordable facilities as a barrier to their ability to serve more students.

Where such barriers exist, Education Cities believes its members can and should play a key facilities leadership role because quarterbacks are uniquely well-positioned to articulate a vision for the future and pull together multiple strands of work across multiple sectors (e.g., finance, real estate, development, and more) to shape an aligned strategy that accelerates, rather than stymies, the growth of high quality schools. Ideally, quarterback leadership on facilities means that schools are finding facilities that are appropriate and affordable for the students and families they serve; in addition, other actors in the ecosystem (e.g., CDFIs, developers, banks, and more) are able to function well in their respective lanes, providing technical expertise and support for schools. We are not saying that quarterbacks should, themselves, become the provider of all facilities solutions -- rather, quarterbacks can lead in a way that allows the entire ecosystem of partners to function effectively and efficiently in service of the goal of serving more kids.

While the facilities problems facing cities across the country share a lot of common traits, the solutions to these challenges are inherently context-specific. We offer this menu of potential roles for quarterbacks to consider, informed by cities' shared facilities challenges, with the knowledge that Education Cities members are best-positioned to discern the optimal roles and solutions for their individual cities. This paper also lays out recommendations for how quarterbacks can build the capacity needed to take on a complicated issue that often requires extensive content knowledge, experience, and expertise.

II. QUARTERBACK ROLES

Quarterbacks, grounded in their deep understanding of the local context in their city, can play one or more strategic leadership roles in facilities strategy, including:

- Convener
- Data Transparency and Problem Definition Support
- School Quality Standard Bearer / Validator
- Funder / Fundraiser
- Technical Assistance Provider
- Policy Priorities and Advocacy Support

CONVENER

Quarterbacks are naturally well-suited to convene groups of stakeholders to generate solutions to shared challenges. With respect to facilities, there are at least five groups of stakeholders that could benefit from convenings to build relationships, achieve shared clarity about challenges, and develop solutions together:

School Operators and Networks

By convening leaders (principals, executive directors, and/or chief operating officers) of schools and networks, quarterbacks can surface shared challenges with respect to facilities, which could lead to policy recommendations or other solutions.

Communities and Families

Convening communities and families affected by facilities decisions (e.g., school restarts, closings, new construction, building rehabilitation, co-location, etc.) to surface needs can help ensure that families and communities are heard and feel connected to the school institutions in their neighborhoods. Quarterbacks may also choose to support schools and networks in their efforts to convene community and family stakeholders, rather than serve as the convener themselves.

CONVENER CONT.

Sector Leaders

In many cities, facilities challenges and solutions lie at the intersection between the district, charter, and private schools sectors, and require multi-sector collaboration and solutions. Quarterbacks can convene district leaders, mayors and their education teams, city council members, authorizers, representatives from faith communities supporting private schools and facilities, as well as charter leaders, to explore areas of mutual interest and strengthen trust across sectors, in service of making sure all students in a city have access to a high quality school.

Facilities Partners / Affiliate Groups

As noted below, the marketplace for serving school and network facilities can be underdeveloped or more risk-averse than is helpful or warranted. By convening partners like CDFIs, real estate developers, banks, and more, quarterbacks can strengthen the sector and engage these partners in developing solutions that work for both schools and their potential facilities partners. These groups also bring expertise (e.g., regarding streams of federal and state dollars) that does not exist in all school operators.

Advocacy Partners

As quarterbacks develop policy priorities regarding facilities, they may choose to convene a coalition of advocacy partners who share those priorities, to advance specific proposals.

In addition to convening these potential cohorts separately, quarterbacks may also find value in co-convening multiple groups to workshop ideas and solutions, developing facilities fairs to highlight opportunities and services from multiple stakeholder groups, and/or consider an annual summit to strengthen relationships, flow of information, and potential solutions.

II. QUARTERBACK ROLES

DATA TRANSPARENCY AND PROBLEM DEFINITION SUPPORT

It is often challenging for schools and other stakeholders to have clear insight into their city's facilities landscape, which can be a barrier to the startup, growth, and replication of high quality schools, and make facilities challenges daunting. Quarterbacks can lead cities to greater clarity about the nature of facilities problems by shining a light on schools' and networks' facilities needs, the array of financial products available to support school facilities transactions, the availability of buildings suitable for use as schools, and by highlighting the public, philanthropic, and other funding available to catalyze and capitalize school facilities solutions.

To bring clarity to the facilities landscape in a given city, quarterbacks could create (via their own teams or through consultants) and share analysis of the following:

School and operator facilities needs across sectors

This analysis would include analyzing schools' current facilities and expected growth plans over the next 10-20 years, and would yield a needs analysis that indicates which schools and operators need new facilities, facilities updates and/or redesigns, schools in neighborhoods closer to the population served, and more. Once these needs are inventoried, quarterbacks and their partners can develop priorities and solutions to meet the facilities needs of the schools that can and should grow to serve more students. Assessing the needs across the sectors allows quarterbacks to determine whether individual supports, sector-wide solutions, policy change, or other solutions are most appropriate to support the growth of high quality schools.

Financial and real estate products for facilities¹

The ultimate goal for financial and real estate tools available to schools and networks is to have a full suite of affordable financing products available to quality schools. Quarterbacks can play the role of educating and informing schools of existing options, and improving the marketplace where good options do not exist. (Note: many cities' starting points are likely to have expensive, fractured, and/or incomplete markets that fill

¹ Thank you to Civic Builders for developing this framework for understanding the financial solutions schools need to secure appropriate and affordable facilities solutions.

DATA TRANSPARENCY AND PROBLEM DEFINITION SUPPORT CONT.

Financial and real estate products for facilities CONT.

only some needs of schools, perhaps at unaffordable prices.) To assist individual schools and networks with the complex work of securing a school facility, quarterbacks should develop resources that highlight the key players that need to be coordinated in a school transaction, including support for school solutions both short- and long-term:

SHORT TERM

Non-Profit Developers, Local Landlords & Developers

Offer short-term capital and leases, support schools and networks in securing affordable real estate development and offer supports that may include project financing, community outreach and planning, construction management, property management and asset management.

Credit Enhancement

Make US DOE and USDA products available to be paired with other loan products to reduce costs, by providing reassurance to lenders that the borrower will honor the obligation through additional collateral, insurance, or a third party guarantee.

Tax Credits

New Market Tax Credits (NMTC) and Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) incentivize low-cost, private investments in high need markets.

Commercial Lending

Primarily short- to medium-term; hard to access but often lower-cost for those who can.

Community Development Finance Institutions (CDFIs) Lending

Primarily short- and medium- term capital (up to 10 years); more flexible on LTV and financial covenants than commercial lending.

DATA TRANSPARENCY AND PROBLEM DEFINITION SUPPORT CONT.

Financial and real estate products for facilities CONT.

LONG TERM

Bond Guarantee Program

Long-term fixed rate debt, available through CDFIs. Through the CDFI Bond Guarantee Program, Qualified Issuers (CDFIs or their designees) apply to the CDFI Fund for authorization to issue bonds worth a minimum of \$100 million in total. The bonds provide CDFIs with access to substantial capital that is then used to reignite the economies of some of our nation's most distressed communities.²

Bond Market

Permanent financial product with geographic limitations, municipal bonds are debt securities issued by states, municipalities or counties to finance capital expenditures, including the construction of schools. These bonds are exempt from federal (and most state and local) taxes.

Moral Obligation

A form of credit enhancement available to qualified schools in certain states based on a pledge from the state to make debt payments should the school default.³

Permanent School Fund

A program available in Texas that allows qualified schools to receive a 'AAA' bond rating based on a guarantee from the Permanent School Fund, which could be replicated in other states.

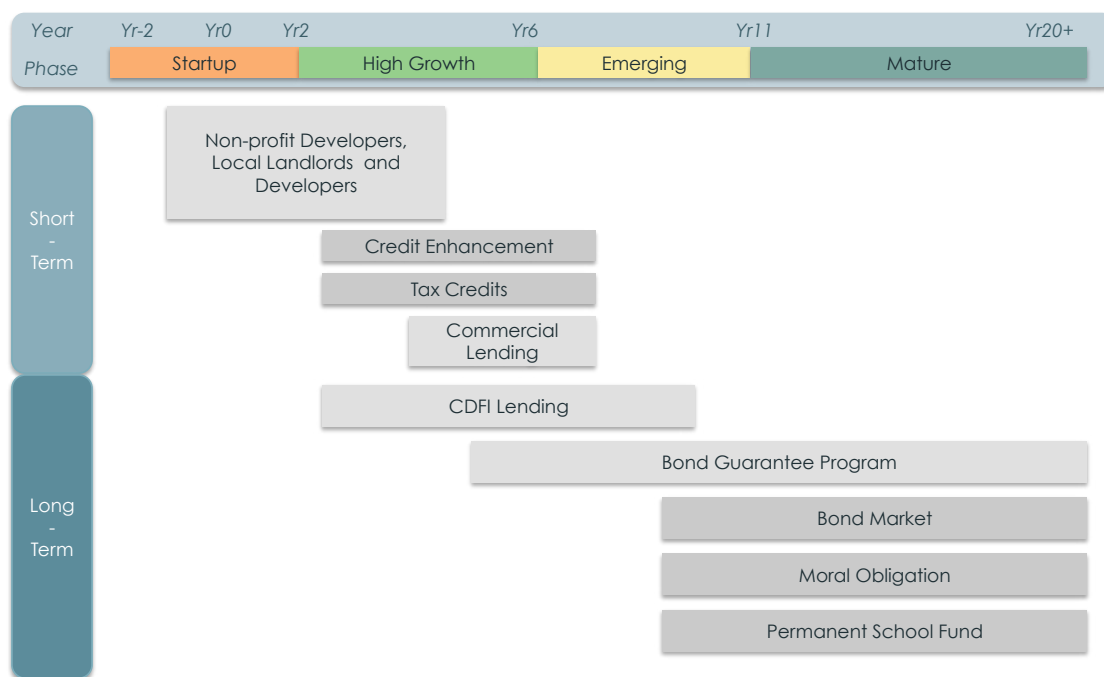
² <https://www.cdfifund.gov/programs-training/Programs/cdfi-bond/Pages/default.aspx> (accessed 7/26/2017).

³ A moral obligation bond not only gives investors the tax exemption benefits inherent in a municipal bond, but also provides an additional moral pledge of commitment against default. The issuing body's commitment is supported by a reserve fund established to meet any debt service costs the government may be unable to make. <http://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/moralobligationbond.asp#ixzz4nySf4xXv> (accessed on 7/26/2017).

DATA TRANSPARENCY AND PROBLEM DEFINITION SUPPORT CONT.

Financial and real estate products for facilities CONT.

Figure 1. Short- and Long-Term Financial and Real Estate Products Needs, by School Development Phase



Public Buildings

To maximize public value for the significant public investment already made in school facilities in cities across the country, the stock of public buildings available for schools should be allocated to schools and operators based on school quality and need. In most cities this is not how access to public buildings is handled, and it can be challenging for stakeholders to assess the capacity (and suitability) of existing unused or underutilized public buildings that could accommodate new or growing schools.⁴ Quarterbacks can shine a light on the stock of public buildings by developing reports about facilities availability and/or, where necessary, advocating for access to public information about

⁴ In most cities in the Education Cities network, overall student enrollment is declining and has been for some time, typically leading to unused and underutilized facilities. In a few cases where the student population in a city is growing, those cities are more likely to experience overcrowding and the need to find new school sites.

II. QUARTERBACK ROLES

DATA TRANSPARENCY AND PROBLEM DEFINITION SUPPORT CONT.

Public Buildings CONT.

facilities where that information is opaque. This analysis can become complex quickly, as districts (typically the owners/landlords of public school facilities) articulate plans to grow their own schools, and therefore assess facilities as fully utilized. Often, it is unclear if those paths to growth are viable or even desirable, depending on the quality of the schools expected to grow, relative to other options in the city. Quarterbacks have an opportunity to develop transparent and collaborative relationships with districts to work in partnership to allocate school buildings according to school quality and student and family need and demand.

SCHOOL QUALITY STANDARD BEARER / VALIDATOR

One of the most important roles quarterbacks play in their cities is to articulate a vision and expectation for school quality, and apply that definition across its work and across sectors. This quality definition manifests in multiple areas of quarterback work, including the quarterback's school investment diligence process, which establishes the threshold for investment in any given school pathway, thereby "setting the bar" for investment-grade school quality.⁵ More established quarterbacks are also positioned to validate school quality at the earliest stages of school development, based on their investments in school leaders and their development through activities like fellowships and other training programs.

As part of both initial diligence and ongoing investment monitoring, quarterbacks are able to validate a school's academic, financial, and operational health, and can vouch for a school or network as needed with partners with less familiarity with school quality and performance indicators. For example, as schools and networks work through financing for a school

⁵ For additional information on pathways quarterbacks pursue to grow high quality schools and seats, see *Pathways to Success: Providing more children access to great public schools*, available at http://www.educationcities.org/wp-content/uploads/Education.Cities.Pathways.to_.Success.Web_.Pages.pdf.

II. QUARTERBACK ROLES

SCHOOL QUALITY STANDARD BEARER / VALIDATOR CONT.

transaction, a quarterback can serve as a “seal of approval” to signal to commercial lenders, CDFIs, developers, and more, providing greater confidence to a marketplace that otherwise passes on the costs of their (perhaps too cautious) risk aversion to schools in the form of more taxing and duplicative diligence processes, higher fees and interest rates, or by choosing not to do business with schools at all.

FUNDER / FUNDRAISER

Quarterbacks have important relationships with their city’s local, regional, and national philanthropy communities, and are tasked with raising money to support the implementation of a city-wide high quality seats plan. While much of that fundraising is in the form of grant dollars that quarterbacks secure and re-invest in key partners, there is also an opportunity for quarterbacks to influence and/or leverage philanthropic equity (e.g., foundation endowments) to support favorable facilities financing for schools and networks in their city. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in foundations pursuing Mission Related Investments, or Program Related Investments (PRIs), in which foundations (and their investment managers) allocate a portion of their capital to equity investments that are consistent with their broader philanthropic goals. For schools and networks, this pool of capital from funders already committed to the high quality seats strategy advanced by the quarterback, could be a significant additional source of low-cost equity for facilities solutions.

To create solutions like PRIs, quarterbacks can build awareness of the opportunity with their funders, design solutions that make it easy for foundations to invest in PRIs, and find partners to administer and support the PRI investments. This can be a particularly useful strategy in markets where other capital providers have not yet become comfortable with investing in school facilities and/or have high risk aversion, particularly around supporting early stage schools and leaders. These PRIs can become a signal to the broader market of the viability of these schools, as the networks associated with these foundations and their investment managers become more familiar with quality schools and needs in their cities.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDER

Facilities and real estate transactions are highly complex, and require specialized skills and expertise. Many schools and networks find themselves in unfamiliar territory when seeking facilities solutions, and often do not have the bandwidth or technical expertise to support a complex transaction like securing a facility at an affordable price that is well-suited to the needs of their students. Quarterbacks can help fill this gap by providing this technical expertise to schools in whom they invest, either by building capacity on the quarterback's team to support facilities transactions, or by providing funding or consultants to support schools embarking on challenging facilities transactions.

In addition, quarterbacks may play an important role in vetting potential / preferred partners to work with their portfolios of schools on facilities transactions. Most quarterbacks are not currently staffed to provide such deep technical expertise, so it may be most appropriate to invest in an external partner to conduct diligence and evaluate potential partners for schools. Quarterbacks or their designated partners, as leaders within the education reform sector, take a city-wide view of the landscape of school needs, and educate potential facilities transaction partners about the needs of schools in their city, building on the quarterback's credibility to speak on behalf of the quality schools sector. In the process of developing these preferred relationships, quarterbacks can, in turn, report back to schools and networks about the most promising partners to meet their needs, serving as a relationship broker in both directions. Over time, quarterbacks or their designated partners may choose to negotiate preferred partner programs with facilities partners to gain favorable terms for high quality schools, and share those terms with schools and networks who are seeking facilities solutions. One of the key benefits of this is to increase efficiency around facilities transactions, to allow schools to grow more effectively and serve more students sooner, as well as to increase sector efficiency by reducing schools' and networks' needs to build these relationships individually or for one-off transactions, taking away time and leadership resources from the core work of educating students.

POLICY PRIORITIES AND ADVOCACY SUPPORT

Quarterbacks frequently contribute to and/or coordinate policy and advocacy work in their cities, in collaboration with other policy groups and partners who want to improve the conditions needed for great schools to thrive and grow. In this capacity, quarterbacks are well-positioned to advance facilities policy priorities at the local and state levels (where appropriate).

Setting a facilities policy agenda is highly context-specific, and requires clarity about the problems in a city's landscape or marketplace, as well as politically viable solutions, much of which is built through the quarterback roles described above.

To advance a facilities policy agenda, quarterbacks may choose to pursue policies aligned the following policy principles:

1. Data transparency is an essential underpinning for good public policy regarding facilities. Quarterbacks may advocate for data transparency and open government principles to support the public interest in school facilities being efficiently and equitably allocated, including by advocating for:
 - Transparency around availability and condition of public buildings (ideally, by third party audits)
 - Clear public processes regarding the use, sale, transfer or other distribution of school facilities
 - Transparency in pricing by technical actors (non-profit developers, landlords, etc)

2. Public buildings should be allocated based on quality and need. Guided by this principle, quarterbacks may prioritize policies including:
 - Establishing an impartial third party responsible for siting all schools in public space (ideally), or at a minimum creating an entity that is not the district or the city (e.g. real estate trust or corporation)
 - Ensuring that facilities construction and management are or become the legal responsibility of a governance entity like the district or the city, and are not the responsibility of individual school operators

POLICY PRIORITIES AND ADVOCACY SUPPORT CONT.

- Increasing effective and equitable long-term school sitings through financeable leases and district turnaround opportunities
 - Establishing public processes in which schools and networks have the right of first offer for school facilities using processes that are fairly implemented across school types
 - Making co-location space available in underutilized public facilities
 - Making incubation space available to support schools in the early stages of development and launch
3. Public dollars for facilities should ensure full funding adequacy for facilities and equity across sectors. Within this principle there are multiple specific policies that can be pursued, depending on a city’s unique context, most pressing needs, and political climate, including:
- Dedicated annual per pupil funding (“PPF”) for facilities tied to actual costs (including for maintenance) (ideally); PPF codified in law as a part of annual funding formula; or annual PPF for facilities costs that may be discretionary or less protected
 - Charter schools and their facilities needs are included in districts’ capital budgets and plans
 - Charter schools have the same access as district schools to bond issuances (ideally) or some access to bond issuances (e.g., moral obligation bonds and bond carve-outs)
 - Access to state special purpose funds that augment PPF (e.g., grants, loans, credit enhancement)
 - Rent credit for improvements to public buildings

POLICY PRIORITIES AND ADVOCACY SUPPORT CONT.

4. Innovation Zones, Empowerment Zones and In-District Autonomous Schools that include use of public facilities as part of contract between operators and districts. In cities across the country, most notably in Indianapolis, IN, and Springfield and Lawrence, MA, cities are pursuing improvements in education outcomes through agreements between districts and school operators (including charter networks).⁶ Under these arrangements, schooling is provided by a range of operators, using district facilities (as well as contracting for additional services), and the academic results of those schools are included in the performance outcomes for the district. In this arrangement, school facilities are allocated based on expected operator quality and in locations of need for the district. Agreements with districts for innovation, turnaround and empowerment zone type schools can be structured to allocate facilities-related costs (e.g., rent, rehabilitation, and maintenance) across partners.

⁶ For more information on Innovation Zones and in-district autonomous schools agreements, see *Beyond District/Charter: How City Leaders Catalyze and Support Systems of Great Schools*, available at <http://www.educationcities.org/wp-content/uploads/Governance-Reform-Paper-1.pdf>.

III. BUILDING QB CAPACITY FOR FACILITIES STRATEGY

As quarterbacks embrace (or expand) their strategic leadership regarding facilities strategy, additional organization capacity is likely necessary. As with all quarterback work, Education Cities members are unique and working in specific contexts that require city-specific solutions. Generally, quarterbacks choose to either “build” (by hiring capacity and directly administering programs and supports) or “buy” solutions (by funding consultants, commissioning work with external partners, and/or providing grants to grantees to build their own capacity), and those same options are available to address facilities strategy needs.

As quarterbacks contemplate the “build vs. buy” question for their respective cities, Education Cities encourages its members to consider the following questions:

- What is the scale of the facilities challenge in your city? Does it affect some, many, or all of the schools in which you invest or plan to invest?
- For the long-term sustainability of the quality schools and networks in your city, is it necessary or desirable for those schools to build their own facilities capacity or to utilize a shared set of services available across the sector on an as-needed basis?
- Do the quality schools in your city have the same set of facilities needs or disparate needs?
- How built out is your market for school facility financing and real estate services?
- Do the solutions you seek fall into primarily financial products, facilities access and allocation, specific school transactions, or policy advocacy, or are the solutions idiosyncratic?
- Is there a strong talent market in your city to address facilities needs either internally at the quarterback organization or within key partner organizations (e.g., schools, the district, the city, CDFIs, banks, etc.)?
- What are the key competencies of your own organization as a Quarterback? Is your theory of change closer to “build” or to “buy,” and how does strategic leadership in facilities align with that?

III. BUILDING QB CAPACITY FOR FACILITIES STRATEGY

Quarterbacks must then design solutions that are calibrated to their city's needs and available solutions.

For quarterbacks who choose to build or expand their own capacity to take on strategic leadership in facilities, recruiting top caliber talent for that role must be a top priority. Depending on the primary focus of the role, candidates may be drawn from policy organizations, CDFIs and other financial institutions, the real estate sector, nonprofit and philanthropy organizations, and more. Local knowledge is particularly important in facilities work, so quarterbacks would be well-served to prioritize recruiting in their own cities (or recruiting leaders with roots and local connections, even if currently living away from the city in question).

A sample job description is included in Appendix A, to be used as a starting point to adjust and refine based on quarterback needs.

IV. CONCLUSION

Given the importance of facilities to the high quality schools goals of quarterbacks, and quarterbacks' unique positions within their cities as problem-solvers, Education Cities believes quarterbacks should take on strategic leadership in facilities strategy. While complex and deeply context-specific, time and resources invested in meeting schools' facilities needs will have an accelerating effect on the growth of high quality schools across the country. Accordingly, Education Cities calls on its members to reflect on their city's context and needs, and develop solutions and their own leadership capacity in this critical area.

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE Job Description — Director of Facilities Strategy

POSITION OVERVIEW

The Director of Facilities Strategy will be responsible for developing and implementing QB ORG’s strategy for increasing access to quality school facilities for CITY’S students.

Specific objectives of this position include:

- researching national best practices in facility access, financing and development;
- creating and implementing a strategic plan for improving facilities access, financing and development in CITY;
- developing and managing relationships with key partners, including lenders, and ensuring successful coordination among all partners; and
- providing direct support to QB ORG’s fellows, schools, and school networks as they develop their facility plans.

The person in this position will work collaboratively across the organization, reporting to the QB SENIOR EXECUTIVE.

To be successful, the Director must: be an independent, self-motivated, strategic and operational thinker; possess exceptional attention to detail and a high bar for quality; be able to organize, prioritize and direct a large volume of projects and tasks; seek solutions as an active problem solver; and eagerly partner with all colleagues to collaboratively extend QB ORG’s impact.

PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Strategy Development and Research

- Develop bold and innovative strategies that increase access to quality facilities for CITY students.
- Create a market analysis of the current state of public school facilities in CITY.
- Research national best practices from both inside and outside the charter sector.
- Increase QB ORG’s institutional knowledge of facility financing products and public policy.
- Develop a strategic roadmap for how to maximize equitable access to facilities in CITY.

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE Job Description — Director of Facilities Strategy

PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITIES CONT.

Relationship Management and Coordination with Partners

- Coordinate with external partners to drive a comprehensive city-wide charter school facilities strategy.
- Serve as QB ORG’s liaison to key partner organizations such as IFF, Charter School Development Corporation, and local developers.
- Coordinate with CITY Public Schools, the Mayor’s Office, and CITY/STATE Charter School Board to better align school openings, closures, and the use of public facilities.
- Develop relationships with commercial lenders to increase financing options for high-quality charter schools.
- Develop and continually update a neighborhood-by-neighborhood analysis that examines need, population trends, and available facilities.

School and Fellow Support

- Provide strategic planning assistance to schools and charter networks as they develop operator-specific short and long term facility plans.
- In coordination with IFF, support QB ORG’s fellows as they identify neighborhoods and develop facility plans.
- Support existing schools incubated by QB ORG to develop and implement long-term facility plans.
- Support local high-quality charter networks to develop and implement facility strategies that are integrated into their growth plans.

Additional

- Work with QB’s Senior Director of School Support to provide non-instructional support to existing schools and networks.
- Serve as a key member of QB ORG’S LEADERSHIP Team, providing cross-cutting leadership and support in the areas of recruitment, school incubation, school support, and talent.

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE Job Description — Director of Facilities Strategy

PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITIES CONT.

Additional CONT.

- Collaborate with QB ORG’s Community Engagement Team to ensure families and community stakeholders have a real voice in developing and implementing strategies that ensure equitable access to facilities.
- Take on discrete projects as assigned by the QB SENIOR EXECUTIVE and the Founder and CEO.

SKILLS AND TRAITS

- Bachelor’s degree required.
- Advanced degree (e.g., MBA) preferred but not required.
- Experience and expertise with facility financing and/or public policy is required.
- Deep belief in QB ORG’s mission to increase educational opportunities for low-income students in CITY.
- Highly organized with experience managing multiple projects simultaneously in a deadline-driven environment.
- Ability to work with a range of people both inside and outside the organization to accomplish complex and ambitious goals.
- Ability to work independently and thrive in a high-energy, dynamic environment.
- Exceptional personal responsibility for meeting goals and proven track record of success.
- Ability to get results through others.
- Strong research and analytical skills.
- Critical thinker who displays good judgment in prioritizing problems to resolve and opportunities to pursue.
- Fluency in Microsoft Office technology (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) in a Mac-based computing environment.
- Motivated by learning and discovering new things.
- Able to work occasional nights, weekends and off-site as required.
- Creative, solution-oriented self-starter.