



**Texas Association of School Business Officials
Award of Excellence in Financial Management
Recertification Guidelines**

Recertification

Consecutive awards can be granted to entities through a recertification submission. A finance office that achieved the AOE may elect to pursue recertification of its AOE for up to 3 (three) consecutive years based on the following guidelines:

Eligibility for Recertification

- The entity was awarded either the AOE the previous year or was recertified in the previous year.
- The entity has not been recertified for more than three (3) consecutive years.
- Entities which have a change in the chief financial officer during the fiscal year (director, administrator, business manager) from the person identified on the original application are eligible for recertification in the first year of that individual's leadership but must submit a full application the following year – i.e. if the leader changes in January 2023, the district may submit a recertification application for the current period but must submit a full application the following year.

SUBMISSION DATE AND REQUIREMENTS

The application period for recertification is for the previous school year. (Example: The 2025 application is for the 2023-24 school year.) **SUBMISSION DEADLINE: December 1 of each year unless otherwise noted (Deadline for 2025 application is December 2, 2024 at 12 PM CST).** Applications received after that day will not receive consideration and entities will be notified.

Method of Submission

Upon receipt of the application, TASBO will create an account for the district to upload documents for review by the review committee. TASBO staff does not monitor the completeness of a submission. Please ensure that you review the application thoroughly and upload the required documents by the due date of the application.

Requirements for Consideration: Recertification

1. All applicants must complete the TASBO online registration form for the corresponding application year and submit the requested information and applicable fees by the stated deadline.
2. Each applicant should provide complete information for the elements listed below.

SUBMISSION COMPONENTS: RECERTIFICATION

Please provide complete information for the following elements:

1) REQUIRED CRITERIA

- a) Organizational Chart - Provide a copy of the most recent organizational chart showing where the finance/business function is assigned in the organization hierarchy. In larger districts, a second chart showing the organization of the finance/business department is required which reflects all departments under the supervision of the Business Manager/CFO.
- b) Transparency Page - Provide a link to the district's financial transparency page along with a count of number of clicks from the district's home page.
- c) Current Fiscal Years Budget - Provide copies of legally adopted budgets for the current fiscal year for General Fund; Food Service Fund; and Debt Service Fund (as applicable).
- d) Budget and Tax Rate Hearing - Provide evidence of budget and tax rate hearing(s) for the current fiscal year. Include copies of the notice for the hearing, meeting agenda and minutes, proposed budget, and tax rate documentation, including a copy of the appraisal roll. If the budget was adopted prior to the adoption of the tax rate, please provide documentation for both board actions.
Note – Charter School applicants are not required to submit tax rate adoption and appraisal information.
- e) FIRST Ratings – Provide evidence of a passing score on School's FIRST for the most recent School's FIRST rating.
- f) Unmodified Audit Opinion – Provide evidence that the district received an unqualified Audit Opinion for the most recent fiscal year and the prior fiscal year.
- g) Debt Transparency Report - Provide a copy of HB1378 Debt Transparency Report (if applicable). **Note – This report is not necessary for Charter School Applicants.**
- h) Bank Reconciliations - Provide evidence that bank reconciliations for the district's operational accounts are completed timely and that the district can demonstrate processes to ensure the completion of bank reconciliations.

2) BUDGET MANAGEMENT

- a) Budget Calendar - Provide a copy of the budget development calendar for the current fiscal year which indicates due dates for departmental/campus budgets, business office timelines, and anticipated board meeting dates.
- b) Budget Presentation – Provide examples of budget presentations which were utilized during the development and adoption of the current fiscal year’s budget. Provide documentation of budget development decisions utilized in conjunction with the preparation of the current fiscal year’s budget. The submission should incorporate best practices for budget development including the process utilized to ensure community input into the budget process; examples of peer comparison of revenues and expenditures; analysis of instructional best practices and the method in which they were incorporated into the budget; and strategic compensation analysis.
- c) Fund Balance (Net Assets Charter School Applicants)- Provide a schedule of fund balance by type **or net assets as applicable** for the five most recent fiscal years. If the fund balance trend shows a decline, provide an explanation of the district’s long-term plan for stabilization of resources.

3) CASH MANAGEMENT

- a) Investments- Provide documentation of monthly, quarterly, and annual investment reports presented to the board.
- b) Cash Flow Analysis – Provide a schedule of the district’s most recent cash flow analysis for the operating fund.

4) COMMUNICATIONS

- a) Documentation which demonstrates the district’s continued transparency and practices and what type of financial reports are available on the district’s website. If the District applied and received the Comptroller’s Transparency Stars, this section is not needed. Please submit documentation of the award.
 - i) Website link showing general contact information for district departments.
 - ii) Website link showing contact information for elected officials.
 - iii) Website link for Public Information Request instructions/form. How many clicks from the district’s main page does it take to get to the PIR page?
 - iv) Website link to district web page showing external link to Texas Education Agency-related financial management reports for School FIRST. How many clicks from the district’s main page does it take? Is this information included on the district’s transparency page?

- b) Internet Posting Requirements - Provide a schedule indicating that the district has fully complied with the internet posting requirements which can be found at <https://www.tasbo.org/tools-services/internet-posting-requirements>.

5) FINANCIAL REPORTS

- a. Annual Financial Reports - Provide website links to the Annual Comprehensive Financial Reports/Annual Financial Reports (ACFRs/AFRs) for previous fiscal year. **Note – Charter School applicants are not required to submit ACFR links.**
- b. Interim Financial Reports - Provide the most recent board reports for financial reporting.

6) PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- a) Provide a record of finance/business staff training given to each staff member in the finance/business office during the most recent fiscal year, including TASBO provided training. The purpose of this indicator is to provide evidence that training programs are available to improve staff member skills such as TASBO certification classes, academies, workshops, webinar and training provided by other recognized entities. Examples of evidence meeting this criterion include but are not limited a) TASBO transcripts; b) certification plan, which details the anticipated time for all exempt staff who are not currently TASBO certified to become certified; c) Training agendas from events not appearing on the TASBO transcript.

7) NARRATIVES

The district must answer each of the following questions for the application to be considered.

- a) Efficiency and Economy - Provide a narrative on implemented innovations related to best practices for efficiency and economy (i.e., automation of accounts payable, implementation of travel cards, etc.)
- b) Strategic Budgeting - Provide a narrative on processes implemented by the finance department in conjunction with campuses and instructional departments which benefit student achievement by strategically analyzing and investing in resources to improve student achievement. Describe how the budget ties to the district's strategic plan.
- c) Processes - Provide a narrative of changes implemented to processes that are managed by the finance/business office which have resulted in a more efficient and effective use of the district's resources.
- d) Communication – Provide a narrative of how the district has communicated with district employees and stakeholders to ensure an efficient use of resources and adherence to internal control procedures.

- e) Technology - Provide a narrative of how the district has managed its technology programs to minimize the risk of breach.
- f) Financial Reserves – If the district has less than 90 days operating expenditures in reserve, provide an explanation of the district’s plan to ensure financial stability.

PROCESS

AOE Evaluation Process

The TASBO Award of Excellence in Financial Management (AOE) has several thresholds that must be met before a district can be considered for this award.

1. Evaluation criteria are developed based on financial accounting and reporting guidelines as identified by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Financial Accountability System Resource Guide (FASRG) Financial Accounting and Reporting Module. Additional resources are best practices in financial reporting as identified by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts; Association of School Business Officials International; Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA); Council of the Great City Schools; and the Legislative Budget Board (LBB) during the Texas School Performance Review process. Additional resources are various innovative best practices developed by public schools in Texas and other states.
2. Applications must be submitted to TASBO by the announced deadline.
3. The ACFR/AFR for the fiscal year ending 2022-23 must be submitted with the application or as soon thereafter as possible. The ACFR/AFR will be uploaded to an account created for the submission of the document.
4. TASBO will provide applicants a unique link to upload their application documents.
5. The Executive Director will notify the AOE applicants of their receipt of the award and include in the notification sheet the applicant’s scoring sheet so that they may continue to make improvements.
6. If the evaluators determine that the AOE should not be given, the AOE Coordinator will assign a mentor who has successfully completed the application process to help them in improving operations and/or their application for future submissions.
7. If the decision is to not accept an application for AOE, and the applicant believes the decision is in error, the decision may be appealed by the applicant to the TASBO Executive Director, who shall refer the matter to the TASBO Board of Directors if it cannot be resolved.
8. Districts that have a minor deficiency will be notified by TASBO and have fourteen (14) calendar days to correct the deficiency.

9. It is anticipated that all districts approved for the AOE will be announced by January 31st of each year.