THE SUSTAINABLE ANSWER KEY

Executive summary

School leaders across the United States are addressing the challenge of creating sustainable schools not only to understand how they can be better stewards of the environment but also to ensure that children are provided healthy physical environments in which to learn. According to the *U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC)*, over a quarter of the nation's students and teachers are learning and teaching in facilities considered substandard or even dangerous to their health. To correct this situation, many school design standards now emphasize building strategies that promote healthy and productive learning environments while minimizing the impact of material and energy resources consumed during construction and operation. The resulting *green schools* have been proven to positively impact health, learning, and also save energy, money and resources over time.

The Sustainable Answer Key will help charter operators design and implement green strategies for their facilities. It provides an extensive overview of **the benefits of green schools,** including **suggestions for integrating sustainable building features** into a charter school facility, **case studies, various educational resources** and a comprehensive **glossary of green terminology.** This Guide will also cover upgrades **specifically tailored to the needs of charter schools.**

Are you interested in learning:

- What does it mean to go green and what are the benefits?
- What *design elements* should I consider in greening my school?
- What are the phases involved in green charter school design projects?
- What are the criteria for identifying a development and design team to guide your charter school through each phase of development?
- What is the difference between *new construction*, *renovation*, and *small scale energy saving solutions*, and how do I choose?
- As a charter school do I qualify for special funding or incentive programs? And, where can I seek funding for sustainable building?

Looking for quick facts on cost and implementation?

The facts about green building costs and savings:

- Don't assume that green school construction costs more. Costs vary by region and by the choices you make. There is evidence that green school construction costs less than or equal to a traditional school building.
- Efficient lighting, heating and cooling systems, use of natural light and better insulated walls and roofs contribute directly to reduced energy consumption and cost.
- Reduced electricity and gas use leads to fewer pollutant emissions.

Why your school should go green:

- Most green schools are built and operated at a lower cost than traditional buildings.
- Green schools have less environmental impact and reduced building operations and maintenance (O&M) costs.
- There are long-term financial and health benefits of green schools which more than offset any initial costs.
- Studies show schools with improved *indoor air quality*, temperature control and lighting provide healthy, productive learning environments. Green schools boast improved teacher retention, which reduces costs, have more opportunities for hands-on learning and promote environmental stewardship.

Before you begin, we encourage you to use the following assessment tool to help capture relevant details of your charter school and facility project.

The following tool will help you consider key elements to success in building or renovating your facility sustainably and will provide you with supporting materials for discussing your project with funders, stakeholders and consultants. You may not have answers to all of these questions immediately, but this tool provides a great starting point for your team. Please note: the main checklist items are discussed in detail throughout this Guide to help you along the way.

Now, let's get started!