



HUMAN CAPITAL ENTERPRISES  
REDEFINING HUMAN RESOURCES LEADERSHIP

# A Superintendent Search Proposal

for the



## Fern Ridge School District

*Human Capital Enterprises believes it uniquely has the expertise to support the Fern Ridge School District with the highest caliber leadership and support through its upcoming executive transition. As a leading Pacific Northwest superintendent search firm, we pride ourselves on searches conducted with exceptional service to our Boards and widely respected attention to detail - with the highest level of integrity in the process. Our strong local ties combined with our connection to the national educational leadership community allows us to bring the best candidates from across Oregon, the rest of the Pacific Northwest, and throughout the country.*

Respectfully Submitted for Consideration,  
July 2026

July 21, 2026

Dear Chair Grover, Vice-Chair Pizzola, and Directors Gent, Kirkpatrick and McCann,

Thank you for inviting us to submit a proposal to serve as Board partners to the Fern Ridge School District in your upcoming leadership transition.

We thank you in advance for reading the proposal below. We are honored to be the most often-referred superintendent search firm in Oregon, and we believe that is because we have an outstanding record regarding:

- An unparalleled level of service to our client boards
- A depth of understanding and innovation regarding superintendent search processes
- Customer satisfaction unmatched by any other superintendent search firm operating in Oregon
- A track record of successful hires who stay the course.

But please don't take our word for it. We invite you to reach out to any member of any board leadership team whom we have served (*see p. 5 for a list of satisfied school boards*), including those listed below:

|                            |                |                                |                |
|----------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|----------------|
| South Lane School District | Colleen Valley | colleen.valley@slane.k12.or.us | (541) 521-6728 |
| Eugene School District     | Jenny Jonak    | jonak_j@4j.lane.edu            | (541) 690-5773 |
| Lane ESD                   | Leslie Harris  | lharris@lesd.k12.or.us         | (541) 729-6557 |
| Beaverton School District  | Syed Qasim     | Syed_Qasim@beaverton.k12.or.us | (323) 630-7993 |

Thank you for reviewing this proposal. We look forward to a possible partnership that serves you, and all of the Fern Ridge community, with remarkable outcomes.

Hank Harris  
Kathleen Rodden-Nord

## I. Executive Summary

We are not like other superintendent search firms.

Human Capital Enterprises, a national firm which considers Oregon our home, is unmatched in our ability to represent Fern Ridge on the regional and national scene and to attract top talent to this search. Although the bulk of our work is in the Pacific Northwest, we are widely known by educators in all fifty states, and as such we draw candidates to our searches from near and far. We have had the honor to serve as the search consultants in the most recent superintendent searches in districts large and small including South Lane, Eugene 4J, Creswell, Klamath County, Lane ESD, Bethel, and Salem-Keizer.

*How do we do this?* We are a known and trusted name with years-long relationships with educational stakeholders across the nation who take our phone calls and help point us to leaders of outstanding talent and character. Our growth is deliberate and intentional, but even in states where we do not typically conduct searches, many educators know Oregon because they know us. It is not uncommon for us to be at national conferences and be approached by a superintendent or educational leader who claim knowledge about Oregon schools – *solely through our national announcements*. We get calls from other search firms who want to know “how we do it.” We are meticulous about our work, absolutely committed to our school boards, incredibly dedicated, and respectful to our candidates who are willing to “put themselves out there”.

Our valued school board partners will routinely tell you that we have far and away exceeded their expectations in all aspects of their Superintendent Search. Our candidates, whether they are selected for a superintendency or not, tell us that we bring a level of professionalism and savvy that is unmatched by other firms. We are a small, humble, and nimble firm and we are a significant player in Pacific Northwest superintendent searches. To serve school boards in this way is immensely rewarding, and we are honored by the accolades we receive. We do this work because we love this work.

We are the only superintendent search firm in the Pacific Northwest that is led by Human Resources professionals, which means we have spent a good portion of our careers dedicated to providing the highest level of thoroughness, integrity, fairness, and communication to the recruitment and selection process.

*Why does that matter?* No superintendent search is boilerplate. Every search has its unique characteristics, and occasional unexpected dynamics. When complexities arise, you are best served by a team of experienced K-12 leaders who are also experienced K-12 search consultants with deep human resources expertise and who have collectively engaged in over 100 K-12 executive-level searches.

We see ourselves as true partners to the Board, with high investment in the outcome – ever mindful that the hiring decision rests squarely on the shoulders of the elected school board. Our commitment is paralleled by our comprehensive understanding of Oregon and a vast national network. We do our work with exceptional quality, and that is why we are the most highly recommended Superintendent Search firm operating in Oregon. It is also why districts, small and large, look to us as their trusted partner in leadership searches. And we aim to bring that caliber of service to the communities that comprise Fern Ridge.

For our FRSD team, we'd like to introduce you to:

**Dr. Kathleen Rodden-Nord** served nearly two decades as Superintendent of the Junction City School District. With a Ph.D. in School Psychology from the University of Oregon, she is widely respected for her steady leadership and deep commitment to students, families, and staff. Throughout her tenure, she built a reputation for fostering collaborative school cultures, advancing equity, and ensuring that every student had access to meaningful opportunities for success.

Widely regarded as a thought leader in Oregon public education, Dr. Rodden-Nord has been a visible and influential voice in state-level advocacy and reform. She has mentored numerous new superintendents, offering guidance and support as they navigate the complexities of district leadership. Her reputation for integrity, fairness, and collaboration has made her a trusted advisor to colleagues across the state.

Since her retirement from Junction City, Dr. Rodden-Nord has continued to serve public education as a consultant and superintendent search leader. She has led or co-led searches in districts large and small, including Beaverton, South Lane, Willamette ESD, Mapleton and Salem-Keizer, bringing to each assignment a deep understanding of the unique challenges facing Oregon schools.

**Hank Harris** will support Dr. Rodden-Nord on this search. Hank is the founder and president of Human Capital Enterprises and one of the most respected superintendent search consultants in the nation. With close to twenty years of service in public education followed by almost fifteen years leading HCE, Harris has built a strong national reputation for professionalism, integrity, and expertise in executive leadership searches. He began his career as a high school teacher in Vancouver, Washington, before moving into administrative leadership roles in Oregon and California, including principalships and district leadership positions. Harris served as Executive Director of Human Resources in Portland Public Schools and held the same role in Washington's Bellingham Public Schools, where he honed the HR expertise that continues to distinguish his work today.

Since founding Human Capital Enterprises in 2011, Hank has personally led or co-led dozens of superintendent and executive-level searches nationwide. His work has supported districts of all sizes, from small rural systems to large urban districts. Known for his meticulous attention

to process, fairness, and stakeholder engagement, Hank has become a trusted partner to school boards across the Pacific Northwest and beyond. His leadership has contributed to HCE's unparalleled record of superintendent longevity, with 96% of placed superintendents since 2020 still in their seat or having served at least four years. Today, Hank continues to guide searches combining his deep HR knowledge, superintendent partnerships, and national networks to help districts identify and secure transformational leaders.

## II. Where We Have Served

Our Northwest roots run deep, and we have served many of the region's small, medium-sized, and large school districts as well as Oregon ESDs. Below is a list of some of the Northwest searches we've conducted on behalf of our partner boards. You are most welcome to reach out to any of them to ask about our performance and our result.

- Ashland, OR – *Superintendent*
- Beaverton, OR – *Superintendent*
- Bellevue, WA – *Superintendent*
- Bethel, OR – *Superintendent*
- Central Point, WA – *Superintendent*
- Chimacum, WA – *Superintendent*
- Dallas, OR – *Superintendent*
- Eugene, OR -- *Superintendent*
- Evergreen, WA – *Superintendent*
- Forest Grove, OR – *Superintendent*
- High Desert ESD – *Superintendent*
- Mapleton – *Superintendent*
- Medford, OR – *Superintendent*
- Oregon Department of Education – *Deputy Director*
- Oregon Department of Education – *Assistant Superintendent (2)*
- Port Angeles, WA – *Superintendent*
- Port Townsend, WA – *Superintendent*
- Portland Public – *Superintendent*
- Puget Sound ESD – *Superintendent*
- Prosser, WA – *Superintendent*
- Redmond, OR – *Superintendent*
- Richland, WA – *Superintendent*
- Riverdale, OR – *Superintendent*
- Salem-Keizer, OR – *Superintendent*
- Seattle Public, WA – *Assistant Superintendent of Finance*
- Sequim, WA – *Superintendent*
- South Lane, OR – *Superintendent*
- Tillamook – *Superintendent*
- Willamette ESD – *Superintendent*

### III. Work Plan

HCE envisions certain milestones for this work with the school board, on a clear timeline that will have been pre-approved by the members of the Board. The work of the search can be delineated as follows.

#### PLANNING

HCE will engage with the Board in an open-session *Planning Meeting* which will establish the parameters and a framework for the search. We develop a strong communication plan with the Board that meets the needs of the Board collectively and individually. There are various paths a Board can take in a search, and we will walk you through them to arrive at a process that is best for the Board and community. We will also outline protocols that ensure a commitment to fairness and integrity in the hiring process.

As your partners in this search, we shoulder the responsibility for managing the search – which means your staff can rest assured that, but for a small number of events in the process, they will not be required to add to their already full plates.

Our philosophy can be distilled to three truisms:

1. that Board Members are well-served by strongly considering the various voices of the community in the development of the *Next Superintendent Criteria*.
2. that Board Members should have high-value feedback in the selection process from a sample of community members.
3. and that the Board, and only the Board, has the statutory responsibility to select and hire the next Superintendent.

#### ENGAGING

Community engagement is a hallmark of our work – as is learning about the dreams and aspirations of the Board Members we serve. We will meet individually with each Board member, and our team will also get to know the community by engaging with key stakeholders. There is high value in engaging as much of the community as possible, and to do this, an online survey in English and Spanish is created so that all stakeholders can offer input.

Following this high-level engagement, HCE will return to meet with the Board in Open Session to present a document we call *Fern Ridge School District's Next Superintendent Criteria* for the Board to consider. From that draft, the Board will establish criteria for what this next superintendent should bring to the table. There are literally hundreds of desirable qualities and experiences that a leader could bring. Deeply engaging in a variety of ways with the Fern Ridge education community – the people who know the district best – during the engagement period will help identify the *specific qualities and experiences* that your next extraordinary leader should embody. This *Next Superintendent Criteria* will guide our next phase: recruiting.

## RECRUITING

In hiring a search firm, school boards not only want a trusted partner who can run a process, but who can also find exceptional talent – and in Fern Ridge’s case, to entice great leaders who match your criteria to consider this opportunity. The ability to attract candidates who may not be actively searching for a leadership role is a key hallmark of the HCE approach. Our direct email announcements are widely known by virtually every school leader in Oregon, as well as leaders across all fifty states – in fact they reach an audience of over 40,000 educational stakeholders across the country.

In addition to that, HCE reaches out to talented individuals who reflect the district’s profile of the ideal superintendent candidate, and in so doing we share it with individuals who might not otherwise know about the vacancy. Similarly, there are candidates who might know of the vacancy but who may not recognize that it is an ideal opportunity for them to consider. By enlisting not only our own network but our “network of networks,” we are able to reach a very wide array of educational leaders from across the region and across the country. And because they typically know our name and reputation, they will be receptive to hearing about Fern Ridge.

## SELECTION

The team will engage in conversations with top prospects followed by a preliminary interview and preliminary reference check. Board Members will receive a confidential link in which they can view all applications and all candidate materials. HCE will then engage with the Board in a *Slate Meeting* in executive session where we will offer recommendations, including articulating a rationale regarding each recommended and non-recommended candidate. As the decision-making entity, the Board will collectively engage to determine whom to interview from any of the candidates who have applied. Following those interviews, the Board will then advance candidates to meet in person in a finalist interview.

Each of these interviews represent a set of data points on a candidate. We also coordinate a thorough system of telephone reference checks, internet searches, and a full investigative background check on finalists. By the time the Board meets with the finalists for a second time, the Board will have a significant number of data points on each of the finalists. We believe that no other search firm provides the amount of information, per finalist, that we do at Human Capital Enterprises.

## TRANSITION

We will guide the Board through the finalization process, which includes various components such as the public announcement and contract development. This begins with contract negotiations, followed by an open session Board Meeting where a motion is made to appoint the new superintendent. We remain in close contact with the Board Chair and the superintendent over the ensuing weeks to ensure an appropriate transition, and we are happy to serve as a thought partner during this process at no extra cost.

## IV. Communication

Although each search is different, it is fair to say that in general, we develop strong partnerships with each member of the Board – and we partner frequently with the identified Board *Lead*, who is often though not obligatorily the Board Chair. There are many logistics involved in a successful superintendent search, and it is vital we have a partner at the Board level.

We are a highly communicative team. The collective board can expect to hear frequently from us. Most often, information to the Board is disseminated through the Board Lead or through the Executive Assistant. Key to all of this is a value that all Board members are in the loop and have a right to all of the information that is provided. Thus, specifically with respect to candidate information, we are careful that all candidate information is provided simultaneously to all Board members. We do not have one-off conversations with board members about candidates – and we do that specifically to ensure fairness to the process and to clarify that each Board member is an equal decision-maker.

## V. A Search of Integrity

We center our recruitment practices on principles of integrity and fairness. In a superintendent search, this manifests in various ways. For the sake of brevity, we'll highlight two.

1. At the initial Planning Meeting with the Board, we will ask Board Directors to individually commit to not meeting with, engaging with, have coffee with, or hold conversations with prospects or candidates. We do this to ensure that there are no inadvertent advantages given to candidates who might already have more access to powerful voices.

It is not unusual for a well-intentioned candidate to reach out to a Board member to request a conversation. But out of fairness for all candidates, we ask that no candidate gets unfairly advantaged by having access to a Board Member where other candidates would not. Historically, those kinds of connections – especially where a certain candidate might know someone who is closely connected with a Board member and therefore can advocate on his/her behalf – advantage some candidates, typically those who already bring a higher level of privilege to the equation. In ensuring equity for all candidates, we take pains to make sure that there are no such “legs up” afforded a certain candidate or group of candidates.

2. A second approach we take is to do our utmost to ensure that top candidates have an opportunity to engage with our team *prior* to an initial interview. Many candidates are not aware that it is acceptable (and in fact wise) to reach out to a recruiter to learn more about the organization – and those who are already aware of this are often the very candidates who already bring privilege into the system. Knowing this, we preemptively invite top candidates to engage in a videocall with us in order for them to have the opportunity to ask us questions about the role *prior* to their initial interview. We are

typically thanked by such candidates who say they've never had a recruiter attend to them before in this way.

## VI. Draft Timeline

We propose the draft timeline below which would conclude with a new superintendent announced in February 2027. Exact dates will be determined in conjunction with the full Board in order to ensure full participation of all Directors.

| <br><b>Fern Ridge Superintendent Search Proposed Timeline</b> |                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Activity                                                                                                                                       | Proposed Date(s)    |
| Board Planning Meeting <i>in Open Session</i>                                                                                                  | August/September    |
| 1:1 Board Conversations                                                                                                                        | August/September    |
| Focus Group Meetings and Online Survey Window                                                                                                  | September/October   |
| Presentation of Fern Ridge's Next Superintendent Criteria <i>in Open Session</i>                                                               | October             |
| Recruitment Window including additional e-Blast and other Advertising                                                                          | November-December   |
| Preliminary Interviews virtual <i>with consultants</i>                                                                                         | December/January    |
| Presentation of Slate <i>in Executive Session</i>                                                                                              | January             |
| Board initial interviews (first round) <i>in Executive Session</i>                                                                             | January             |
| Finalist (second round) interviews <i>in Executive Session</i>                                                                                 | January             |
| Board meets to identify preferred candidates <i>in Executive Session</i>                                                                       | January             |
| Selection and Announcement                                                                                                                     | February            |
| <b>Superintendent assumes responsibilities</b>                                                                                                 | <b>July 1, 2027</b> |

## VII. Our commitment to staff

All district employees will have opportunities to offer input into the *Next Superintendent Criteria* and may also have an opportunity to be involved at the selection phase of the search. All such opportunities are voluntary.

One of our key commitments in this work is that we do not ask District staff to shoulder the work of running the search. We know that sometimes search consultants task district staff to take on multiple responsibilities, sometimes known ahead of time and sometimes not. We pledge to you that this does not happen in a Human Capital Enterprises search. A small number of tasks will necessarily require staff involvement, and we clarify them ahead of time – right here, in fact. Beyond the list below, there will be no surprises to staff regarding additional work.

- A. A senior staff person/executive assistant will serve as liaison and will:
  - a. be involved in the scheduling and organization of board-member 1:1s and focus groups.
  - b. provide on-site support to the consultant and Board during in-person interviews.
  - c. serve as a point-person throughout the search for information flow.
- B. A communications point-person will
  - a. routinely update the district's website to provide information to community and staff.
  - b. inform the public and employees about opportunities to participate.
  - c. prepare a press release about a hire or pending hire and may be asked to work in conjunction with counterpart in other school districts.

## VIII. Board Member Responsibilities

Collectively, the Board is the "Hiring Manager" for the new superintendent. The Board's work involves setting the framework for the search and engaging in a highly focused way in the selection processes. During our initial *Planning Meeting*, an official timeline will be finalized in alignment with individual Board members' schedules such that all Board members are able to commit to all individual and collective responsibilities, specifically:

- A. 1:1 interview by each Board member with HCE consultant. *Scheduled at the convenience of each Board member.*
- B. 1 appointed member will convene with the senior staff and HCE to identify the Focus Groups.
- C. Fern Ridge's Next Superintendent Criteria meeting. *Held in Open Session.*
- D. Document Review. *In preparation for item (E) below, Board members should individually set aside approximately 4-7 hours to review application materials in the days leading up to the Slate Meeting.*
- E. Slate meeting, during which semifinalists are selected. *Held in Executive Session.*
- F. First Round Interviews. *One full extended day of interviews, held in Executive Session.*

- G. Second Round Interviews. *Typically held on multiple consecutive afternoons, approximately 3-5 hours in duration. Held in Executive Session.*
- H. Telephone Reference Checks on finalists. *We find it to be of high value for Board Members to be involved in the telephone reference checks on finalists. Any Board Member may opt out of this if they choose.*

## IX. Fee for Service

Base Fee for Superintendent Search Package: \$23,400

### A. Included in the Base Fee

- a. Board Planning Meeting in Open Session.
- b. 1:1 engagement interviews with all Board Members.
- c. Ten 40-minute focus group engagements with small groups of constituents.
- d. Coordination of community surveys in both Spanish and English.
- e. Authoring draft of *Fern Ridge School District's Next Superintendent Criteria*.
- f. *Next Superintendent Criteria* Meeting with Board in Open Session.
- g. Coordinating the advertising of the vacancy.
- h. Engaging with staff on communications and logistics.
- i. High-level recruitment involving multiple points of contact with prospects:
  - i. Researching.
  - ii. Sourcing.
  - iii. Attracting.
  - iv. Pre-Screening.
- j. Preliminary interviews with top contenders.
- k. Single preliminary phone reference checks on top contenders.
- l. Preparation of materials for Board review in advance of Slate meeting.
- m. Slate Meeting in Executive Session.
- n. Preparation of First Round Interviews.
- o. Coordination of First-Round Interviews including debrief and facilitation.
- p. Preparation of Feedback from Board after First-Round Interviews.
- q. Facilitation of Board decision-making after each round of interviews.
- r. Preparation of Second-Round Interviews.
- s. Engagement with Board and Staff around logistics of Second-Round Interviews.
- t. Coordination of Second Round (Finalist) Interviews.
- u. Coordination of Board-approved background-checks.
- v. Coordination of multi-point phone reference checks on all finalists.
- w. Engagement with district counsel on final processes.
- x. High-level communication with candidates throughout the process
- y. Counsel to Board Lead throughout the process including evenings and weekends.

B. Travel Expenses

a. Consultant Travel

At our Board Planning meeting we will determine which meetings are to be in-person and which are to be virtual. Consultant travel expenses will be billed as supplemental invoices within thirty days of completed travel. Travel expenses include mileage reimbursement at the IRS rate and a per-diem of \$140/day. As your lead consultant will be traveling from Junction City, consultant travel expenses will be minimal.

b. Candidate Travel

If there are travel expenses incurred by finalist candidates, they will be reimbursed by HCE and invoiced to the District at the conclusion of the interviews.

C. Optional Other Expenses

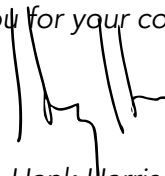
- a. Advertising agreed upon by the Board will be invoiced at cost by HCE. There is no charge for the Listserv Announcement that reaches over 40,000 subscribers.
- b. Background Check with a third-party entity in the amount of \$1175 per finalist.
- c. Implicit Bias Training: TBD.
- d. Confidential Community Interview Panel including coordinating, outreach, crafting interview questions, hosting, calendaring, orienting, and facilitating: \$2200/panel of 12.
- e. Other activities not covered by this contract are billed at the hourly rate of \$195/consultant and might include the following such activities: additional board meetings not listed above; planning for public finalist events; managing public finalist events.
- f. Although many school boards choose to handle the superintendent search communications in-house, an add-on package is available. This includes managing the publicity and community engagement regarding the search and can include both one-way and two-way communication packages. Packages are based on district needs and are billed hourly at \$165/hr.

**Guarantees**

- A. The superintendent appointed with HCE's assistance will not be actively recruited by HCE for another role if it would result in the Superintendent leaving the District within five years of employment, unless the Board provides written authorization to HCE that it may do so.
- B. This search process continues under the parameters articulated in this service agreement up until the time a contract is signed between the District and a new superintendent, or through June 30, 2027, whichever is earlier. If by June 30, 2027, no suitable superintendent has been identified by the Board, HCE will continue to provide services toward the hiring of a superintendent, permanent or otherwise, at no additional Base Fee to the district through January 1, 2028.

- C. If the newly hired Superintendent departs from the position within eighteen months of signing an employment agreement, and if a majority of the Board by vote is still in place, HCE will recruit new candidates and coordinate the selection process at no additional Base Fee.

*On behalf of Human Capital Enterprises, I thank you for your consideration.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hank Harris', with a stylized, cursive-like script.

*Hank Harris  
President, Human Capital Enterprises*