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Purpose

CFDA Number: 84.282**Program Type:** Discretionary/Competitive Grants**Also Known As:** Charter Schools, Public Charter Schools Program, CSP

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This program provides financial assistance for the planning, program design, and initial implementation of charter schools, and the dissemination of information on charter schools. Grants are available, on a competitive basis, to SEAs in states that have charter school laws; SEAs in turn make subgrants to developers of charter schools who have applied for a charter. If an eligible SEA elects not to participate or if its application for funding is not approved, the Department can make grants directly to charter school developers.

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TYPES OF PROJECTS

An eligible applicant that receives a grant or subgrant may use the funds only for post-award planning and design of the education program of a charter school. It may carry out such activities as the refinement of the desired education results, the refinement of the methods for measuring progress toward achieving those results, and the initial implementation of the charter school. Implementation may include informing the community about the charter school and acquiring necessary equipment, materials, and supplies. Other eligible operational costs that cannot be met by state and local sources also may be covered. A state may reserve up to 10 percent of its allocation to support eligible charter schools for dissemination activities.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Public Charter Schools Program supports the planning, development, and initial implementation of charter schools. Charter schools provide enhanced parental choice and are exempt from many statutory and regulatory requirements. In exchange for increased flexibility, charter schools are held accountable for improving student academic achievement. The objective is to replace rules-based governance with performance-based accountability, thereby stimulating the creativity and commitment of teachers, parents, and citizens.

States--and specifically their State educational Agencies (SEAs)-- are eligible to compete for grants if they have a charter school law in place. If an eligible SEA does not participate, charter schools from the State may apply directly to the U.S. Department of Education. Grantees receive up to 3 years of assistance, of which the charter school may use not more than 18 months for planning and program design and not more than 2 years for the initial implementation of a charter school.

In awarding grants, the Department must give preference to States that have multiple chartering agencies (or an appeals process for prospective charter schools that initially fail to be approved by a single agency), that ensure accountability of public charter schools for reaching clear and measurable objectives, and that give public charter schools a high degree of autonomy over their budgets and expenditures.

In addition, States may reserve up to 10 percent of their grant for dissemination sub-grants to spread lessons learned from high-quality charter schools with a demonstrated history of success to other public schools, including other public charter schools, about how to create and sustain high-quality, accountable schools.

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Eligibility

Who May Apply: (by category) State Education Agencies

Who May Apply: (specifically) SEAs in states with a state statute specifically authorizing the establishment of charter schools may apply. After SEAs receive awards, they make competitive grants to charter schools. If an eligible SEA chooses not to compete for PCSP funding, then charter schools in that state may apply directly to the secretary.

(a) State educational agencies (SEAs) in States with a specific State statute authorizing the establishment of charter schools may apply for funding. The Secretary awards grants to SEAs to enable them to conduct charter school programs in their States. SEAs use their PCSP funds to award sub-grants to "eligible applicants," as defined in this notice, for planning, program design, and initial implementation of a charter school; and to support the dissemination of information about, including successful practices in, charter schools. A charter school may apply to an SEA for funds to carry out dissemination activities, whether or not the charter school has applied for or received funds under the PCSP for planning or implementation, if the charter school has been in operation for at least three consecutive years and has demonstrated overall success, including--

1. Substantial progress in improving students achievement;
2. High levels of parent satisfaction; and
3. The management and leadership necessary to overcome initial start-up problems and establish a thriving, financially viable charter school.

(b) Non-SEA eligible applicants may apply for funding directly from the U.S. Department of Education (Department) if the SEA in the State elects not to participate in the PCSP or does not have an application approved under the program. An "eligible applicant" is defined as a developer that has applied to an authorized public chartering authority to operate a charter school and has provided to that authority adequate and timely notice, and a copy of its PCSP application, except that the Secretary or the SEA may waive these requirements in the case of a pre-charter planning grant. If an SEA's application is approved in this competition, applications received from non-SEA eligible applicants in that State will be returned to the applicants. In such a case, the non-SEA eligible applicant should contact the SEA for information related to the State's subgrant competition.

Note: The Department plans to hold separate competitions for non-SEA eligible applicants under CFDA # 84.282B and # 84.282C.

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[Return to Charter Schools Program](#)


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Awards

Number of New Awards Anticipated

4-6 for SEAs; 50-75 for others.

Average Award

\$3,000,000 for SEAs; \$150,000 for others.

Range of Awards

\$500,000 - \$8,000,000 for SEAs; \$10,000 - \$150,000 for others.

STATES WITH CURRENT APPROVED APPLICATIONS

The following States currently have approved applications under this program:

- | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| • Arkansas | • Illinois | • North Carolina |
| • California | • Indiana | • Ohio |
| • Colorado | • Louisiana | • Oklahoma |
| • Connecticut | • Massachusetts | • Oregon |
| • Delaware | • Michigan | • Rhode Island |
| • District of Columbia | • Minnesota | • Tennessee |
| • Florida | • Missouri | • Texas |
| • Georgia | • Nevada | • Utah |
| • Hawaii | • New Jersey | • Wisconsin |
| • Idaho | • New York | |

Charter schools and charter school planning groups in these states may not apply directly to the U.S. Department of Education for funds, but must apply to the SEA in their state.

EXAMPLES OF FUNDED PROGRAM ABSTRACTS

These abstracts are taken from the grant applications submitted to the U.S. Department of Education in 2002.

State Education Agencies

New Jersey--New Jersey's Charter School Program Act of 1995 became the nation's twentieth charter school law, thereby stimulating development of an important model for innovation in the State's system of public education. As amended in November 2000, the Charter School Program Act has enabled a flourishing charter school movement to take hold in New Jersey by providing a balance of flexibility, autonomy, and accountability. The number of charter schools in the state has grown from 13 in the first cohort to 50 charter schools currently in operation, serving nearly 13,000 students. Six additional charter schools are scheduled to open in September 2002. Forty of these 56 schools, or 71 percent of New Jersey's charter schools are located in the poorest urban districts in the state and provide service to educationally disadvantaged students. Forty-eight percent of all students in charter schools meet the definition of economically disadvantaged (eligible for free lunch). This percentage is equal to the percentage of students who are economically disadvantaged in the districts in which they are located, and is significantly higher than in New Jersey's traditional public schools. Charter schools serve predominantly minority students. Overall, minority students account for 89 percent of the students in the 50 operating schools.

The New Jersey Charter Schools Grant Program seeks to promote high student academic achievement and attainment of New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards through the design and implementation of viable new charter schools, and the dissemination of successful charter school practices and innovations that show promise of effecting broader reforms in our traditional system of public education. The goals of this grant program parallel the state's overall objectives for the charter school initiative.

- To improve student learning and achievement;
- To increase the availability of choice to parents and students when selecting a learning environment;
- To establish a new system of accountability for schools; to make the school the unit for educational improvement;
- To establish new professional opportunities for teachers and school leaders.

Assessing the achievement of the objectives of the charter school grant program is closely aligned with evaluating the success of our charter school initiative as a whole. Specific assessment tools have been developed for both programs: required quarterly program and fiscal reports and on-site monitoring to track achievement of charter school grant program objectives; and a three-phase evaluation procedure consisting of the Annual Report, Program Review, and Renewal Process for tracking the success and viability of operating charter schools.

New Jersey's charter school program has a proven track record of success beginning with the first cohort of schools that commenced operations in the 1997-98 school year. The New Jersey Charter School Grant Program, by supporting the planning and implementation of new charter schools, has significantly contributed to this success. Going forward, the New Jersey Department of Education anticipates improved results based on refinement of programs as we incorporate lessons learned in the first six years of the charter school initiative.

New Jersey Charter School Grant Program awards will be made in two categories: Planning and Implementation Grants targeted to new charter schools; and Dissemination Grants, aimed at assisting "veteran" charter schools in adapting and sharing their successful programs with other schools, and enabling the dissemination of information about the charter school. The New Jersey Department of Education anticipates providing assistance to an estimated 30-35 new charter schools over the next 3 years through the New Jersey Charter Schools Grant Program. Dissemination grants are expected to become an increasingly important component of New Jersey's charter school initiative, and are projected at 6 grants per year over the next 3 years. The Office of Innovative Programs and Schools, Charter School Unit, is dedicated to providing administrative oversight of the charter school grant program to ensure that objectives are achieved in a timely and efficient manner.

Wisconsin--Wisconsin has 101 operating charter schools and anticipates an increase of 40 percent by the year 2005. Wisconsin Charter School growth is the result of a strong and flexible Wisconsin charter school law and the Wisconsin Charter School Program (WCSP) subgrant awards for planning, start up, implementation, and dissemination activities. Our charter schools are exempt from most state regulations. There is no limit on the number of schools to be chartered, the chartering authority and planners are given great flexibility in designing the schools, and our state law has recently expanded chartering authority. No state approval is required. However, an appeal process for denied charters is in place for a portion of our state. Our law works in concert with federal charter school statutes. The WCSP Dissemination grant program that was begun in 1999-2000, has enhanced the growth of and interest in charter schools by sharing best practices and by providing innovative models and ideas for charter school planners and developers.

The Wisconsin Charter School Program is aligned to our state content standards, the state accountability system and our state plan. The New Wisconsin Promise, which promotes early learning opportunities, educator quality, career and technology education, increased parent and community involvement, and building reading skills to close the achievement gap for minorities, children in poverty, and other children at-risk of school failure. The goals of this project are to increase the number of high quality charter schools, increase the availability of and access to resources and expertise for operators, planners and authorizers, and to award planning subgrants to groups establishing strong, innovative charter schools which support state priorities; by awarding implementation subgrants to new charter schools, and by expanding our dissemination program to share best and promising practices.

Local Education Agency

Avondale Learning, located in the suburbs of Maricopa County west of Phoenix, is a college preparatory high school for 150 students of all backgrounds and learning abilities in grades 9-12. It is based on a program the charter holder created and led for three years for a Phoenix-based charter school. Under this program, upper class students successfully attended nearby community colleges and did exceptionally well on the state's writing test Avondale Learning is a Local Educational Agency according to Arizona State law.

Avondale Learning features instruction that is student-centered. Extended lectures and worksheets are discouraged; rather, students do various projects, many of which are interdisciplinary. Required courses include four years each of English and Social Studies and three years each of Math and Science. Also, students take the sequences of career and Life Success, Leadership, and Internship courses. Leadership includes two hours minimum per week of community service, and Internship enables students to practice professional skills in a paid or nonpaid off-campus job. Students also study speech, fine arts, technology, a second language, and College Prep. College Prep improves reading comprehension and vocabulary, reduces the unknown about college life, and prepares students for standardized tests.

The mission of Avondale Learning is to help students prepare for postsecondary education and entry into careers. Our

goals are to have a strong instructional focus for all students; help establish a positive school climate; meet individual student needs; offer ongoing, relevant staff development, vary school assessment, and encourage strong parental involvement. Being accredited by North Central Association is a priority.

Juniors and seniors are encouraged to take one course each semester at nearby community colleges. Advisors and instructors from the colleges will visit our campus to ease the students' way into the college environment. Our school will provide tuition reimbursement and set the calendar to accommodate the colleges' schedule of classes.

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