



NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR
**PUBLIC
CHARTER
SCHOOLS**

The Charter Schools Program

Expanding Opportunity Through Quality Charter Schools

The Charter Schools Program grants are the only funds in the entire federal budget dedicated to advancing school choice across the country. The modest federal investment — \$440 million a year; less than 1% percent of federal education spending — in this program provides start-up funds for new charter schools until state funding kicks in when students arrive on campus.

The CSP also provides funding to help charter schools pay for school buildings because in most states, state and local funding for buildings is not available to charters. Nearly half of the charter schools educating students today have received CSP funds. And while the CSP doesn't come close to covering all charter school start up or facilities costs or needs, it is a catalyst for advancing one of the most successful, bipartisan, and in-demand education reforms in American public education history.

Despite its small size, the CSP has become one of the most complex federal discretionary K-12 programs to administer, with voluminous statutory and regulatory requirements for awarding subgrants, monitoring grantees, and ensuring compliance with federal and state requirements. In fact, the program has gotten so complex and dictated by minutia that there are many examples of a grantee — either a state department of education or a school directly — taking so long to get an answer to a compliance question that the times runs out to spend the grant money and it ends up returned to the government, instead of funding a new school as it was intended.

With enrollment in charter schools surging across the country, now is the time to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the CSP so that states and schools can meet parent demand.

These important changes to the Charter School Programs grants would help the charter school community grow and thrive:

	PROGRAM CHALLENGE	SOLUTION
Facilities	Access to appropriate and affordable school facilities continues to be one of the biggest barriers to charter school growth. The existing facilities programs within the CSP need greater resources and flexibility.	<p>Make CSP resources available for facility operating costs more accessible to more states by expanding the types of state funding programs that qualify for the State Facilities Incentive Grant matching requirements.</p> <p>Increase funding for school buildings by allowing more CSP funds to be allocated to the facilities programs within the CSP.</p>
Innovation	Innovation is at the core of the charter school movement, and the CSP should do more to support early-stage development of new charter schools.	<p>Allow educator pre-planning grants: Current educators may be best positioned to design new innovative schools but they can't access CSP funds to support that work until after they have already applied for a charter. Pre-planning grants would give educators the time and resources to develop high-quality charter applications and foster innovative new schools.</p> <p>Expand allowable activities: Currently, CSP subgrants can only be used to open, replicate, or expand schools. Allowing other activities—such as adding a significant new program or adopting a new school model—would support innovation.</p>
Bureaucratic Burden	The CSP is one of the most complex federal discretionary K-12 programs to administer, with numerous statutory and regulatory requirements for awarding subgrants, monitoring grantees, and ensuring compliance with federal and state requirements for charter schools. Red tape has made the program less responsive to the needs of the sector and more difficult for grantees to spend funds.	<p>Bring regulations back in line with statute: Significant new compliance and monitoring expectations have been layered onto the program that are not in line with statute. Rolling back these regulations would help eliminate bureaucratic burden.</p> <p>Ease federal micromanagement of funds: Too many grantees have encountered barriers to spending grant funds where they are needed. Small changes, such as allowing greater flexibility around allowable uses of funds throughout the life of the grant, would ensure that operators can focus on opening their school.</p> <p>Align funding among different CSP subprograms with current needs: Current law sets specific funding percentages for different subprograms within the CSP; but in practice, appropriators have allocated specific amounts to the subprograms. Recently, lawmakers have allowed some limited flexibility for the Department of Education to allocate subprogram funds according to demand year to year. Codifying this flexibility would allow the CSP to be more responsive to the changing needs of the charter community over time.</p>

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Visit a school near you. Please reach out to visitcharters@publiccharters.org to meet teachers and students, and discover the difference of a charter school firsthand.