



NATIONAL  
CHARTER SCHOOL  
RESOURCE CENTER

# State Entity Grantee Profiles

U.S. Department of Education  
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## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Further Reading.....	3
Indiana Department of Education.....	4
Grantee Overview.....	4
Grant Goals .....	4
Grant Activities .....	4
Project Successes.....	5
Grantee Lessons Learned.....	6
New York State Education Department.....	7
Grantee Overview.....	7
Grant Goals .....	7
Grant Activities .....	8
Project Successes.....	8
Grantee Lessons Learned.....	9
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction .....	10
Grantee Overview.....	10
Grant Goals .....	10
Grant Activities .....	10
Project Successes.....	11
Grantee Lessons Learned.....	12
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.....	13
Grantee Overview.....	13
Grant Goals .....	13
Grant Activities .....	13
Project Successes.....	14
Grantee Lessons Learned.....	15

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## Introduction

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The U.S. Department of Education Charter School Programs (CSP) awards grants to State Entities (SE) that enable them to award subgrants to eligible applicants in their State to open and prepare for the operation of new charter schools and to replicate and expand high-quality charter schools. Grant funds must also be used to provide technical assistance (TA) to eligible applicants and authorized public chartering agencies in opening and preparing for the operation of new charter schools, or replicating or expanding high-quality charter schools; and to work with authorized public chartering agencies to improve authorizing quality, including developing capacity for, and conducting, fiscal oversight and auditing of charter schools.<sup>1</sup>

The following U.S. Department of Education CSP SE grantee profiles capture key elements of each grantee's project and disseminate lessons learned and project successes. Each profile includes key components of the grantee's project, a description of major grant activities with a general timeline, highlights of project successes and lessons learned, and quotes from grantees.

Each profile draws on the respective grantee's CSP application, completed project evaluation where available, public websites, and interviews with leaders of the grant-funded project. Grant activities described in these profiles are not exhaustive, but instead reflect the focus of project leaders at the time they were interviewed. Links to grantees' CSP applications and websites are provided throughout the document where applicable. Any data collected from external data sources is additionally cited. All statements of fact or causality are derived from grantee publications or interviews and have not been verified or vetted by NCSRC except where explicitly stated.

## Further Reading

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National Charter School Resource Center (2020). [SMART Objectives Toolkit](#).

National Charter School Resource Center (2020). [The SMART Approach: Strategies for Making Objectives SMART](#).

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<sup>1</sup> [Expanding Opportunities Through Quality Charter School Programs \(CSP\) Grants to State Entities](#)

# Indiana Department of Education

## Grantee Overview

Indiana Department of Education (IDOE)'s vision is to make it “a priority to give all Hoosier families a plethora of high-quality options from which to choose. Charter schools are a critical component of Indiana’s educational landscape and essential to ensuring that every child has the opportunity to attend the high-quality school of their choice.”<sup>2</sup> Indiana’s charter law has been in place for nearly 20 years, first passed in 2001. As of the 2018–2019 school year, charter school students in Indiana represent approximately 5% of the state’s student population and 72% of charter school students categorized as economically disadvantaged.

### CSP State Entities Grant

- Indiana Department of Education
- SE grant awarded in 2017
- Total expected funding over five years: \$59,966,575
- As of SY 2018–19, the state has 104 charter schools, enrolling approximately 49,813 students

## Grant Goals<sup>3</sup>

1. Increase the number of high quality charter schools statewide via incubation, replication, expansion, or improvement.
2. Leverage support specific to building the capacity necessary for the Indiana charter school sector to grow quality programs.
3. Evaluate the impact of charter schools on student outcomes.
4. Improve consistency of high quality charter school authorizing statewide.

## Grant Activities

### Grant Timeline

**Year 1:** Funded eight subgrants to eligible charter schools

**Year 2:** Funded 16 subgrants to eligible charter schools

**Year 3:** Funded eight subgrants to eligible charter schools

**Next Steps:** Designating subgrant recipients for cohort 4.

With the CSP grant, the IDOE is awarding up to 60 subgrants over five years to high-quality charter schools for replication and expansion efforts, to incubate and grow innovative charter school models, and to support traditional public school districts that may want to include a charter in their existing district configurations. The IDOE works with an external evaluator to analyze the impact of charter schools on student achievement, families, and communities, and to share best practices between charter schools and traditional public schools through analysis of a longitudinal school choice data set. Finally, the IDOE

<sup>2</sup> [Indiana Department of Education’s 2017 Grant Application](#)

<sup>3</sup> Stated in [Indiana Department of Education’s 2017 Grant Application](#)

works with [School Works](#), an authorizer support organization, to provide both statewide and individualized support to all eight of Indiana’s charter school authorizers in order to ensure capacity to support the growth of high quality charter schools.

## Project Successes

As part of IDOE’s evaluation of the project, many grantees have communicated how helpful subgrant funds were at a vital point in starting schools, especially in terms of the TA provided by IDOE. One IDOE staff member noted that these grants allow schools to use time and resources more efficiently in starting a charter school, increasing schools’ ability to spend time developing the instructional side of the charter school, rather than startup logistics.

Using the CSP grant, IDOE has produced and collected resources for the sector to bolster best practices, innovation, and authorizing across the state including:

- A comprehensive needs assessment of Indiana’s authorizing landscape and a best practices manual for authorizers in the state, created in partnership with School Works.
- Exemplary work created by schools and authorizers under innovation grants,<sup>4</sup> which IDOE features on their Charter Innovation Grant Artifacts webpage, allowing for new practices to be shared publicly.
- Indiana’s CSP-Quality Counts webpage, which houses information about grant activities; resources for school leaders, parents and families, and authorizers; and CSP Quality Counts Evaluation results.



*We want to protect teachers’ roles as instructional leaders because, as a teacher, nothing prepares you for the infrastructure of establishing a school. What we provide is funding to establish the business aspects from the beginning, so educators can focus on instruction.*

— Cole Dietrich, Assistant Director of Charter Schools and Special Programs at IDOE

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<sup>4</sup> The IDOE CSP Quality Counts Innovation Grant is intended to increase the number of high-quality charter schools in the State of Indiana through TA for currently operating charter schools. This grant is used toward the TA categories of Supporting All Students, Instructional Supplies and Technology, Professional Development and Licensing, and Parent, Family, and Community Outreach and Empowerment with the understanding that these needs are not mutually exclusive.

## Grantee Lessons Learned

*Autonomy does not prohibit collaboration.* To effectively implement program vision and grant activities with different stakeholders, one IDOE staff member reflected that it was important to “be mindful of how to encourage consensus and build relationships in order to carry out the work of your grant.” Relationship building between the state education department and school authorizers has not only helped IDOE accomplish grant goals but also contributed to strengthening the charter sector in the state.

*When in doubt, write it out.* IDOE emphasized the importance of documenting and saving artifacts to evidence grant implementation, as monitoring of grant activities is an aspect of CSP grant work. Staff mentioned that “this is helpful, as it can be hard to reflect on what was done and accomplished from the inception of the grant project.” Incorporating documentation from the beginning of the grant prevents any challenges down the road with producing necessary information related to the grant.

# New York State Education Department

## Grantee Overview

The vision of [the New York State Education Department \(NYSED\) Charter School Office](#) is to “create a diverse portfolio of innovative charter schools that produce strong outcomes through a rigorous new school process, strong performance oversight and accountability, and model authorizing practices. The charter schools authorized by the Board of Regents will serve as exemplars for all public schools in New York State and across the country.”<sup>5</sup> New York’s state charter law was established in 1998 and as of the 2019–2020 school year, charter school students in New York State represent around 6% of the state’s student population. Approximately 77% of charter school students are categorized as economically disadvantaged. Charter school students in New York produce significant learning gains when compared to their peers in traditional district schools, according to a 2017 study by the Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford University.<sup>6</sup>

### CSP State Entities Grant

- New York State Education Department
- SE grant awarded in 2018
- Total expected funding over five years: \$95,555,556
- As of SY 2019–20, the state has 315 operating charter schools serving approximately 156,000

## Grant Goals<sup>7</sup>

1. Increase the number of high-quality charter school seats in New York State, especially for those charter schools serving students who are at greatest risk of not meeting State academic standards.
2. Improve student achievement outcomes in New York State charter schools, particularly for students who are at greatest risk of not meeting State academic standards through high quality charter authorizing and TA.
3. Promote the dissemination of New York charter school effective practices to other public schools.
4. Strengthen the overall quality of the New York State charter authorizing and CSP grant administrative infrastructure.

### Grant Timeline

**Year 1:** Conducted internal needs analysis in the process of identifying a TA resource provider. Began developing expansion subgrants. Worked to finalize CSP grant requirements.

**Next Steps:** Processing 15 planning and implementation grants. Selecting a TA resource provider with expertise in three key areas: providing services for students with disabilities, board of trustees governance, and financial operations.

<sup>5</sup> [NYSED Charter School Office](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Charter School Performance in New York](#)

<sup>7</sup> Stated in [New York State Education Department’s 2018 Grant Application](#)

## Grant Activities

With the 2018 CSP project funds, NYSED is:

- Increasing the number of high-quality charter school seats across 69 new or expanded charter schools over the course of the five-year grant period;
- Improving student outcomes, especially for those considered at-risk, by expanding access to these high-quality seats and by making technical assistance (TA) available to schools through a competitive request for proposal (RFP) process to build capacity in key training areas;
- Disseminating effective practices by encouraging district-charter partnerships, and developing charter-charter partnerships; and
- Strengthening the quality of charter authorizing through aligning best practices and CSP grant infrastructure development.

## Project Successes

According to NYSED staff, the CSP grant has allowed NYSED to invest in human capital, which has helped them expand the support, monitoring, and oversight they provide for all charter schools. NYSED is currently successfully processing \$18.5 million for 15 planning and implementation grants, which is a substantial undertaking.

This grant has allowed NYSED to provide extensive TA and oversight to charter schools, which has been crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic. NYSED is part of a team that conducts weekly TA webinars with advocacy, and support groups and school staff that see consistent attendance of over 350 people. The team has also created [a website of resources](#) for educators and parents to help support schools and communities during the pandemic including NYSED guidelines, remote learning resources, and information about state executive orders. Additionally, NYSED's practices around holistic solutions to systemic issues were highlighted at the 2020 CSP Project Directors' Meeting.

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*The availability of CSP grant funding has energized our schools in their continuing mission to create high-quality academic opportunities for all children. Educators can look to NY as an exemplar in making real strides towards, and in some cases closing, the learning gap.*

— David Frank, Executive Director of the NYSED Charter School Office

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## Grantee Lessons Learned

*Rely on the resources available to you.* When applying for a CSP grant, an NYSED staff member noted that the CSP-provided resources, through the National Charter School Resource Center, have been helpful in improving grant performance measures (see Further Reading on page 3). Two major takeaways from this work were to create Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timebound (SMART) grant project goals and to build time into the project plan to address the unexpected.

*Create strong fiscal systems.* Additionally, a staff member reflected on the importance of strong fiscal systems in taking on a CSP grant. “Make sure you have the capacity to meet the financial requirements of federal grants,” they mentioned, as the team found their strong financial expertise and foundation helpful in accomplishing the task of fulfilling all grant requirements.

# North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

## Grantee Overview

The vision of the [North Carolina Department of Public Instruction \(NCDPI\)](#) is that “every public school student will graduate ready for postsecondary education and work, prepared to be a globally engaged and productive citizen.”<sup>8</sup> North Carolina’s state charter law was passed in 1996 and as of the 2018–19 school year, charter school students represent around 7% of North Carolina public school students; 19% of charter school students are characterized as economically disadvantaged.<sup>9</sup> NCDPI uses CSP grant funds to support the “development, expansion, and replication of high quality charter schools that can effectively serve educationally disadvantaged students.”<sup>10</sup>

### CSP State Entities Grant

- North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
- SE grant awarded in 2018
- Total expected funding over five years: \$36,633,025
- As of SY 2019–20, the state has 196 charter schools, enrolling approximately 120,000 students.

## Grant Goals<sup>11</sup>

1. Increase the number of educationally disadvantaged students attending high-quality charter schools and expand the number of high-quality charter schools available to educationally disadvantaged students.
2. Develop a cohort of 160 charter school leaders<sup>12</sup> who can develop and demonstrate best practices in serving educationally disadvantaged students.
3. Broadly disseminate best practices in serving educationally disadvantaged students and foster collaboration in the charter school community and between charter schools and traditional public schools.

## Grant Activities

With CSP grant funds, NCDPI created the [North Carolina Advancing Charter Collaboration and Excellence for Student Success](#) (NC ACCESS) Program, which, through a subgrant and intensive fellowship program, leverages existing interest in charter school development and stimulates the startup and expansion of additional high-quality charter school options to increase educational

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<sup>8</sup> [About DPI](#)

<sup>9</sup> North Carolina uses a combination of Direct Certification data and school-reported Free and Reduced-Price Lunch data to report the economically disadvantaged student population for charter schools. Charter schools not participating in the National School Lunch Program only report Direct Certification data and not the full population of students who may qualify as economically disadvantaged. For this reason, this statistic may underreport the number of economically disadvantaged students attending North Carolina charter schools.

<sup>10</sup> As stated in [NCDPI’s 2018 grant application](#)

<sup>11</sup> As stated in [NCDPI’s 2018 grant application](#)

<sup>12</sup> Updated from 100 charter school leaders by the [2019 NC ACCESS supplemental grant](#).

opportunities for educationally disadvantaged students. The NC ACCESS Program will issue up to 60 subgrants over five years in the following four categories: Planning and Implementation, Implementation Only, Expansion, and Replication. Additionally, the NC ACCESS Fellowship Program supports the school director or principal and an additional school administrator or board member from each school in the first year of a school's subgrant.

### Grant Timeline

**Year 1:** Awarded nine subgrants: three Planning and Implementation, four Implementation Only, and two Expansion. Launched the NC ACCESS Fellows Institute with 24 Fellows. Piloted the Visiting Fellows Program with four school leaders.

**Next Steps:** Awarding the second cohort of subgrantees, including identifying ACCESS Fellows and Visiting Fellows. A group of Fellows will participate in the Want More Do More program to develop instructional leaders.

The NC ACCESS Fellowship Program provides school leaders with support and TA to develop and demonstrate best practices for serving educationally disadvantaged students and fostering collaboration within the charter school community and between charter and traditional public schools. The program focuses on leadership development and includes opportunities to build supportive and collaborative networks, share best practices, and engage in critical conversations with state and national experts who have experience in leadership best practices; developing, expanding, and replicating successful high-quality schools; and working with educationally disadvantaged populations.<sup>13</sup> The resources created, evaluation data, and the program model itself will be

disseminated to inform the broader charter school community and facilitate critical conversation around developing high-quality schools for the benefit of all students. To expand the reach of the Fellowship, the NC ACCESS Program created the Visiting Fellows Program to provide opportunities for leaders of schools not eligible for subgrants to take part in and learn from the NC ACCESS Fellowship Program.

### Project Successes

The program's early successes allowed the NC ACCESS team to apply for and be awarded \$10 million in supplemental funding from CSP to expand its reach. The funding will be used to award an additional 10 subgrant awards, grow the number of ACCESS Fellows from 100 to 160, and provide additional support for low performing charter schools. After the first year of NC ACCESS, NCDPI saw an increase in demand for participating in the program, receiving three times as many applications for subgrants in the second year of the application cycle compared to the first.

Subgrant funds have provided NC ACCESS schools the opportunity to develop and implement special projects. Schools have used grant funding to establish on-site mental health services for students and mental health-related professional development for staff through partnerships with service providers. One school is now providing a school-based health center, delivering

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<sup>13</sup> Fellowship Programming has included topics like: Addressing the Social and Emotional Needs of All Students; Creating A Culturally Responsive, High-Quality Charter School; School Culture by Design; and Intentional Marketing and Recruitment; Parent Engagement; and Empowering Teacher Leaders.

physical and mental health services for all members of the school community (teachers, staff, students, and students' parents and siblings). Many subgrantees have used funds to expand and improve their school's technological services, including to purchase laptops for students and staff, invest in improving Internet access, and update software. Two schools have hosted collaboration round tables with traditional local educational agencies (LEAs) focused on strategies for serving educationally disadvantaged students and families, school culture, and professional development. Portfolios of strategies, best practices, and resources produced by Fellows will be available on the [NC ACCESS website](#).

*The NC ACCESS Fellowship's design uses a holistic approach to develop school leaders to design highly effective organizations capable of meeting the needs of all students, especially those most at-risk due to socio-economic and environmental factors. Words can't express how grateful I am for the opportunity to network with innovative educators, as well as engage in quality professional development.*

— Dr. Tremaine Canteen, 2019-2020 NC ACCESS Visiting Fellow

## Grantee Lessons Learned

*Provide opportunities for school leader networking.* The first year of the NC ACCESS Fellowship Program incorporated a mix of in-person and virtual events. In conducting these activities, NC ACCESS staff found that in-person networking, especially between schools in the same region, was an important component of the program and development of the Fellows. It was helpful for charter school leaders across schools to form relationships so they could reach out to each other for help and advice. The NC ACCESS staff plans to increase opportunities for Fellows to network in upcoming grant years.

Identify where schools lack knowledge or resources and help schools target potential barriers early. In subgrant applications for the NC ACCESS Program, staff identified that many prospective charter schools needed additional support to implement and enhance services and programs like transportation, school lunch, weighted lotteries, and parent engagement. The subgrant review process helped detect where charter schools were experiencing barriers and how the NC ACCESS Program could target additional resources. In response, program staff used the NC ACCESS Fellowship Program to bridge charter school leaders' gaps in knowledge, connect schools with resources, and work closely with them to overcome barriers. Additionally, during the application period for the second round of NC ACCESS subgrants, staff disseminated

additional resources and information about specific topics to help schools build these essential supports into their school preparation plans from the beginning.

## Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

### Grantee Overview

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) supports the development of high-quality charter schools that increase academic achievement for all students, especially those that are educationally disadvantaged, through the Wisconsin Charter School Program (WCSP).<sup>14</sup> Wisconsin's state charter law was passed in 1993 and as of school year 2019–2020, the state's charter students comprise around 5% of Wisconsin's total student population. That same school year, just over 50% of Wisconsin charter school students were categorized as economically disadvantaged. The WCSP is implementing a statewide strategy that will strengthen charter school authorizing, support the development of high-quality charter schools as well as the replication and expansion of successful high-quality charter schools, and promote statewide collaboration and sharing of best practices.

#### CSP State Entities Grant

- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
- SE Grant awarded in 2017
- Total expected funding over five years: \$95,777,775
- As of SY 2019–20, the state has 236 charter schools, enrolling approximately 44,703 students in the state

### Grant Goals<sup>15</sup>

1. Support the growth of high-quality charter schools in Wisconsin, especially those focused on improving academic outcomes for educationally disadvantaged secondary charter school students.
2. Strengthen and improve authorizing quality and promote the adoption of best practices for all authorizers in Wisconsin.
3. Promote and support collaboration and sharing of best practices between high-quality charter schools and other schools in the state, especially those that experience difficulty in adequately serving educationally disadvantaged students.

#### Grant Timeline

**Year 1:** Funded 26 subgrants for Planning and Implementation, Implementation, and Expansion of charter schools

**Year 2:** Funded 11 subgrants for Planning and Implementation, Implementation, and Expansion of charter schools

**Next Steps:** Subgrant awards are in process.

### Grant Activities

During the five years of CSP grant-funded project implementation, the WCSP is providing subgrants to eligible charter schools for Planning and Implementation as well as Replication and

<sup>14</sup> [The Objectives the Wisconsin Charter Schools Program](#)

<sup>15</sup> Stated in [Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's 2017 Grant Application](#)

Expansion to promote growth and quality in the State’s charter sector. Another key component of the WCSP grant activities is the creation of the [Wisconsin Resource Center for Charter Schools \(WRCCS\)](#), a hub for TA, collaboration, and dissemination of best practices within Wisconsin’s charter school sector. The WRCCS serves as an information clearinghouse for charter authorizers, schools, operators, and board members. The WCSP, via the WRCCS, engages the charter sector with TA through professional development programs for charter schools, charter school boards and authorizers. Additionally, the WRCCS provides opportunities for collaboration and dissemination by organizing conferences, workshops, and other events to showcase practices utilized by high-quality charter schools. The WRCCS established a backbone of school competencies to guide its resource and TA work. The competencies include four main competencies: authorizer, governance board, school leader, classroom and two secondary competencies: families and communities, that provide a foundation for all grant activities.<sup>16</sup>

## Project Successes

The WRCCS provided personalized TA by guiding schools to diagnose and improve on the competencies specific to each school’s needs for improvement, which staff noted as instrumental to their success. The TA included partnering with experts and specialists around the country to provide targeted support and materials as well as a mentorship program with 21 high-performing mentor charter schools.<sup>17</sup> WRCCS provided diverse expert resources for use across the Wisconsin charter sector by connecting with 20-25 national partners with expertise in different components of the competencies, including in law, nonprofit boards, school culture, digital literacy, and authorizing.



*Create strong connections with the charter community. Connections create groundswell. You have to do it with them, not to them. The WRCCS’s backbone of competencies allow us to do microsurgery to help schools identify what they need and match them with the specific resources, partners, and mentors to get them there.*

— Nick Pretasky, Associate Director of WRCCS

According to feedback from charter school stakeholders, WRCCS staff stated that the sector has found these resources “extremely helpful.” For example, a [model charter contract](#) resource has been “one of the biggest game changers” for prospective charter schools in Wisconsin in

<sup>16</sup> See [WRCCS School Competencies](#) for more information

<sup>17</sup> Mentor schools are charter schools that have continuously met their performance measures.

understanding what a contract should look like, noted one WRCCS staff member. WCSP has seen improvement in the quality of charter contracts created by new charter schools, resulting directly from this resource. Additionally, the WRCCS has put together two annual conferences bringing together stakeholders from across the sector including school leaders, governing boards, and authorizers to participate in sessions and workshops on the competencies, sharing best practices and resources. This wraparound work has not only helped subgrantees but encouraged charter schools who have not received subgrants to strengthen and improve.

## Grantee Lessons Learned

*Create resources targeting those you want to serve.* WCSP found that the state needed a resource hub that worked with the charter school stakeholders in Wisconsin to expand and strengthen the sector. In doing so, WCSP realized that charter school developers need extensive support in the startup phase to be competitive in the application process, which was affecting the school pipeline. The charter application requires a high level of planning, community outreach, and high-quality strategies, which can be preventative for prospective charter school operators without capacity and initial funds. WRCCS found ways to target these gaps, providing TA for community outreach and more startup resources, including [a template for conducting a district needs assessment](#), [strategic planning for charter schools](#), and important information for [negotiating a charter contract](#).

*Make TA collaborative and relationship-driven.* Staff noted that the WRCCS approach of personalized support and core competencies allows them to provide targeted support to schools, governing boards, and authorizers in a way that involves them in the process, which increases the effectiveness of the supports. One staff member reflected, “It is important to make the technical assistance process very collaborative and be inclusive in inviting partners to the table to form and provide insights into the work needing to be done. Whatever you are creating, you need to create strong connections with charter schools. Connections create groundswell. You have to do it with them, not to them.”