FINDING FEDERAL FUNDING FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS: A User’s Guide
for the National Resource Center on Charter School Finance and Governance Federal Funding Catalog

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About the National Resource Center on Charter School Finance and Governance

The National Resource Center on Charter School Finance and Governance (NRC) was established in fall 2006 with funding from the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Innovation and Improvement (Grant No. 0282N060012) under the Charter Schools Program National Leadership Activities Grant Program. The NRC develops and disseminates tools, information, and technical assistance to help charter leaders at all levels—operators, authorizers and state policymakers—take steps to improve charter school finance and governance.

For more information, visit the NRC web site at www.CharterResource.org or e-mail the NRC at info@charterresource.org.

About the Partners

The National Resource Center on Charter School Finance and Governance is a collaborative effort of The Center on Educational Governance at the University of Southern California, The Finance Project, and WestEd:

**The Center on Educational Governance at the University of Southern California** is an interdisciplinary research center of the University of Southern California’s Rossier School of Education that focuses on the linkages among policy, educational governance and the improvement of school systems.

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One of the greatest challenges that charter school operators face today is accessing the resources necessary to provide a quality education to their students and ensure the sustainability of their schools. To access needed resources, charter school leaders commonly tap a variety of funding streams, including private philanthropy and state and local funding. As charter school leaders consider available financing approaches, they can make the most of federal funding opportunities. Federal programs are an important source of revenue for starting, operating, and expanding charter school programs that meet the diverse needs of students and families. Maximizing federal funding helps leverage other funds, builds a more sustainable base of funding, and increases program capacity.¹

This user’s guide is a companion to the Federal Funding Catalog of the National Resource Center on Charter School Finance and Governance (NRC).² The online, searchable Catalog includes more than 100 federal resources that can support charter school operations. This guide helps users make effective use of the funding catalog by providing:

- a summary of the types of federal funding;
- strategies for maximizing federal resources for charter schools;
- a description of the framework used to organize the federal programs included in the catalog; and
- an overview of the online, searchable database.

The user’s guide and funding catalog are part of a series of resources and tools developed by the NRC to help charter school leaders take steps toward developing successful and sustainable charter schools through effective finance and governance.

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Approximately 4,500 charter schools in 40 states and the District of Columbia were in operation during the 2007–2008 school year, serving approximately 1.3 million students. As the charter school movement continues to expand rapidly across the nation, an ever-greater demand for resources to support these schools exists. For charter school leaders to continue their efforts to plan, develop, and operate successful charter schools that meet the needs of their students—and the terms of their charters—they must be able to find and secure adequate funding that is stable, sustainable, and aligned with the purposes for which it will be used.

Although charter schools are eligible to receive public education funding, most state statutes do not provide charter schools with the same opportunities as traditional public schools for securing general operating funds and funds for special purposes. On average, charter schools receive substantially less than traditional public schools in per-pupil state allocations. According to the Center for Education Reform, charter schools “are funded at 61 percent of their district counterparts, averaging $6,585 per pupil compared [with] $10,771 per pupil at conventional district public schools.”

To produce strong academic results within a competitive funding environment, successful charter school leaders often tap a variety of funding sources that together can provide the resources they need. Corporations, individual donors, and national and local foundations are key funding sources to which charter school leaders can look to help narrow funding gaps between their annual operating budgets and funding they receive from state and local sources. Charter school leaders often supplement dollars from these sources with funds from federal programs.

Federal agencies administer more than 100 programs, through various funding programs that potentially can provide resources to charter school leaders seeking new funds to support charter school development and operation. Federal funds can support charter schools and their services directly, such as through programs aimed at enhancing the academic achievement and well-being of at-risk students or improving the professional development of teachers. Federal funds can also support initiatives undertaken in partnership with nonprofit or government entities to develop and strengthen charter schools and their partners.

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Overview of the Federal Funding Catalog and This User’s Guide

The National Resource Center on Charter School Finance and Governance (NRC) maintains a Federal Funding Catalog, available at http://www.charterresource.org/index.cfm?page=5. The online, searchable database identifies federal funding sources that can be used to support charter schools and describes how each federal funding program works and how to access these funds (see About the Funding Sources in the Federal Funding Catalog). The database enables users to search by federal agency, eligible applicant, funding type, and matching requirement. Specifically, the database:

- catalogs all relevant federal funding sources that can support charter schools;
- identifies the purposes for which the funding can be used;
- describes the flow of funds and identifies eligible recipients, partners, and beneficiaries of funding;
- documents the funding history for the program, including the size of grants;
- provides information on the requirements and process for applying for funding; and
- links users to additional sources of information.

This user’s guide is designed as a companion to the online Federal Funding Catalog and aims to help charter school operators and partners increase their knowledge of how to access federal funding programs to support expansion and innovation in charter school activities and services. The guide has five sections.

Section I examines the context for financing charter schools. It also provides an overview of public and private investments in charter school development and operation.

Section II summarizes the types of federal funding, including discretionary grants, formula grants, and loans, that are available to help support charter schools. This section provides a description of each type of funding structure and a brief discussion of matching requirements.

Section III presents strategies to maximize federal funding and the best ways to think about federal funding sources for charter schools. It offers seven recommendations to guide decisionmaking about funding sources.

Section IV presents the framework used to organize funding sources in the Federal Funding Catalog. This section identifies the broad domains and specific categories in the framework and provides examples of federal programs that can support activities and services in the various areas.

Section V provides tips for using the NRC’s online, searchable database of federal funding sources to identify resources to support charter school development and operation.

The matrix of federal funding sources in Appendix A sorts programs by service domain and category and details activities and services that can be supported under each program. Appendixes B, C, and D sort the federal funding sources listed in the Federal Funding Catalog by, respectively, federal agency, eligible applicant, and funding type.
A Note on the Funding Sources Included in the Federal Funding Catalog

The 108 funding sources included in the Federal Funding Catalog are as wide-ranging in their purposes and uses as the services and activities offered by charter schools nationwide and as diverse in their focus as the students and communities these schools serve. Of course, not every funding source listed in the catalog is appropriate for every charter school. The suitability of each funding source depends on the population the school serves and the specific programs offered or activities undertaken by the school (e.g., vocational education, health and mental health services, and facilities acquisition and construction).

In addition, the applicability of particular sources is affected by who is eligible to apply for the funds. Some federal funding sources are limited to certain grantees, such as local education agencies, state education agencies, or specific types of partnerships. Other funding sources place limitations on the student populations that are eligible to receive the benefit of specific federal programs and target students based on, for example, household income, legal status, personal characteristics, and family circumstances.

In some instances, a charter school may not be eligible to access certain funds directly. Yet knowledge of the full array of potential resources supporting charter school purposes is important, because charter schools may be able to access these resources through strategic partnerships with other eligible entities.
Charter schools commonly are financed through three primary funding sources: federal funding, state and local funding, and private philanthropy.

**Federal Investments**

Recent trends in education reform, shaped in large part by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), reflect a broadened federal role in elementary and secondary education policy. NCLB, the revised version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, has altered the education policy landscape by increasing the focus on accountability, standards-based reforms, and high-stakes testing. New requirements for elementary and secondary public schools include rigorous testing of students, report cards detailing individual school progress, increased sanctions for schools failing to meet minimum standards, heightened use of public school choice, supplemental educational service options for students in failing schools, and more stringent teacher qualification requirements. To help schools implement these new initiatives to achieve “adequate yearly progress,” additional funding programs have been established. These programs are geared toward enhancing teacher quality, out-of-school time support services, and curricula support in math, science, and literacy.

The federal government provides limited resources to assist public schools, which include charter schools. However, because of the diverse nature of charter schools and the supplemental services they offer, programs administered by several federal agencies offer a number of funding possibilities. The Corporation for National and Community Service and the Departments of Justice, Interior, Agriculture, Education, Health and Human Services, and Housing and Urban Development provide resources for programs related to education, health and well-being, youth development, and capacity building that charter schools can access.

For example, the Department of Agriculture funds initiatives that support the needs of rural communities, such as the Rural Development Communities Facilities Grant and Loan Programs, which provide grants and loans to develop essential community facilities for public use in rural areas. The Department of Justice offers several funding programs aimed at promoting safe communities and reducing juvenile delinquency. This department’s Drug-Free Communities Grant Program supports community coalitions in their efforts to prevent and reduce substance abuse among youth. Charter schools that serve special populations can also make use of discretionary grant programs that target certain student groups, such as the Department of the Interior’s Indian School Equalization Program, which funds the needs of schools funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

**State and Local Investments**

As of 2008, 40 states and the District of Columbia have enacted legislation specific to charter schools. Within each of these 40 states, individual school charters are granted by designated agencies, typically called “authorizers” or “sponsors.” The entities charged with authorizing charter schools vary by state and locale, but they often include local education agencies, state education agencies, or charter school associations or boards.

Considerable diversity exists in policies and practices related to financing for charter schools because of decentralization in education, generally, and differences in charter school laws nationwide, specifically. States approach
charter school funding differently in terms of the funding formula, the flow and distribution of funds (e.g., directly from the state or through the traditional school districts), and the timing and calculation of payments.

Like all public schools, most public funding for charter schools comes from state and local revenues. Moreover, funding for charter schools from several federal programs is often filtered through the state. Consequently, understanding state funding mechanisms is essential and may offer new avenues for accessing federal funding for charter schools.

Most states with charter school legislation provide schools with a percentage of state per-pupil aid and, in a few cases, a fixed per-pupil amount. However, studies of the parity of funding between charter schools and traditional public schools have found that, on average, charter schools receive and operate with significantly less funding than traditional public schools. One primary reason for this inequity is that charter schools do not receive a proportionate share of local revenue compared with traditional public schools.  

State charter legislation plays a significant role in the parity of funding between charter schools and traditional public schools. In some states, charter schools are eligible for the same education funding available to traditional public schools. In addition, some states have special provisions or funding streams specifically for charter schools. Several states offer charter schools funds for facility and capital expenditures, because finding adequate facilities can be a challenge for charter school developers. All states offer formula grants to charters for special populations of students, such as special education, “at-risk”, or English Language Learner students, though various states maintain different timing and methods of funding dispersement. Consider these examples.

In Georgia, the state department of education offers awards of $5,000 or $10,000 through a competitive grant process to individuals who are pursuing the development of a charter school. This grant is designed to support developers during the research and planning phase of charter school development.

In Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Ohio, South Carolina, and Virginia, all federal and state special education resources provided to the school district on behalf of eligible charter school students must be paid in full to the charter school. Legislation in New York adds that federal and state special education resources should only be paid in proportion to the level of services that charter schools provide to eligible students.

In Wyoming, the state education agency compensates charter schools for the transportation services they provide.

Private Philanthropy

To supplement state and local funding, charter schools often seek funds from private sources such as foundations, businesses, and individual donors. Historically, several local and national foundations have offered support to charter schools and related education reform initiatives. Consider these examples.

The Walton Family Foundation’s Public Charter School Initiative awards grants to independent charter developers for planning and startup. The foundation awards a maximum of $20,000 for charter school developers to create business plans and charter petitions for new schools that serve low-income students in one of its targeted communities. The foundation also provides up to $250,000 in grants to support startup activities prior to official notice of authorization and activities after authorization.

The Prudential Foundation Charter School Lending Program was established in 1997 to provide below-market loans for the startup, early operations, and facilities needs of charter schools. Loans have been provided directly to charter schools in Atlanta, Los Angeles, New Jersey, and Philadelphia as well as through nonprofit financial intermediaries. To date, the program has approved 100 loans totaling $110 million.

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6 See the Walton Family Foundation at http://www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org/forgrantees/types.asp.
7 See the Prudential Foundation at http://www.prudential.com/SocialInvestments.
The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s domestic grant-making program has supported numerous education initiatives that aim to create high-quality high schools. Under this umbrella, the Gates Foundation has provided grants to schools, districts, and states to support charter school initiatives.\(^8\)

The Michael and Susan Dell Foundation supports charter school authorizers in the development of performance management systems. These systems bring sophisticated performance management tools to authorizers and charter schools.\(^9\)

In addition to foundation support for startup and replication, charter schools often seek resources from individual donors, corporate sponsors, and nonprofit partners. This support can be in the form of direct funding or in-kind services.

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\(^8\) See the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s Transforming High Schools Program at [http://www.gatesfoundation.org/UnitedStates/Education/TransformingHighSchools/default.htm](http://www.gatesfoundation.org/UnitedStates/Education/TransformingHighSchools/default.htm).

As charter school leaders begin to explore ways to tap federal funding sources, it is important that they become familiar with the various types of federal funding and fully understand any requirements for matching funds.

Types of Federal Funding

Federal agencies use a variety of mechanisms to distribute funds to recipients. Each funding source serves a particular purpose, and each comes with its own rules and requirements. Understanding the various types of funding programs is important, because the funding mechanism affects the strategies that can be used to access particular programs. The federal programs discussed in this user’s guide fall into the following categories:

- formula/block grants;
- discretionary/project grants;
- entitlement programs;
- direct payments;
- loans/loan guarantees;
- tax credits;
- cooperative agreements

Within the U.S. Department of Education, two main sources of funding exist for all public schools, including charter schools: formula/block grants and discretionary/project grants. The largest and most sustainable funding source is the formula/block grant.

**Formula/Block Grants** provide recipients—usually, states—with a fixed allocation of funds based on an established formula that is tied to a measure of need, such as the poverty rate. For each formula grant, states must submit to the U.S. Department of Education a plan describing the broad functions and population(s) served by the grant-receiving program. States often have flexibility in determining how to spend formula grants to meet program goals. Although states are the primary grantees under this funding mechanism, they can further allocate funds to localities and other eligible entities through sub-grants and contracts. The English Language Acquisition State Grant is one example of a formula/block grant.

- The **English Language Acquisition State Grant**, administered by the U.S. Department of Education, provides financial assistance to improve the education of limited-English-proficient (LEP) children and youth. State education agencies (SEAs) that develop state plans approved by the department receive a formula allotment to award subgrants to local education agencies (LEAs), which must have plans approved by the state. The number of LEP and immigrant children and youth in the LEA determines the funding level of each subgrantee. A charter school can apply directly as a subgrantee if it is considered its own LEA, or the school can partner with its local LEA to receive funds.

**Discretionary/Project Grants** fund a wide range of targeted federal efforts, from providing educational enrichment to supporting drug-free communities. Depending on program requirements, state and local governments, nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, coalitions of community groups and agencies, or others specified by the program can apply directly to the sponsoring federal agency for these funds through a competitive bidding process. Application for a discretionary grant does not guarantee an award, and the amounts received by grantees are not predetermined by a formula. The Teacher Incentive Fund is one example of this type of funding.

- The **Teacher Incentive Fund** awards grants to SEAs, LEAs, and nonprofit organizations to develop and implement performance-based teacher and principal compensation systems in high-need schools. The goals are to increase student achievement by improving teacher and principal effectiveness, reform compensation systems so teachers and principals are rewarded for increases in student achievement, increase the number of effective teachers, and create sustainable performance-based compensation systems.
Entitlement Programs guarantee that all individuals who meet the eligibility requirements receive services. Some of the entitlement programs are listed in this guide, such as the National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs. Although the National School Lunch Program can be classified as a formula grant, the guide identifies it as an entitlement because, as long as intended grantees meet program requirements, they are eligible to receive benefits from the program. Some federal entitlements flow directly to state agencies, which operate the particular program or turn the funds over to local agencies to operate the program. For example, some states operate their Title IV-E program on a statewide basis; in other states, city or county governments run the program. States may also use federal entitlement funds to contract with private nonprofit agencies to perform specific activities that are part of the state plan.

- **National School Lunch Program.** Charter schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program can provide reimbursable meals and snacks to children and youth either during the school day or in afterschool educational or enrichment programs. The Department of Agriculture then makes payments to states to reimburse the schools for serving snacks to children. Snacks served in schools in low-income areas are reimbursed at the free rate; in all other areas, payments are based on each child’s eligibility for free and reduced-price meals. Charter schools that do not have LEA status can partner with school districts participating in the National School Lunch Program to ensure children participating receive nutritious meals and snacks.

Direct payments are funds paid by the federal government directly to individual beneficiaries who satisfy federal eligibility requirements. These programs may, however, be administered by an intermediate state agency or other organization. One example is the Indian School Equalization Program.

- The **Indian School Equalization Program** provides funding for basic education and residential programs to Native American students not being served by public or sectarian schools. Charter schools that are recognized by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) can apply directly or can partner with tribes or tribal organizations served by a BIA-funded school to access this funding.

**Loans/Loan Guarantee Programs** enable non-profit organizations, public and private entities, and private corporations to borrow funds from public or private lenders for specific purposes. These programs can provide funds directly to loan applicants or to institutions that act as intermediaries. The Community Facilities Loan Program is an example.

- **Community Facilities Loans and Grants.** This program provides loans to help develop essential community facilities in rural areas and towns with populations of up to 20,000. Funds may be used to construct, expand or improve community facilities in rural areas for health care, public safety and public services. Charter schools can be considered essential community facilities under this program.

Charter schools may also be able to take advantage of Tax Credit and Cooperative Agreement programs. See Appendix D for examples of these programs.

**Matching Requirements of Federal Programs**

A feature of many federal programs is a requirement for matching funds: recipients must contribute a percentage of program funding from their own sources. In some cases matching funds must be all cash contributions; in other cases in-kind contributions (e.g., space and materials) can be valued and counted as qualified match. For example, the U.S. Department of Justice’s **Drug-Free Communities Grant Program** requires a 100 percent to 125 percent cash or in-kind match.
Charter school leaders often have several barriers to overcome when attempting to access federal dollars, though taking certain steps can improve their chances of success in accessing federal funds. In addition, they must consider several factors as they determine whether the pursuit of certain federal funding sources is a wise decision for their organization. Finally, blending and braiding funding sources may serve as a viable option for charter school leaders as they seek to maximize funding sources to support school development and operation.

Challenges in Accessing Federal Funds

In April 1998, the General Accounting Office (GAO) issued a report to Congress, titled Charter Schools: Federal Funding Available but Barriers Exist, reviewing the ways that charter schools access federal funding. Ten years later, several barriers still thwart charter school leaders’ efforts to access federal funding. This GAO report noted that most charter schools were able to obtain block/formula funding, but discretionary funding was more challenging to access. The report also noted some logistical barriers that charter schools experience when pursuing federal funding, including these.

- Unlike school districts, charter school leaders may not have the administrative capacity to pursue federal grants.
- Some charter school leaders may lack experience in submitting applications to federal programs, unlike district personnel who pursue government grants as a significant focus of their positions.
- State and federal agencies are more experienced in processing district applications. Tailoring the grant opportunities to individual charter schools can be a challenging task.
- If a charter school must rely on the district as its local education agency, the district may not be amenable to funding a school outside its direct authority.

Keys to Success in Accessing Federal Funds

The unique characteristics of charter schools and the rigorous requirements of federal funding programs require time, persistence, and a strategic approach. To increase their chances for success in applying for federal resources, charter school leaders should:

- recall that charter schools are public schools;
- keep a state focus;
- know the school’s legal status;
- make sure the funding program is a good fit;
- focus on scalability;
- demonstrate success; and
- consider all sources of information on funding.

Remember That Charters Are Public Schools

Although this point may seem obvious, its relevance becomes clear when searching for federal programs that exclusively fund charter schools. A limited number of such programs exist, because most federal funding opportunities for charter schools are also available to traditional public schools. The few exceptions include planning/implementation startup grants for charters, dissemination grants for charter schools, and occasional discretionary grants for specific types of charter schools/special learning environments. Some charters may also be uniquely positioned to capture grants reserved for those partnering with, for example, universities, nonprofit organizations, and other community organizations. In general, however, most federal funding opportunities are not crafted differently for charter schools.

Keep a State Focus

Most funding for charter schools is either from state and local sources or is funneled through state and local sources. One of the smartest steps that charter school leaders can take to find federal funding is to research the staff contacts and funding programs of their state department of education. Developing ongoing relationships with state education department staff is also valuable in terms of
accessing federal grants that come through the state and knowing the timeframes for requests for proposals.

Each state department of education has developed a plan regarding the planning, development, and operation of charter schools. This plan includes funding strategies for charter schools. In some instances, the state’s plan has not been funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Charter schools should obtain a copy of their state charter school plan and ask their state department of education whether the plan was funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Charter schools may be eligible for a planning grant early in the school’s existence. Conversely, they may not be ready for a dissemination grant for many years. Each state plan contains directions on uses of federal grant funds and information on eligibility requirements.

**Know the School's Legal Status**

While this may seem like a small detail, each charter school must know its legal status. Whether a charter school is an LEA or a part of a larger school district is a matter of state law. LEA status is significant because it determines whether a charter school is eligible for a myriad of federal funding opportunities. The legal status of a charter school can pose barriers to its ability to access funding streams for categorical purposes. Where such barriers exist, funding streams specifically for charter school needs, such as startup or facilities assistance, are limited. It is important for potential applicants to carefully review each federal grant program’s eligibility requirements. Charter schools should not assume they are eligible or not eligible based on reading the rules for other federal grant programs.

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**Assessing a School’s Capacity to Manage the Grant**

Before deciding to pursue any grant opportunity, charter school leaders should thoroughly review the terms and conditions of the grant with their leadership team to ensure the school has the capacity to effectively manage the grant.

When reviewing the grant notice, pay close attention to the language describing:
- applicant eligibility;
- the scope of work;
- the expected results; and
- applicable rules and regulations.

These "terms and conditions" outline the commitments the school will have to make to comply with grant requirements.

At a minimum, answers to these questions are critical to determining whether the program is a good fit for the school’s programs and initiatives:
- Are the awarded funds designated for a particular use or population?
- Are the awarded funds designated for a particular period?
- How will the school receive the money?
- What are the reporting requirements associated with the grant or contract?
- What staff will be responsible for managing the grant?

In the end, school leaders should also weigh the benefits against the costs of pursuing the grant. If school managers decide to apply for the grant program, they should carefully plan each step of the application and subsequent management and reporting processes as well as maintain open lines of communication with the funder.

If a charter school is not an LEA, it may still be able to apply for various federal opportunities. Attaining nonprofit status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code enables charter schools to apply for additional federal funding opportunities that schools without such status cannot access; this is also true for additional private funding opportunities. Schools can also partner with other nonprofit organizations to apply jointly for some grants.

**Make Sure the Funding Program Is a Good Fit**

While it is easy to become focused on obtaining federal grant funding when pursuing diverse opportunities, it is important that charter school leaders carefully consider whether a particular grant or contract opportunity is right for their school (see, also, Assessing a School’s Capacity to Manage the Grant). Rather than add layers of additional programs in order to receive funding, they should examine the school’s programmatic needs and determine the type of funding that would further its existing activities and services. Again, the only way to achieve this clarity is to focus first on the charter school’s needs and then on funding opportunities that align with these needs.

**Focus on Scalability**

Individual charter schools usually cannot demonstrate success with large numbers of students and teachers in the same way school districts can. One of the goals of federal funding—as well as many types of private funding—is to demonstrate replicable success with a significant number of students in various grades over time. For individual grants and contracts to have lasting effects, the work should be replicable in other settings and/or with many more students.

Because of these expectations, individual charter schools should consider applying in partnership for grants with other charter schools, other public schools, and other community partners such as universities and nonprofit organizations (see Potential Partners for Charter Schools). These partnerships can provide the charter school with additional capacity, more replication possibilities, and the opportunity to affect more students. Such partnerships also increase the charter school’s chances of success in obtaining discretionary and demonstration federal funding.

**Demonstrate Success**

Charter school leaders must have a clear concept of how restricted funding from a particular source can help them advance their school’s educational agenda. In some cases, additional funds must be used to meet program expectations. Most federal discretionary grants have specific purposes and are not intended to cover general operating expenses. Furthermore, federal grant recipients are asked to show that the funds were used for the statutory purposes and to subsequently demonstrate measurable results. Charter schools must have a plan for using federal funds purposefully and should establish clear measures of success at the beginning of the grant or contract period.

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**Potential Partners for Charter Schools**

Partnerships provide opportunities for charter schools to access funding, leadership, technical assistance, and in-kind support. Many federal programs now require collaboration among a group of partners. When looking for potential partners, charter school leaders should consider these organizations and individuals.

- Child welfare agencies
- Health departments
- Health care organizations
- Libraries and literacy programs
- Community mental health providers
- Law enforcement agencies
- School districts
- Rural organizations
- Juvenile justice agencies
- Postsecondary institutions
- Faith-based organizations
- Tribal agencies
- Migrant organizations
- Business leaders
- Private lenders
- Economic development organizations
Consider All Sources of Information on Funding

Two significant organizational capacity challenges for many charter schools are tracking when grant opportunities become available and responding to grant applications in the allotted time. Charter school leaders can use the support of their community partners by giving a small group of supportive parents or board members the responsibility for regularly reviewing potential funding opportunities. School leaders may also consider joining statewide and local charter school associations, which often collect valuable funding information and disseminate it to members.

Several sources of information on federal funding announcements should be regularly perused to keep abreast of opportunities to access funding.

- **Funding “outlooks” published on federal agency websites.** These outlooks are usually published annually and provide information on grant opportunities that will be open in the coming year as well as a schedule of availability. For example, the U.S. Department of Education creates an annual “Guide to U.S. Department of Education Programs,” which lists all education funding opportunities and can be found on the department’s website at [http://www.ed.gov/programs/gtep/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/programs/gtep/index.html).

- **Grants.gov.** This website, accessed at [http://www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov), enables grant seekers to find and apply for competitive grant opportunities from all federal grant-making agencies electronically. Grants.gov also has an e-mail notification service.

- **Federal Register.** Although reading this entire publication can be tedious, grant seekers should pay closest attention to the last paragraph of each grant description. In this paragraph, the federal government’s contact for the grant is listed and should be contacted for specific questions. This resource can help charter schools learn about fast-moving opportunities (e.g., one-time discretionary grants that are announced and granted in 60 days).

- **The Foundation Center.** This source tracks both public and private funding opportunities from a large number of locations/sources of funding. Visit [http://foundationcenter.org/](http://foundationcenter.org/).

Criteria for Choosing Among Funding Sources

When considering various funding sources, federal or otherwise, several factors should be considered. Carefully weighing these criteria will help direct and focus grant-writing efforts (see, also, Overview of Financing Strategies).

- **Mission: Does the funding source fit with the school’s mission?** Rather than spending energy and resources following up on all available funding opportunities, discern whether the funding source truly supports the school’s goals.

- **Use of Funds: Does the funding source support the right activities?** Some federal funding sources can support an array of activities and services, while others reserve resources for narrowly defined purposes or populations. Before applying, determine whether the funded activities will advance the school’s goals (e.g., enhanced academic performance).

- **Added Value: Do the benefits outweigh the costs?** Many federal funding sources have significant reporting and/or eligibility verification requirements. Also, creating and maintaining the partnerships required by some funding sources requires time and effort. Charter school leaders should have a clear understanding of the costs and benefits of participating in federal funding programs. In some cases, the administrative costs may outweigh the financial returns.

- **Diversified Portfolio: Does the funding source expand or create balance in the charter school’s funding portfolio?** This user’s guide focuses on maximizing federal funds. Yet creating a diversified portfolio of resources is important, because political and economic changes and altered priorities can significantly affect grant or contract availability. Ideally, a portfolio should contain a mix of short-term, long-term, categorical, and flexible funding sources from a variety of public and private sources.
Overview of Financing Strategies
Charter school leaders can implement four broad categories of financing strategies to support the development and implementation of programs and services for their students. These strategies can be implemented at the school level, but state and local policymakers can also implement various system-level approaches to support statewide reforms. The most appropriate strategy or combination of strategies will depend on the charter school’s unique characteristics (e.g., school curriculum and specialized student populations), its stage of development, and the economic and political environment in which it operates.

Strategy 1: Making Good Use of Existing Resources
Ensuring that current resources are spent in the most effective and efficient way helps prevent the need to constantly seek additional funding sources. Efforts to make better use of existing resources include creating efficiencies by streamlining administration, making good use of nonmonetary resources, and developing strong internal operations and management systems.

Strategy 2: Maximizing Public Revenue
Maximizing federal and state revenue is a financing strategy that enables charter school leaders to identify relevant public funding sources and draw down the maximum amount that can be obtained from each source. This strategy entails identifying, tracking, and monitoring grant opportunities at the federal and state levels, understanding how the various federal funding streams flow, and learning which decisionmakers control the allocation of funds in their state or community.

Strategy 3: Building Partnerships
Building partnerships involves joining forces and collaborating with colleagues and various players in the community to expand the base of support for charter school students and their families. These partnerships can take place between and across the public and private sectors and can help leverage financial resources, contribute leadership, help frame the policy agenda, and contribute to improved academic outcomes.

Strategy 4: Generating New Revenue
Charter school leaders seeking to generate new revenue streams can focus on raising public- and private-sector funds for specific programs, services, and capacities. These funds can be generated privately at the program level through fundraising, charging fees (e.g., for extra uniforms or supplies and materials for supplemental programs and activities), and taking advantage of opportunities for unrelated business income (e.g., renting space or consulting for other schools).

To learn more about developing a strategic financing plan, see The Finance Project publication Thinking Broadly: Financing Strategies for Youth Programs at www.financeproject.org.


Tips for Blending and Braiding Federal Funding Sources

As charter school leaders determine which federal programs constitute a good match for their schools, they should also consider opportunities for blending and braiding resources from multiple special purpose federal funding streams (see Blending and Braiding of Funds Defined). Bringing together traditionally separate programs enables school leaders to align and incorporate discrete categorical funding streams. Such blending and braiding can result in services that are integrated and highly responsive to the needs of diverse charter school students.  

Despite these benefits, federal categorical funding streams can be difficult to coordinate and combine because of three major program characteristics:

1. Eligibility requirements—targeted student populations and agency/school eligibility;
2. Programs regulations—requirements regarding service delivery, content and curriculum standards, and quality standards; and
3. Administrative requirements—reporting, data collection, and other administrative requirements that have the potential to tax the organizational capacity of the school.

School leaders can examine each potential funding source to devise strategies to increase flexibility, which may involve coordinating funds at a school or community level or changing the structure and regulations of funding streams at the state or county level.

Blending and Braiding Funds Defined

Several different terms are used to describe efforts to use separate funding streams in coordinated and flexible ways. Many individuals refer to all efforts to use funding streams flexibly as “blending.” In The Finance Project publication *Blending and Braiding Funds to Support Early Care and Education Initiatives*, the authors describe three distinct types of flexibility (or blending) strategies: coordination, pooling, and decategorizing.

- **Coordination**—a community- and program-level strategy for using separate categorical streams together to support seamless service. This strategy is also often referred to as “braiding” because separate funding streams are wrapped together to support unified services.
- **Pooling**—a strategy, most commonly used at the state and county levels, in which flexible pots of funding are blended into one funding pool.
- **Decategorizing**—another state-level strategy that is focused on making funding streams less “categorical” by removing, reducing, or aligning requirements and regulations. Funds from more than one program are “blended” into a unified funding stream.


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12 Ibid.
Service Domains and Categories

To guide the inclusion of federal funding sources in the online, searchable database at http://www.charterresource.org/index.cfm?page=5, the National Resource Center on Charter School Finance and Governance (NRC) developed a framework of broad spending domains and specific program elements for which leaders in the charter school community may seek funds (see Framework of Service Domains and Appendix A). This framework reflects the activities and services in which charter schools engage, the various populations they serve, and the infrastructure that supports charter school development and operation.

The framework includes the following five broad service domains:

- education/academic support;
- youth development;
- health and well-being;
- student support services; and
- infrastructure.

The NRC has further categorized specific charter school program elements that could be encompassed within each service domain. Many of the federal funding programs identified have broad purposes and could fund several different charter school activities. Consequently, these programs are categorized as being able to support multiple domains and program elements.

To access federal funding programs, charter school leaders must relate the use of potential funding sources with the functions, activities, and initiatives of their school. By identifying the service domains and categories that federal programs can support, charter school leaders can be strategic in matching funding sources to the development and ongoing support of their school’s programs. The service domains and categories described in the framework are interrelated, and many federal funding sources identified in the Federal Funding Catalog can support more than one set of activities. Following is an overview of the service domains and examples of federal programs that can support charter school activities, services, and supports.

Education/Academic Support

As charter school leaders endeavor to meet and adhere to heightened accountability measures, specifically those regarding academic achievement and teacher quality, establishing programs that support academic enrichment in specific subject areas and age groups can aid in their efforts to increase student learning. Federal programs that provide additional resources and services in math, science and technology, literacy, and English as a Second Language can help charter schools meet state standards, while other programs support enrichment activities in other curriculum areas such as physical education and the arts.

Moreover, many of these educational programs target specific population groups, such as special education students, Native Americans, Native Hawaiians, and migrant students. For example, the U.S. Department of Education’s Migrant Education High School Equivalency Program supports services that help migrant and seasonal farmworkers (or children of such workers) obtain the equivalent of a high school diploma and, subsequently, to gain employment or begin postsecondary education or training. General vocational education and career readiness are additional areas included in this service domain.

Youth Development

In addition to providing rich academic environments for their students, many charter schools seek to offer activities and services that promote positive youth development. Charter schools can provide students with a safe, nurturing environment where they can engage in leadership and character-building programs. In addition, charter schools can partner with community- and faith-based organizations to provide opportunities for students to engage in community service activities. For example, Learn and Serve America and AmeriCorps, administered by the...
Framework of Service Domains
The framework includes five broad service domains.

Education/Academic Support
- **Arts/Cultural Education**: activities or services that promote arts and cultural knowledge and skill building.
- **Early Childhood Education**: activities or services that support the development and education of young children.
- **English as a Second Language**: activities or services that help non-native, English-speaking children and youth acquire English language competency.
- **English/Literacy**: activities or services that help youth and their families acquire basic skills in reading, writing, and English language competency.
- **Environmental Education**: activities or services that promote environmental awareness and instruction in environmental and ecological disciplines.
- **Math, Science, and Technology**: activities or services that support academic achievement in the math and sciences and technology-based instruction.
- **Social Studies/Civic Education**: activities or services that encourage and provide youth with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for effective democratic citizenship.
- **Special Education**: activities or services that support the education and development of children with disabilities and special needs.
- **Vocational Education**: activities or services that help youth acquire career and technical skills at the secondary level.

Youth Development
- **Character Building**: activities or services that teach and encourage responsibility and add to an individual’s decision-making capacity.
- **Cultural Awareness**: activities or services that promote cultural awareness and focus on positive youth development.
- **Delinquency Prevention**: activities or services that aim to reduce risky behavior and promote positive youth development, including gang prevention and community policing.
- **Leadership Development**: activities or services that encourage and provide children and youth with opportunities to develop leadership skills.
- **Life Skills**: activities or services that provide youth with the opportunities to gain skills for everyday living, such as parenting and financial management.
- **Mentoring**: activities or services that provide children and youth with caring adults who can offer guidance and support and connect them with resources to facilitate their growth and development.
- **Community Service**: activities or services that provide children and youth with opportunities to engage in community service activities.

Health and Well-Being
- **Food and Nutrition**: activities or services that help children and youth learn about and meet their nutritional needs, such as meal programs.
- **Health Education**: activities and services that support instruction in health and physical education and that promote healthy development.

*Continued on page 19*
### Framework of Service Domains (continued from page 18)

#### Health and Well-Being (continued)
- **Medical, Dental, and Reproductive Health**: activities or services that provide oral, physical, obstetric, and gynecological health care services, including public health insurance program outreach.
- **Mental Health and Behavioral Services**: prevention and treatment services for mental health, behavior problems and disorders, and substance abuse.
- **Recreation/Fitness**: activities or services that promote fitness and physical development, including athletics or parks and recreation programs.
- **Safety and Violence Prevention**: activities or services that support the creation of safe school environments and the prevention of violence among youth.

#### Student Support Services
- **Academic Support Services**: activities or services that supplement regular academic instruction to promote academic achievement, such as tutoring and other supplemental education services.
- **Before- and After-School Care**: activities or services for children and youth provided during out-of-school time hours.
- **Child Care**: activities or services that provide or help youth secure and pay for child care, including referrals, child care subsidies, and capacity building.
- **College Prep Services**: activities or services that educate youth about and encourage them to go on to college, including helping them acquire the necessary skills.
- **Drop out Prevention and Recovery**: activities or services that prevent youth from becoming school dropouts and engage youth who have already dropped out.
- **GED Classes**: activities or services that prepare youth to acquire their General Educational Development diplomas.
- **Guidance Counseling**: activities or services that support growth and development across multiple domains, including education, employment, and postsecondary education.
- **Housing**: activities or services that provide or help youth secure housing. (e.g., charter schools that provide housing for students).
- **Transportation**: services that provide transportation to and from school and school-related activities.

#### Infrastructure
- **Facilities**: activities or services related to securing facilities; financing capital improvement, such as construction, upgrades, and expansions; and paying for facilities operation and maintenance.
- **Management Systems**: activities or services that support the development or operation of the internal systems of charter schools, including financial systems, governing boards, and teacher recruitment.
- **Parental Involvement**: activities or services that encourage and support parents in becoming involved in the school and in educational activities with their children.
- **Planning and Evaluation**: activities or services related to the planning, development, coordination, and evaluation of programs or initiatives, including curriculum development.
- **Professional Development**: activities or services that support staff training and development in various disciplines.
- **Technical Assistance**: activities or services that provide technical assistance and training to charter school staff and developers, including the development of technical assistance and training resources.
- **Volunteers**: programs that encourage and support volunteer participation in schools and school-related activities.
FINDING FUNDING  Section IV: Federal Funding for Charter Schools

Corporation for National and Community Service, provide support for community service programs. Several federal funding sources can support charter school activities that aim to foster the social and emotional development of youth and build life skills.

**Health and Well-Being**
Charter schools can take steps to promote healthy behavior and provide important health resources to the youth and families they serve. Charter schools may tap federal funding programs that support providing healthy and nutritious breakfasts and lunches for low-income students (e.g., those administered by the Food and Nutrition Service) or efforts to expand the physical education curriculum (e.g., the U.S. Department of Education’s Carol M. White Physical Education Program). Federal funds also are available to charter schools working to guarantee that the school environment is safe and free of violence.

**Student Support Services**
Support services are critical to meet the various needs of charter school students. Some charter schools provide transportation or housing services to students in need, while others provide supplemental services that focus on supporting students’ academic success and their preparation for and access to postsecondary education. The U.S. Department of Education’s Advanced Placement Incentive Program provides grants to increase the participation of low-income students in Advanced Placement (AP) classes and improve performance on AP exams. Many charter school programs also work to build students’ life skills in areas such as parenting and financial management. Grants to states and communities under the Education for Homeless Children and Youths program is another example of federal funding geared toward student support services. Such support services can play a key role in helping students achieve success in school and in life.

**Infrastructure**
Charter schools are most effective when the supporting infrastructure can effectively meet the demands of the students and communities they serve. Evaluation, planning and coordination, the provision of professional development and technical assistance, and the acquisition and maintenance of adequate and safe facilities all support the development of strong organizational infrastructures. Several federal funding programs, such as the National Writing Project grant for teacher education or the Teacher Incentive Fund, support teacher and principal professional development and provide technical assistance to leaders and staff on various academic and supportive programs. A few programs specifically support the acquisition, building, and/or maintenance of facilities, either through grants, loans, or other funding mechanisms.
The National Resource Center on Charter School Finance and Governance’s online, searchable database of federal funding sources for charter school initiatives provides information on 108 federal programs that could be used to support charter school funding needs. Users can access the Federal Funding Catalog at [http://www.charterresource.org/index.cfm?page=5](http://www.charterresource.org/index.cfm?page=5).

When using the catalog, charter school leaders should think broadly about the programming and activities to be funded and consider using different funding options to meet financial goals. To facilitate this process, the catalog is indexed into the five broad service domains detailed in Section IV: education/academic support; health and well-being; infrastructure; student support services; and youth development.

Within each service domain, programs are further categorized to identify specific types of services or activities that can be supported. Many of the federal funding programs included in the catalog have broad statements of purpose and can fund diverse services and activities. These funding sources are included in multiple service domains and categories.

The search function of the online catalog enables users to search all the federal funding sources in the database and identify those that meet the specific needs of a charter school or initiative. Users can search by:
- uses of funds;
- federal agency;
- eligible applicants;
- type of funding; and
- matching requirement.

Searches of the online catalog will produce tables that provide considerable information on each source. The table for each federal funding source includes the following information:
- name of the funding source or program;
- name of the responsible federal agency;
- authorizing legislation;
- funding type;
- a brief description of the funding source’s purpose;
- a description of how the funds may be used;
- entities eligible to apply for the funds;
- a brief description of the application process;
- funding award and disbursement procedures;
- funding history, including current and past allocation amounts;
- matching requirements, if any;
- contact information, including website address; and
- a listing of potential partners.

Once users receive their online search results, it will be useful to refer back to this guide to determine which funding sources will prove the best match for individual schools.
As the charter school movement expands nationwide, so does the demand for funding to support the many unique services and activities that charter schools provide. Federal programs can be a viable financing option for many charter school leaders to help fill gaps that may exist between allotted per-pupil funding and burgeoning operating, categorical, and facilities costs.

This user’s guide and the accompanying online, searchable Federal Funding Catalog help charter operators and developers, along with their partners in nonprofit, public, and private organizations, identify and access the federal funding programs that best suit the needs of their individual schools or initiatives. By adding federal resources to their funding portfolio, charter school operators can help ensure they have a more diverse and sustainable funding base that will support school operations for years to come.
The matrix of federal funding sources in Appendix A sorts programs by service domain and category and details activities and services that can be supported under each program. Appendixes B, C, and D sort the federal funding sources listed in the online Federal Funding Catalog by, respectively, federal agency, eligible applicant, and funding type. These lists can help charter school leaders better understand the funding programs available to support their activities and services. Charter school leaders are urged to consider several factors as they determine which resources are a good match for their programs, including:

- whether the goals of the funding agency align with the charter school’s mission;
- whether the charter school is considered an eligible applicant and, if not, what partnerships may help school leaders access funds; and
- whether the charter school’s leadership and staff have the capacity to access and maintain particular types of funding programs.
## Appendix A. Federal Funding Sources: Domains and Categories

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<th>Health &amp; Wellbeing</th>
<th>Infrastructure</th>
<th>Student Support Services</th>
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**21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC)**

**Abstinence Education Program**

**Adolescent Family Life: Demonstration Projects**

**Advanced Placement Program**

**Alaska Native Education Equity**

**AmeriCorps**

**Arts Education Program**

**Business and Industry Guaranteed Loans**

**Career and Technical Education: Grants to Native Americans and Native Hawaiians**

**Carol M. White Physical Education Program**

**Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)**

**Child Care and Development Block Grant**

**Children, Youth and Families At Risk Initiative (CYFAR)**

**Community Development Block Grant (CDBG): Section 108 Loan Guarantees**

**Community Development Block Grant (CDBG): Entitlement Grants**

**Community Development Block Grant (CDBG): States’ Program**

**Community Facilities Loan Program**

**Community Outreach Partnership Center Program**

**Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)**

**Community-Based Abstinence Education**

**Compassion Capital Fund: Communities Empowering Youth Program**

**Compassion Capital Fund: Targeted Capacity Building**
## Appendix A. Federal Funding Sources: Domains and Categories

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### Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children with Serious Emotional Disturbances (SED)
- Facilies
- Management Systems
- Parental Involvement
- Planning and Evaluation
- Professional Development
- Technical Assistance
- Volunteers
- Academic Support Services
- Before and After School Care
- Child Care
- College Prep Services
- Dropout Prevention & Recovery
- GED Classes
- Guidance Counseling
- Housing
- Transportation
- Character Building
- Community Service
- Cultural Awareness
- Delinquency Prevention
- Life Skills
- Mentoring
## Appendix A. Federal Funding Sources: Domains and Categories

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**Examples of Funding Sources:**
- Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T)
- Grants for the Integration of Schools and Mental Health Systems
- Grants to Reduce Alcohol Abuse
- Head Start
- Healthy Schools, Healthy Communities
- Healthy Start Initiative
- Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) Assisting Communities
- Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Program
- Impact Aid Section 8008
- Improving Literacy Through School Libraries
- Indian Child and Family Education
- Indian Child Welfare Act Title II Grants
- Indian Education: Grants to Local Educational Agencies
- Indian School Equalization Program
- Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Grant Program
- Learn and Serve America: School and Community-Based Programs
- Learning in the Arts for Children and Youth
- Learning Through Assisting: Developmental Disabilities Priority Area I
- Mentoring Grants
- National Professional Development Program
- National School Lunch Program
- Native American and Alaska Native Children in School Program
- Native American Employment and Training Program
- Native Hawaiian Education
- Native Hawaiian Vocational Education
- New Markets Tax Credit
- Partnerships in Character Education Program
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28
Appendix B. Federal Funding Sources Listed by Agency

This appendix lists the federal funding sources in the online NRC’s Federal Funding catalog by agency. Each federal agency has a different mission and culture, and each is most likely to fund applicants whose work will help forward its own organizational vision. As charter school leaders consider which programs to pursue, they should ensure the mission of their school or initiative aligns with that of the funding agency.

**Corporation for National and Community Service**
- AmeriCorps
- Corporation for National and Community Service: Training and Technical Assistance
- Foster Grandparent Program
- Learn and Serve America: School and Community-Based Programs
- Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)
- Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA)

**Department of Agriculture**
- Business and Industry Guaranteed Loans
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
- Children, Youth, and Families At-Risk Initiative (CYFAR)
- Community Facilities Loan Program
- Cooperative Extension Service: 4-H Youth Development Program
- Food Donation
- National School Lunch Program
- Rural Development Communities Facilities Direct and Guaranteed Loan Programs
- School Breakfast Program
- Special Milk Program for Children
- Summer Food Services Program for Children

**Department of Education**
- 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21CLC)
- Advanced Placement Program
- Alaska Native Education Equity
- Arts in Education
- Career and Technical Education: Grants to Native Americans and Native Hawaiians
- Carol M. White Physical Education Program
- Credit Enhancement for Charter School Facilities
- Early Childhood Educator Professional Development Program
- Early Reading First
- Education for Homeless Children and Youth
- Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Programs
- English Language Acquisition State Grants
- Enhancing Education through Technology State Program
- Even Start: Family Literacy Programs
- Even Start: Indian Tribes and Tribal Organizations
- Even Start: Migrant Education
- Foreign Language Assistance Program
- Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS)
- Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP): State Grants and Partnership Grants
- Grants for the Integration of Schools and Mental Health Systems
- Grants to Reduce Alcohol Abuse
- Impact Aid Section 8008
- Improving Literacy through School Libraries
- Indian Education: Grants to Local Education Agencies
- Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Grant Program
- Mentoring Grants
- National Professional Development Program
- Native American and Alaska Native Children in School
- Native Hawaiian Education
- Native Hawaiian Vocational Education
- Partnerships in Character Education Program
- Professional Development for Arts Educators
- Professional Development Program: Indian Education
- Public Charter Schools Program
- Qualified Zone Academies Bond
- Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools
- Reading First
- Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act: National Programs
- Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act: State Programs
- Safe and Drug-Free Schools Native Hawaiian Program
- Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative
- School Leadership Program
- Small Learning Communities
Special Education—National Activities: Technology and Media Services
Special Education—Preschool Grants
Special Education—Grants to States
State Charter School Facilities Incentive Grant Program
Striving Readers
Teacher Incentive Fund
Teaching American History Grants
Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies
Title Supplemental Services
Transition to Teaching Program
TRIO—Education Opportunity Centers
TRIO—Talent Search
TRIO—Upward Bound
TRIO—Upward Bound Math-Science
Vocational Education Basic Grants to States Program
Voluntary Public School Choice Program

Department of Health and Human Services
Abstinence Education Program
Adolescent Family Life: Demonstration Projects
Child Care and Development Block Grant
Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)
Community-Based Abstinence Education
Compassion Capital Fund: Communities Empowering Youth Program
Compassion Capital Fund: Targeted Capacity Building
Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children with Serious Emotional Disturbances
Consolidated Health Centers (Community Health Centers, Migrant Health Centers, Health Care for the Homeless, Public Housing Primary Care, and School-Based Health Centers)
Head Start
Healthy Schools, Healthy Communities
Healthy Start Initiative
Learning through Assisting: Developmental Disabilities Priority Area I

Department of Housing and Urban Development
Community Development Block Grant (CDBG): Section 108 Loan Guarantees
Community Development Block Grant (CDBG): Entitlement Grants
Community Development Block Grants (CDBG): States’ Program

Department of the Interior
Indian Child and Family Education
Indian Child Welfare Act Title II Grants
Indian School Equalization Program

Department of Justice
Drug-Free Communities Support Program
Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T)
Title V Delinquency Prevention Program
Tribal Youth Program (Title V)

Department of Labor
Native American Employment and Training Program
Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Youth Activities

Department of Treasury
New Markets Tax Credit

Environmental Protection Agency
Environmental Education Grant Program

Federal Emergency Management Agency
Public Assistance Grant Program

National Endowment for the Arts
Learning in the Arts for Children and Youth
Appendix C: Federal Funding Sources by Eligible Applicant

This appendix lists the federal funding sources in the NRC’s Federal Funding Catalog according to the type of organization eligible to receive grant funds directly from the federal government. Eligible applicants are divided into eight broad groupings:

- state/territorial agencies (includes state education agencies);
- Indian tribes;
- local education agencies;
- local public agencies;
- institutions of higher education;
- nonprofit and community-based organizations;
- partnerships; and
- other (includes applicants not covered by the other groupings).

This appendix also includes a group of funding sources under the heading Open Eligibility for which any of the above-listed entities can apply. These funding sources, as well as those in the individual groupings, can help school leaders to get a full picture of the sources available to charter schools.

Remember that even though a funding source may indicate a specific applicant, a charter school that is not eligible as a direct grantee may be able to access funds as a subgrantee or through a partnership arrangement with an eligible grantee. For example, most block grants are released to a designated state agency, which may then subgrant funds to a variety of organizations within the state to fulfill the purposes of the block grant. To avoid confusion, this appendix lists all funding sources according to the entity that receives funds directly from the federal government.

The groupings are broad, and a few exceptions exist for every funding source. Visit the online catalog entry to obtain more information on charter school eligibility.

State and Territorial Agencies
These funding sources specifically identify state and territorial agencies as eligible applicants or, in many cases, required applicants. Again, in many cases, charter school leaders and/or their partners (e.g., school districts and nonprofit organizations) may apply to the administering state agency to access these funding streams. Note: Funding sources that designate state education agencies as the recipient are listed separately.

- Abstinence Education Program
- AmeriCorps
- Child Care and Developmental Block Grant
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG): States’ Program
- Community Facilities Loan Program
- Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)
- Community-Based Abstinence Education
- Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children with Serious Emotional Disturbances
- Food Donation
- Foster Grandparent Program
- Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP): State Grants and Partnership Grants
- Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.)
- Healthy Start Initiative
- Indian School Equalization Program
- Learning through Assisting: Developmental Disabilities Priority Area
- National School Lunch Program
- Public Assistance Grant Program
- Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)
- Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act: State Grants
- School Breakfast Program
- Special Education: Grants to States
- Special Milk Program for Children
- Summer Food Service Program for Children
- Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies
- Title V Delinquency Prevention Program
- Vocational Education Basic Grants to States Program
- Volunteer in Service to America (VISTA)
- Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Youth Activities

State Educational Agencies
Note: Local school districts and schools often may also access this funding and should contact the state education agency for requirements.

- 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21CCLC)
- Advanced Placement Program
- Arts in Education
Early Childhood Educator Professional Development Program
Education for Homeless Children and Youth
English Language Acquisition State Grants
Enhancing Education through Technology State Program
Environmental Education Grant Program
Even Start: Family Literacy Programs
Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP): State Grants and Partnership Grants
Grants for the Integration of Schools and Mental Health Systems
Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Grant Program
Learn and Serve America: School and Community-Based Programs
National Professional Development Program
National School Lunch Program
Partnerships in Character Education Program
Professional Development Program—Indian Education
Public Charter Schools Program
Reading First
Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act: State Programs
Special Education—National Activities: Technology and Media Services
Special Education—Preschool Grants
Special Education—Grants to States
State Charter School Facilities Incentive Grant Program
Teacher Incentive Fund
Transition to Teaching Program
Voluntary Public School Choice Program

Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children with Serious Emotional Disturbances
Consolidated Health Centers (Community Health Centers, Migrant Health Centers, Health Care for the Homeless, Public Housing Primary Care, and School Based Health Centers)
Environmental Education Grant Program
Even Start: Indian Tribes and Tribal Organizations
Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T)
Grants for the Integration of Schools and Mental Health Systems
Head Start
Healthy Start Initiative
Indian Child and Family Education
Indian Child Welfare Act Title II Grants
Indian School Equalization Program
Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Grant Program
Learn and Serve America: School and Community-Based Programs
Native American Employment and Training Program
Professional Development Program—Indian Education
Public Assistance Grant Program
Rural Development Communities Facilities Direct and Guaranteed Loan Programs
Special Education—National Activities: Technology and Media Services
Special Education—Grants to States
Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies
Tribal Youth Program (Title V)

**Indian Tribes**
These funding sources are made available to nationally recognized tribal government entities. Some programs are allocated only to specific tribes.

- AmeriCorps
- Business and Industry Guaranteed Loans
- Career and Technical Education: Grants to Native Americans and Native Hawaiians
- Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)
- Community-Based Abstinence Education
- Compassion Capital Fund: Communities Empowering Youth Program
- Compassion Capital Fund: Targeted Capacity Building
- Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children with Serious Emotional Disturbances
- Consolidated Health Centers (Community Health Centers, Migrant Health Centers, Health Care for the Homeless, Public Housing Primary Care, and School Based Health Centers)
- Environmental Education Grant Program
- Even Start: Indian Tribes and Tribal Organizations
- Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T)
- Grants for the Integration of Schools and Mental Health Systems
- Head Start
- Healthy Start Initiative
- Indian Child and Family Education
- Indian Child Welfare Act Title II Grants
- Indian School Equalization Program
- Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Grant Program
- Learn and Serve America: School and Community-Based Programs
- Native American Employment and Training Program
- Professional Development Program—Indian Education
- Public Assistance Grant Program
- Rural Development Communities Facilities Direct and Guaranteed Loan Programs
- Special Education—National Activities: Technology and Media Services
- Special Education—Grants to States
- Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies
- Tribal Youth Program (Title V)

**Local Education Agencies (LEAs)**
This grouping includes funding sources that are administered directly to local school districts—or charter schools considered their own LEAs—and schools.

- 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21CCLC)
- Advanced Placement Program
- Arts in Education
- Carol M. White Physical Education Program
- Child and Adult Care Food Program
- Community-Based Abstinence Education
- Early Childhood Educator Professional Development Program
- Early Reading First
- Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Programs
- Enhancing Education through Technology State Program
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- Environmental Education Grant Program
- Even Start: Family Literacy Programs
- Foreign Language Assistance Program
- Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP): State Grants and Partnership Grants
- Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T)
- Grants for the Integration of Schools and Mental Health Systems
- Grants to Reduce Alcohol Abuse
- Head Start
- Impact Aid Section 8008
- Improving Literacy through School Libraries
- Indian Education: Grants to Local Education Agencies
- Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Grant Program
- Learning through Assisting: Developmental Disabilities Priority Area I
- National Professional Development Program
- National School Lunch Program
- Partnerships in Character Education Program
- Professional Development for Arts Educators
- Professional Development Program—Indian Education
- Public Charter Schools Program
- Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools
- Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act: National Programs
- Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative
- School Leadership Program
- Small Learning Communities
- Special Education—National Activities: Technology and Media Services
- Special Milk Program for Children
- Striving Readers
- Summer Food Service Program for Children
- Teacher Incentive Fund
- Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies
- Transition to Teaching Program
- Vocational Education Basic Grants to States Program
- Voluntary Public School Choice Program

Local Public Agencies

Eligible applicants under this grouping include city and/or county governments, and, in some cases, local public housing authorities.
- Alaska Native Education Equity
- Arts in Education

- Business and Industry Guaranteed Loans
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG): Section 108 Loan Guarantees
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG): Entitlement Grants
- Community Facilities Loan Program
- Community-Based Abstinence Education
- Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children with Serious Emotional Disturbances
- Consolidated Health Centers (Community Health Centers, Migrant Health Centers, Health Care for the Homeless, Public Housing Primary Care, and School-Based Health Centers)
- Drug-Free Communities Support Program
- Early Reading First
- Even Start: Family Literacy Programs
- Foster Grandparent Program
- Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP): State Grants and Partnership Grants
- Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T)
- Grants for the Integration of Schools and Mental Health Systems
- Head Start
- Healthy Schools, Healthy Communities
- Healthy Start Initiative
- Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Grant Program
- Learn and Serve America: School and Community-Based Programs
- Learning through Assisting: Developmental Disabilities Priority Area I
- Public Assistance Grant Program
- Qualified Academies Zone Bond
- Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)
- Rural Development Communities Facilities Direct and Guaranteed Loan Programs
- Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act: National Programs
- School Breakfast Program
- Special Milk Program for Children
- TRIO—Education Opportunity Centers
- TRIO—Talent Search
- TRIO—Upward Bound
- TRIO—Upward Bound Math-Science
- Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA)
Institutions of Higher Education

These sources of funding are directed to colleges and universities. Many of these programs emphasize the creation of partnerships between postsecondary institutions and nonprofit or government agencies. Charter school leaders should consider partnering with a local college or university to access these funds.

- Arts in Education
- Compassion Capital Fund: Communities Empowering Youth Program
- Early Childhood Educator Professional Development Program
- Early Reading First
- Enhancing Education through Technology State Program
- Environmental Education Grant Program
- Even Start: Family Literacy Programs
- Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP): State Grants and Partnership Grants
- National Professional Development Program
- Professional Development Program—Indian Education
- School Leadership Program
- Special Education—National Activities: Technology and Media Services
- Transition to Teaching Program
- TRIO—Education Opportunity Centers
- TRIO—Talent Search
- TRIO—Upward Bound
- TRIO—Upward Bound Math-Science
- Vocational Education Basic Grants to States Program

Nonprofits and Community-Based Organizations

Eligible applicants in this grouping include nonprofit entities such as community-based organizations or, in some cases, faith-based organizations and charter schools that have applied for tax exempt status. Many of these funding sources are structured for partnerships involving state or local programs. Charter school leaders can form partnerships with local nonprofit or community based organizations to access these programs.

- 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21CCLC)
- Advanced Placement Program
- Alaska Native Education Equity
- AmeriCorps
- Arts in Education
- Carol M. White Physical Education Program
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
- Community-Based Abstinence Education
- Compassion Capital Fund: Communities Empowering Youth Program
- Compassion Capital Fund: Targeted Capacity Building
- Consolidated Health Centers (Community Health Centers, Migrant Health Centers, Health Care for the Homeless, Public Housing Primary Care, and School-Based Health Centers)
- Credit Enhancement for Charter Schools Facilities
- Drug-Free Communities Support Program
- Early Childhood Educator Professional Development Program
- Early Reading First
- Environmental Education Grant Program
- Even Start: Family Literacy Programs
- Foster Grandparent Program
- Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP): State Grants and Partnership Grants
- Head Start
- Healthy Schools, Healthy Communities
- Healthy Start Initiative
- Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Grant Program
- Learn and Serve America: School and Community-Based Programs
- Learning through Assisting: Developmental Disabilities Priority Area 1
- National School Lunch Program
- Native American and Alaska Native Children in School Program
- Native Hawaiian Education
- Public Assistance Grant Program
- Public Charter Schools Program
- Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)
- Rural Development Communities Facilities Direct and Guaranteed Loan Programs
- Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act: National Programs
- Safe and Drug-Free Schools Native Hawaiian Program
- School Breakfast Program
- School Leadership Program
- Special Milk Program for Children
- Striving Readers
- Summer Food Service Program for Children
- Teacher Incentive Fund
- Transition to Teaching Program
• TRIO—Education Opportunity Centers
• TRIO—Talent Search
• TRIO—Upward Bound
• TRIO—Upward Bound Math-Science
• Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA)

Partnerships
These funding sources specifically list partnerships or consortia as eligible or required applicants. This eligibility requirement does not mean organizations may not apply jointly for other funding sources; it means these funding sources specifically identify partnership applicants.
• AmeriCorps
• Arts in Education
• Business and Industry Guaranteed Loans
• Career and Technical Education: Grants to Native Americans and Native Hawaiians
• Early Reading First
• Even Start: Family Literacy Programs
• Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP): State Grants and Partnership Grants
• Learning through Assisting: Developmental Disabilities Priority Area 1
• New Markets Tax Credit
• Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative
• Striving Readers
• Teaching American History Grants
• TRIO—Education Opportunity Centers
• TRIO—Talent Search
• TRIO—Upward Bound
• TRIO—Upward Bound Math-Science

Other
These funding sources are open to groups that are not covered by any of the other categories. Read the individual program details in the online catalog to determine whether a particular charter school is eligible for these funds.
• 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21CCCLC)
• Arts in Education
• Business and Industry Guaranteed Loans
• Career and Technical Education: Grants to Native Americans and Native Hawaiians
• Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
• Children, Youth, and Families At-Risk Initiative (CYFAR)
• Community Facilities Loan Program
• Compassion Capital Fund: Communities Empowering Youth Program
• Cooperative Extension Service: 4-H Youth Development Program
• Credit Enhancement for Charter School Facilities
• Drug-Free Communities Support Program
• Early Childhood Educator Professional Development Program
• Environmental Education Grant Program
• Food Donation
• Grants for the Integration of Schools and Mental Health Systems
• Healthy Schools, Healthy Communities
• Learn and Serve America: School and Community-Based Programs
• Native American Employment and Training Program
• Native Hawaiian Education
• Native Hawaiian Vocational Education
• New Markets Tax Credit
• Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Act: National Program
• Safe and Drug-Free Schools: Native Hawaiian Program
• School Breakfast Program
• Special Education—National Activities: Technology and Media Services
• Summer Food Service Program for Children
• Teacher Incentive Fund
• Title I Supplemental Services
• Tribal Youth Program (Title V)

Open Eligibility
These funding streams either do not specify a specific lead agency or are open to all of the applicant groupings indicated above. These funding sources may, however, have additional requirements that will prevent certain entities from applying. All applicants are encouraged to review these individual programs for further details.
• Adolescent Family: Demonstration Project
• AmeriCorps
• Corporation for National and Community Service: Training and Technical Assistance
• Even Start: Migrant Education
Appendix D: Federal Programs Listed by Funding Type

The following lists details each of the federal programs included in the NRC Federal Funding Catalog by funding type. The funding type is an indication of the mechanism through which funds are allocated and has implications for accessing and maintaining the various funds. See pages 9–10 of this user’s guide for a definition of each of the funding types listed below.

Formula/Block Grants
- 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21CClC)
- Abstinence Education Program
- Child Care and Development Fund
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG): Entitlement Grants
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG): States’ Program
- Community Services Block Grant
- Education for Homeless Children and Youth
- English Language Acquisition State Grants
- Enhancing Education through Technology State Program
- Even Start: Family Literacy Programs
- Impact Aid Section 8008
- Indian Education: Grants to Local Educational Agencies
- Reading First
- Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act: State Grants
- Special Education—Preschool Grants
- Special Education—Grants to States
- Special Milk Program for Children
- Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies
- Title I Supplemental Services
- Title V Delinquency Prevention Program
- Vocational Education Basic Grants to States Program
- Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Youth Activities

Discretionary/Project Grants
- Adolescent Family Life: Demonstration Projects
- Advanced Placement Program
- Alaska Native Education Equity
- AmeriCorps
- Arts in Education
- Career and Technical Education: Grants to Native Americans and Native Hawaiians
- Carol M. White Physical Education Program
- Children, Youth, and Families At-Risk Initiative
- Community-Based Abstinence Education
- Compassion Capital Fund: Targeted Capacity Building
- Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children With Serious Emotional Disturbances
- Consolidated Health Centers (Community Health Centers, Migrant Health Centers, Health Care for the Homeless, Public Housing Primary Care, and School-Based Health Centers)
- Cooperative Extension Service: 4-H Youth Development Program
- Corporation for National and Community Service: Training and Technical Assistance
- Credit Enhancement for Charter School Facilities
- Drug-Free Communities Support Program
- Early Childhood Educator Professional Development Program
- Early Reading First
- Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Programs
- Environmental Education Grant Program
- Even Start: Indian Tribes and Tribal Organizations
- Even Start: Migrant Education
- Foreign Language Assistance Program
- Foster Grandparent Program
- Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS)
- Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP): State Grants and Partnership Grants
- Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T)
- Grants for the Integration of Schools and Mental Health Systems
- Grants to Reduce Alcohol Abuse
- Head Start
- Healthy Schools, Healthy Communities
- Healthy Start Initiative
- Improving Literacy through School Libraries
- Indian Child and Family Education
- Indian Child Welfare Act Title II Grants
- Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Grant Program
- Learn and Serve America: School and Community-Based Programs
- Learning in the Arts for Children and Youth
- Learning through Assisting: Developmental Disabilities Priority Area 1
- Mentoring Grants
National Professional Development Program
Native American and Alaska Native Children in School Program
Native American Employment and Training Program
Native Hawaiian Education
Native Hawaiian Vocational Education
Partnerships in Character Education Program
Professional Development for Arts Educators
Professional Development Program—Indian Education
Public Assistance Grant Program
Public Charter Schools Program
Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools
Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)
Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act: National Programs
Safe and Drug-Free Schools Native Hawaiian Program
Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative
School Leadership Program
Small Learning Communities
Special Education—National Activities: Technology and Media Services
State Charter School Facilities Incentive Grant Program
Striving Readers
Teacher Incentive Fund
Teaching American History Grants
Transition to Teaching Program
Tribal Youth Program (Title V)
TRIO—Education Opportunity Centers
TRIO—Talent Search
TRIO—Upward Bound
TRIO—Upward Bound Math-Science
Voluntary Public School Choice Program
Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA)

Entitlement Programs
Child and Adult Care Food Program
National School Lunch Program
School Breakfast Program
Summer Food Service Program for Children

Direct Payments
Food Donation
Indian School Equalization Program

Loans/Loan Guarantees
Business and Industry Guaranteed Loans
Community Development Block Grant (CDBG):
Section 108 Loan Guarantees
Community Facilities Loan Program
Rural Development Communities Facilities Direct and Guaranteed Loan Programs

Tax Credits
New Markets Tax Credit
Qualified Zone Academy Bond

Cooperative Agreements
Compassion Capital Fund: Communities Empowering Youth Program
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