

Rhode Island Charter Public Schools Charter School Program (CSP): Guidelines for Planning and Implementation Grants

Office of Charter Schools

Rhode Island Department of Education

Announcement of FY 2015 competition:	November 2014
Application Due Date (<i>planning</i>):	January 10, 2015
Application Due Date (<i>implementation</i>):	rolling; accepted after proposed schools receive final approval from RI K-12 Council

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Section 1. Charter School Program (CSP) Grant Information

1.1 Description of Grant Program

The purpose of the US Department of Education’s Charter Schools Program (CSP) is to increase the number of high-quality charter schools available in the United States by providing financial assistance for the planning, program design, and initial implementation of charter schools. The CSP also enables USDE to evaluate the effects of charter schools on student achievement.

In 2010, the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) was awarded a State Education Agency (SEA) CSP grant with the primary goal of increasing the number of highly-effective, high-achieving charter schools in Rhode Island. Through its grant, Rhode Island manages *startup grant competitions* for qualified applicants, as well as *dissemination grant competitions* for qualified existing charter schools that are collaborating with district and/or charter partners to expand successful practices to more students.

CSP grants awarded by RIDE are federally funded under the US Department of Education Charter Schools Program (CFDA 84.282B). Awards are subject to the availability of funds through the CSP. Additional federal guidance can be found at: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/charter/nonregulatory-guidance.html>.

1.2 CSP Startup Grants

CSP startup grants are competitive grants for the purpose of funding startup activities. There are two different startup grant awards: *a) planning grants* and *b) implementation grants*.

Planning Grants

Planning grants fund activities that occur *after* a proposed charter school receives preliminary approval but typically *before* the charter school opens its doors. Planning grant funds are designed to assist founding teams with staff/board development, academic program development, and other planning activities. More information on allowable activities under planning grants can be found in Sections 1.4 and 1.5 of these *Guidelines*.

Awards for planning grants range in size from \$50,000 to \$120,000, with an average award size of \$100,000 for schools planning to serve approximately 80 students per cohort.

NOTE: For the FY2015-16 competition, the planning grant period for successful applicants will begin on the date that a satisfactory application was received by RIDE (as long as it was submitted on or before the submission deadline) and end on June 30, 2015.

CSP PLANNING GRANTS	
Uses	Staff/ board development; academic program development; development of assessments; development of board and school policies; development of information and reporting systems
Average Size	\$100,000
Open date	Date satisfactory application is received by RIDE
Close date	June 30, 2015

Implementation Grants

Implementation grants fund activities that occur *after* a school receives final approval from the Board of Education, and may extend through the school's first years of operation. Implementation grants can be used to purchase supplies and equipment, and provide resources for additional planning and program development. More information on allowable activities under implementation grants can be found in Sections 1.4 and 1.5 of these *Guidelines*.

Awards for implementation range in size from \$250,000 to \$350,000, with an average award size of \$300,000 for schools serving approximately 80 students per cohort. Please note that applicants cannot be awarded more than \$400,000 total, including both planning and implementation grants.

CSP IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS	
Uses	Supplies and equipment; staff/ board development; academic program development; additional planning
Average Size	\$300,000
Open date	date satisfactory application is approved by RIDE (after proposed schools receive final approval from RI K-12 Council)
Close date	June 30, 2016

The size of any award will be contingent on the quality of the proposed project and project goals, the justification and clarity of the budget request, and the availability of funds.

1.3 Eligibility to Apply

To be eligible for a planning grant through the FY 2015-16 Rhode Island CSP competition, applicants must be proposed charter schools that have received preliminary approval from the Rhode Island K-12 Council on Education, are projected to open in the 2015/16 school year, and have not received a Charter School Program planning grant in the past.

To be eligible for an implementation grant through the FY 2015-16 Rhode Island CSP competition, applicants must have received final approval from the Rhode Island Council on K-12 Education to open in the 2015/2016 school year, and have not received Charter School Program implementation grant in the past.

NOTE: Any funds awarded must remain under the care and control of the Board of Directors of the charter school that applied for and was awarded the grant. Each grantee's project must be designed and implemented in conformance with all applicable state and federal regulations.

1.4 Allowable Activities

In accordance with Title V, Part B Sec. 5204 (f) (3) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), successful applicants may use *planning grants* for the planning and design of the charter school, which may include:

- development of curriculum;
- refinement of the desired educational results and of the methods for measuring progress toward achieving those results, including fees for contracted staff and consultants on a limited basis;
- outreach to the community and management of an enrollment process;
- building of an approved chart of accounts, and the development of financial policies and accounting procedures, to manage and oversee finances;
- professional development of teachers and staff who will work in the charter school.

Implementation grant funds can be used for initial implementation activities of the charter school, which may include:

- acquiring necessary equipment and educational materials and supplies;
- acquiring curriculum materials; and
- other initial operational costs that cannot be met from State or local sources.

1.5 Grant Parameters

All CSP grantees are expected to complete the goals and objectives described in the approved grant application, complete all planning activities described in the approved grant application, and adhere to the budget described in the approved grant application. Failure to do so may result in the rejection of grant reimbursement requests and the withdrawal by the Rhode Island Department of Education of the charter school's eligibility for additional grant funding through the CSP. RIDE reserves the right to remove ineligible or undocumented costs from funding consideration and reimbursement requests.

CSP funds shall be used to supplement, and not supplant, state, local or other funds providing for the planning and operations of charter schools. Recurring operational expenses, such as teacher or administrator salaries, are not allowable under the charter schools program (CSP). Costs of facilities, including lease, acquisition, purchase, construction, renovation, major improvements, minor improvements, or services such as utilities, are not allowable.

Applications will be subject to a full programmatic and fiscal review by RIDE's Office of Charter Schools and Office of Finance. Applications including activities that are not allowable may be rejected. General guidance regarding allowable expenses for federal grant funds may be found within Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-87. It is located on the OMB web page at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars>.

In the event that a charter school is awarded funds for planning, but is notified that it will not be recommended for final approval for the upcoming school year, the charter school will be unable to file for reimbursement of costs beyond the date of notification that final approval will not be granted.

1.6 Technical Assistance

A technical assistance meeting for potential grant applicants will be scheduled upon request. Please contact Drew Allsopp, RIDE Charter School Coordinator, at drew.allsopp@ride.ri.gov to schedule a meeting.

1.7 Submission Instructions

The deadline for submission for planning grants, for schools planning to open in Fall 2015, is January 10, 2015. For implementation grants, applications may be submitted on a rolling basis; awards will not be granted, and no grant funds may be reimbursed, until a proposed school has received final approval from the RI Council on K-12 Education.

Any funds awarded for planning in this current competition must be completely drawn, and all reimbursement requests submitted, by or before 5:00 PM on June 30, 2015. Any funds awarded for implementation in this current competition must be completely drawn, and all reimbursement requests submitted, by or before 5:00 PM on June 30, 2016. Any expenditure incurred after these dates will not be reimbursed. Any reimbursement requests received after these dates will not be reimbursed.

Please adhere to the following guidelines to assemble the application and accompanying materials:

- A complete application includes: a cover letter signed by the Board's Chair, executive summary, statement of need, project narrative, benchmarks and outcomes, project timeline, budget, attachments, and signed assurances.
- All pages of the narrative must be standard letter size, 8½" X 11" using 12 point, Times New Roman or comparable font, double spaced, one-inch margins.

Please submit **ONE (1) bound, signed original** and **ONE (1) PDF/electronic version** of your grant application. Applications will not be returned. Please keep a copy for your records.

Applications should be submitted to:

Office of Charter Schools
Rhode Island Department of Education
ATTN: Drew Allsopp, Charter School Coordinator
255 Westminster St.
Providence, RI 02903
drew.allsopp@ride.ri.gov

1.8 Review of Grant Applications

CSP applications will be reviewed by a panel of education professionals, including when possible qualified administrators in existing charter schools not currently applying for or awarded a CSP grant. The purpose of the review is to determine the quality and viability of the proposed program plan, goals, budget, and financial management procedures described in the CSP grant application.

NOTE: Only complete and timely applications will be considered.

In order to evaluate grant applications, RIDE reserves the right to:

- Request and review certified audited financial statements and/or other appropriate supplementation including, but not limited to, interim financial statements and credit reports;
- Request references and to contact any or all references;

- Waive requirements or amend this application upon notification to all applicants;
- Adjust or correct cost or cost figures with the concurrence of the applicant if mathematical or typographical errors exist;
- Reject any or all portions of any offer, to negotiate terms and conditions, and to make an award for any or all remaining portions;
- Request clarifications from applicants, and further, to request or require revisions from applicants prior to award;
- Terminate award with written notice.

1.9 Reporting Requirements

Grant recipients are required to submit periodic project and fiscal progress reports. Reports for this program will be due as follows:

Interim reports due: March 15; July 15; October 15

Final reports due: July 15 (after grant is closed)

These reports should indicate progress toward all benchmarks and outcomes described in the approved grant application, a narrative describing progress on all proposed grant activities, and an up-to-date budget summary.

1.10 USDE Reporting

RIDE will utilize data collected from CSP grantees to develop its annual report to the US Department of Education. USDE collects a variety of data from RIDE regarding charter school enrollment, performance, and progress toward the goals set in RIDE’s approved grant. USDE will evaluate RIDE through analysis of the accomplishments of its multi-year strategic objectives as set forth in the SEA CSP grant.

1.11 Reimbursement Requests

Reimbursement requests should be submitted using the form titled *Rhode Island Charter Schools Program Request for Reimbursement*. In addition to the standard request form, all reimbursement requests must include:

- A signature from the charter school’s Board Chair certifying that the request has been reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors in an open and public meeting;
- All backup documentation, including copies of invoices and receipts as applicable.

Any costs incurred that are not for the allowable activities listed above and that do not have copies of corresponding legible invoices and receipts will not be reimbursed. Any costs incurred outside of the award period will not be reimbursed.

Section 2. CSP Planning Grant Application Guidelines

The purpose of this section is to provide potential applicants with instructions for developing an application and grant activities that will meet the purpose of this grant program. Before preparing applications, potential applicants should review description of the CSP grant program (Section 1 of these *Guidelines*), and all federal guidance, to ensure a full understanding of the grant program and purpose.

2.1 Design Considerations

Each grantee should plan to use CSP funds to undertake critical planning activities, which may include curriculum development, board/staff training, the creation of internal policies and procedures, and the development of financial reporting and student information systems in line with Rhode Island requirements.

RIDE has identified three (3) priorities of CSP startup grants to address the challenges often faced by new charter schools. Schools should design grant applications that will fund activities that positively impact the following priorities. Approvable activities may include but are not limited to the activities listed under these priorities:

Priority 1: Increase the capacity of leadership prior to opening.

- Training for lead administrators and board members on governance issues
- Acquisition and development of tools to support board oversight
- Development of board policies

Priority 2: Develop a high-quality academic program

- Develop and document curriculum
- Develop comprehensive assessment system and acquire necessary materials
- Professional development and training for educational staff

Priority 3: Ensure organizational viability prior to opening

- Establishment of a financial management and reporting system
- Financial management training
- Establishment of student enrollment, registration, and information systems
- Development of operational policies
- Community outreach
- Training on data systems

2.2 Application Requirements

Executive Summary

Provide a one-page executive summary of the proposed charter school's needs during the planning period, and proposed activities and outcomes. Do not include information that is not included/supported elsewhere in the application.

Statement of Need

Explain the mission of the proposed school and the target population of students to be served. Justify the need for support from the CSP startup grant, and how it will address the mission of the school and the needs of students. Discuss the proposed school's needs and priorities in preparation for opening its doors to students.

Project Narrative

Include a detailed narrative that describes the overall grant project design and plan, as well as each budgeted item. Justify that the quality and scope of grant activities will successfully address the identified needs of the proposed school. Support your cost assumptions.

- 1) Describe all proposed grant activities. Include specific scopes of work, projects to be developed, trainings to be attended, systems to be built, etc.
- 2) Identify who will be responsible for various stages of each grant activity, and what level of support they will need to complete the activity.
- 3) Describe how the proposed grant activities will meet the priorities of this grant competition.
- 4) Include explanations of how the school can wind down grant activities at the end of the grant period with no detrimental effect to the school.

Required Attachments

- ✓ Job descriptions for any consultants funded with CSP funds. Note that the CSP may not fund recurring salaries such as teacher or administrator salaries.
- ✓ Financial management, conflict of interest, and monitoring policies to be used by the Board to ensure effective use and oversight of CSP funds during the planning period.
- ✓ Board meeting calendar.

Grant Benchmarks and Outcomes

Identify benchmarks for the early, middle, and final stages of grant activities and how progress will be measured toward these benchmarks. All benchmarks and goals should be clearly written, manageable, and measurable. These benchmarks should be directly linked to the stated needs of the program, and will be used to quantitatively track progress toward grant objectives.

Project Timeline

Create a timeline for the planning grant. List key events and details in chronological order that will lead up to final approval from the Board of Education, and then carry through the end of the planning year. The events in the timeline that require CSP funding should align with the grant request. NOTE: Assume a mid-May 2015 final approval date.

Budget

Create a budget using the *Budget Form for FY2015-16 CSP Startup Applications*. The applicant's budget must remain within the funding parameters described in these *Guidelines* and demonstrate efficient use of resources. The budget will be reviewed to ensure customary and reasonable costs for all grant activities. The actual amount awarded will be contingent on the applicant's ability to support the proposed budget items in the application and cost eligibility.

Section 3. Charter School Program (CSP) Assurances

By submitting this proposal, the applicant ensures that the school will:

- annually provide United States Department of Education (USDOE) and the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) such information and assurances as may be required;
- cooperate with USDOE and RIDE in evaluating the program assisted through the planning grant;
- maintain care and control of all funds through the oversight of the Board of Directors of the proposed charter school;
- use the grant only for post-award planning and design of the educational program, which may include —
 - (i) refinement of the desired educational results and of the methods for measuring progress toward achieving those results; and
 - (ii) professional development of teachers and other staff who will work in the charter school; andinitial implementation of the charter school, which may include—
 - (i) informing the community about the school;
 - (ii) acquiring necessary equipment and educational materials and supplies;
 - (iii) acquiring or developing curriculum materials; and
 - (iv) other initial operational costs that cannot be met from State or local sources;
- if approved, the proposed charter school will operate in accordance with the federal definition of a charter school:
 - (A) in accordance with a specific State statute authorizing the granting of charters to schools, is exempt from significant State or local rules that inhibit the flexible operation and management of public schools, but not from any rules relating to the other requirements of this paragraph;
 - (B) is created by a developer as a public school, or is adapted by a developer from an existing public school, and is operated under public supervision and direction;
 - (C) operates in pursuit of a specific set of educational objectives determined by the school’s developer and agreed to by the authorized public chartering agency;
 - (D) provides a program of elementary or secondary education, or both;
 - (E) is nonsectarian in its programs, admissions policies, employment practices, and all other operations, and is not affiliated with a sectarian school or religious institution;
 - (F) does not charge tuition;
 - (G) complies with the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;
 - (H) is a school to which parents choose to send their children, and that admits students on the basis of a lottery, if more students apply for admission than can be accommodated;
 - (I) agrees to comply with the same Federal and State audit and reporting requirements as do other elementary schools and secondary schools in the State, unless such requirements are specifically waived for the purpose of this program;
 - (J) meets all applicable Federal, State, and local health and safety requirements;
 - (K) operates in accordance with State law; and

- (L) has a written performance contract with the authorized public chartering agency in the State that includes a description of how student performance will be measured in charter schools pursuant to State assessments that are required of other schools and pursuant to any other assessments mutually agreeable to the authorized public chartering agency and the charter school.

GENERAL ASSURANCES

In accordance with Section 14306(a) of ESEA, the applicant LEA ensures that:

- a) program funds will be used only to supplement and, to the extent practical, increase the level of funds that would, in the absence of the Federal funds, be made available from non-Federal (State and local) sources for the education of participating students. In no case, may an LEA use Federal program funds to supplant funds from non-Federal sources;
- b) unless and until existing requirements are waived, the applicant will continue to comply with all operational requirements of each program. Each program will be administered in accordance with all applicable statutes, regulations, program plans, and applications;
- c) the control of funds provided under each covered program and title to property
 - (1) acquired with program funds will be in a public agency or in a nonprofit private agency, institution, organization, if the law authorizing the program provides for assistance to such entities; and
 - (2) the public agency, nonprofit private agency, institution or organization will administer such funds and property to the extent required by the authorizing statutes;
- d) the applicant will adopt and use proper methods of administering each such program including:
 - (1) the enforcement of any obligations imposed by law on agencies, institutions, organizations and recipients responsible for carrying out each program; and
 - (2) the correction of deficiencies in program operations that are identified through audits, monitoring or evaluation;
- e) the applicant will cooperate in carrying out any evaluations of each program conducted by or for the State Educational Agency, the Secretary of Education, or other Federal officials;
- f) the applicant will use such fiscal control and fund accounting procedures as will ensure proper disbursement of, and accounting for, Federal funds paid to such applicant under each such program;
- g) the applicant will:
 - (1) make reports to the State educational agency and the Secretary of Education as may be necessary to enable such agency and the Secretary to perform their duties under each such program;
 - (2) maintain such records, provide such information, and afford access to the records as the SEA or the Secretary may find necessary to carry out the SEA's or the Secretary's duties

CIVIL RIGHTS ASSURANCES

All recipients of assistance under these grants made pursuant to the ESEA shall comply with the following Federal and State civil rights statutes and regulations:

- (a) 42 USC, Sections 1981 and 1983 (acts prohibited on the basis of race);
- (b) Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (acts prohibited on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin);

- (c) Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended, 20 United States Code 1681 et. Seq. (acts prohibited on the basis of sex);
- (d) 42 USC, Section 1601 et seq. (acts prohibited on the basis of age);
- (e) Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, 20 USC 794 (acts prohibited on the basis of handicap);
- (f) 24 USC, Section 12100 et seq. [The Americans with Disabilities Act] (acts prohibited on the basis of disability);
- (g) Section 16-38-1 of the Rhode Island General Laws, as amended (discrimination because of race or age);
- (h) Section 16-38-1.1 of the Rhode Island General Laws, as amended (discrimination because of sex);
- (i) Chapter 42-87 of the Rhode Island General Laws, as amended (Civil Rights of Individuals with Handicaps); and
- (j) Sections 28-5.1-13 and 28-5.1-14 of the Rhode Island General Laws, as amended (Private education institutions – compliance with state policy of non-discrimination and affirmative action).

CERTIFICATION REGARDING DEBARMENT, SUSPENSION, INELIGIBILITY AND VOLUNTARY EXCLUSION – LOWER TIER COVERED TRANSACTIONS

This certification is required by the Department of Education regulations implementing Executive Order 12549, Debarment and Suspension, 34 CFR Part 85, for all lower tier transactions meeting the threshold and tier requirement stated at Section 85.110.

Certification:

- (1) The prospective lower tier participant certifies, by submission of this proposal, that neither it nor its principals are presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation in this transaction by any Federal department or agency.
- (2) Where the prospective lower tier participant is unable to certify to any of the statements in this certification, such prospective participant shall attach an explanation to this proposal.

Signature of Board Chairperson/Authorized Representative of the Board of Directors

Print name and title

Date