

Colorado Department of Education

Over the past 15 years, the Charter School Program (CSP) has played a significant role in the creation of high quality charter schools that assist educationally disadvantaged and other students to achieve state academic content standards and state student academic achievement standards. While we are pleased with the progress the state has made in creating a robust charter school sector of approximately 150 schools, we are determined to increase the number of high quality charter schools and take existing charter schools to a new level of excellence.

While we are encouraged by the progress our state has made in terms of previous grant results, we remain sobered by the need for more high quality education options for Colorado's school children. Despite an upward trend in math and reading achievement on the National Assessment of Educational Progress over the past decade, 16% of Colorado fourth graders are not proficient in math and 28% lack proficiency in reading. Clearly we must do more.

In addition to administering a well designed sub-grant program, CDE is working with its partners, the Colorado League of Charter Schools (The League), reform-minded districts and the Charter School Institute (CSI) at an unprecedented level to disseminate best practices, standardize contract and application processes, encourage quality replication, and provide technical assistance to charter school leaders, administrators, and instructional staff members.

The need is great and with the support of CSP funds, we can make a significant contribution to the education of our students. The goal of this grant is to support the creation and continuous improvement of high quality charter schools that assist educationally disadvantaged and other students to achieve academic content and achievement standards. To meet this goal, we have two specific objectives:

Objective 1: Increase the number of new high quality charter schools that enable all students to achieve state content standards, graduate from high school and enter college or a career with the requisite knowledge and skills to succeed. To meet this objective, CDE will conduct a sub-grant program providing start-up and implementation grants to new charter school applicants. CDE, in collaboration with The League and the CSI, will increase the number of new high quality charter schools. CDE estimates the following number of 16-18 start-up sub-grants will be awarded each year and 22-35 implementation sub-grants. Sub-grantee schools will receive abundant training and technical assistance to help them build a strong foundation.

Objective 2: Build capacity among authorizers, board members, administrators, and teachers at new and existing charter schools to conduct quality authorizing, exert effective school leadership, and engage in high-impact teaching so that students will achieve state content standards, graduate from high school and enter college or a career with the requisite knowledge and skills to succeed. In addition to the sub-grant program, CDE will use CSP administrative funds together with state funds to build capacity in all of the state's charter schools (new and established schools) to help them raise achievement and enable all students to make progress toward meeting state standards. This objective includes the following activities: resource development; trainings, seminars, and luncheons; reporting; and research studies.

The CSP grant will be managed by an experienced director and highly qualified staff and consultants. CDE has secured an agreement with an outside evaluator who will pursue the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data annually. Information will be used for reporting and continuous improvement purposes.