

News Release

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Wisconsin wins \$95 million charter school grant

MADISON — Wisconsin won more than \$95 million from a competitive, five-year federal grant for the Wisconsin Charter Schools Program, according to an announcement last week by the U.S. Department of Education.

The grant, the largest in the country this year, will support the growth of high-quality charter schools, especially secondary schools that serve educationally disadvantaged students; strengthen and improve charter authorizing quality; and promote and support collaboration and sharing of best practices across the state.

“Our federal grant will help us expand charter school access throughout Wisconsin, especially for our high school kids who are from low-income families,” said State Superintendent Tony Evers. “All kids, regardless of their circumstances, deserve access to innovative opportunities through our public schools. This grant will help us promote more collaboration and partnerships to take the lessons learned in charter schools and apply that success across the state.”

Wisconsin was an early adopter of the charter school concept, enacting legislation in 1993 with 13 public charter schools created under the initial law. Today, the state has 234 charter schools, enrolling more than 44,000 students. This is Wisconsin’s sixth and largest federal grant to support charter school development.

Over the five-year grant period, the Wisconsin Charter Schools Program will support the opening of 80 new or replicated quality charter schools and the expansion of 27 high-quality charter schools in the state.

New guidelines under the reauthorized Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) allow states to award subgrants to quality charter operators to replicate or expand existing high-quality charter schools. Wisconsin’s plan prioritizes schools that serve secondary students and provides additional funding in this area. Subgrants can be for a maximum of five years rather than the three-year maximum under previous grants.

| Charter Subgrant Types | | |
|--------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| | <150 students | >150 Students |
| Planning | \$150,000 | \$150,000 |
| Implementation | \$550,000 | \$650,000 |
| Secondary School | \$100,000 | \$100,000 |
| Maximum (5 Years) | \$800,000 | \$900,000 |
| Expansion or Replication | \$550,000 | \$650,000 |
| Secondary School | \$100,000 | \$100,000 |
| Maximum (5 Years) | \$650,000 | \$750,000 |

(more)

In addition to awarding subgrants, the state's grant award will support establishment of a Wisconsin Resource Center for Charter Schools, which will anchor the statewide plan for technical assistance, support, and dissemination of best practices. Among the tasks for the resource center is to provide charter school, authorizer, and school governance board development programs and forge partnerships and collaborative relationships among schools across the state. The center also will support collaboration and partnerships with the Wisconsin Digital Learning Collaborative and other virtual learning stakeholders to improve online and blended learning opportunities for Wisconsin students.

Charter schools are public schools that offer innovative programming in exchange for flexibility with regard to state laws regulating schools. A charter school is created through a contract between an independent charter governance board and an authorizer. Charter schools are held accountable by their authorizer for the performance goals and other programmatic, operational, and financial provisions in the charter contract. The charter school's governing board is autonomous and controls staffing, programming, budgeting, and all other aspects of the charter school's operation.

Under current law, the state's public school districts, the City of Milwaukee, the Waukesha County executive, the College of Menominee Nation, the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College, the University of Wisconsin System Office of Educational Opportunity, the chancellor of any University of Wisconsin System institution, and each technical college district board in Wisconsin can authorize a charter school.

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NOTES: More information can be found on the Department of Public Instruction's [Charter Schools in Wisconsin website](https://dpi.wi.gov/sms/charter-schools) <https://dpi.wi.gov/sms/charter-schools>. This news release is available electronically at https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/news-release/dpinr2017_83.pdf.