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Forward Together

Preliminary Policy Priorities

Prateek Dutta

VP of Policy, for the League, and CLCS Action

Facilities Research Overview

Jim Griffin + Brooke Quisenberry

Momentum Strategy and Research

Facilities Advocacy

Kyle DeBeer, VP Civic Affairs + League Member Guests

SFIG + CSP

Paola Paga, Director of Charter Schools, CDE Tanesha Bell, GSC Project Director, the League

Current + past recordings available online at coloradoleague.org/events/event-calendar/town-halls.html





Preliminary Policy Priorities

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Political Context

The state is looking at another \$1 billion budget shortfall. Governor and legislature want to protect education from cuts, but we will not get finality now until later this Spring.

Governor Polis and Speaker McCluskie are in their final year.

Republicans lost two key leaders (Lundeen and Pugliese), but Minority Leader Caldwell is a strong charter school supporter.

With the election year approaching, some elected officials will be more hesitant to take on risky policies.

House:

Democrats control 43-22

Senate:

Democrats control 23-12

Rough Draft Proactive Policy 2026

- 1) DEFENSE
- 2) Regulatory Relief repeal duplicative mandates
- 3) "Education Deserts" Alternate Pathways to success, including Task Force and Ballot Pathway
- 4) Facilities: Bond equity for charter schools
- 5) Charter Funding Fix Aligning new funding formula to charter schools

Policy	Description	Current Status		
Regulatory Relief	Repeal rules/regulations that are outdated or burdensome.	Have Sponsors in Senate and House		
Charter Funding Fix	Clarifying how the new funding formula applies to charter schools.	In discussions with key stakeholders. Speaker's office very interested		
Authorizing reform in low- performing areas	President Coleman and Governor Polis are committed to "Education Deserts" concept.	Looking at other pathways, including creating a "taskforce" or going to the ballot in 2026.		
Bond Equity	How do ensure charters are included at the beginning and be more transparent with voters	Have Senate sponsors, looking at finding sponsors in the House.		

Facilities Research Overview

Jim Griffin + Brooke Quisenberry

Momentum Strategy and Research



Background and Data Sources

Momentum Strategy & Research

- Colorado based research & policy organization collecting and analyzing large, national data sets to strengthen K-12 policies and systems.
- Long-term focus on facilities policy, supported by a national data collection effort since 2019 around:
 - Charter school inclusion in district bond elections
 - Charter school inclusion in state facilities grant programs (e.g., BEST in Colorado)
 - Charter school facilities grant programs
- Partnership with National Alliance for Public Charter Schools.

Colorado Data Sources

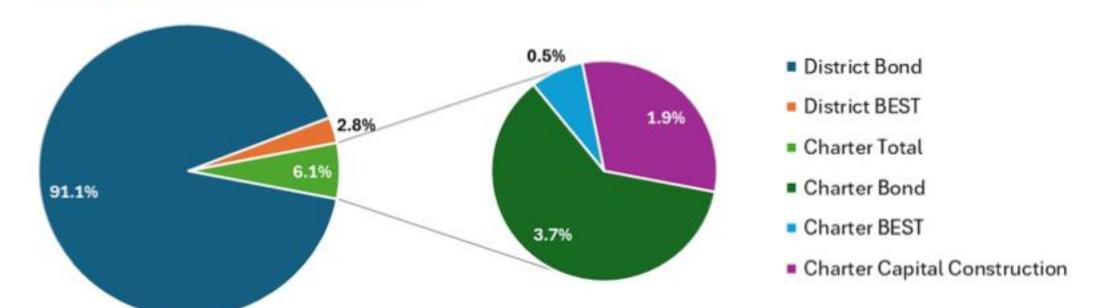
- <u>District Bond Elections</u>: Election results/details from Colorado School Finance Project;
 charter inclusion details from intentional research and district outreach
- BEST Awards: CDE website (BEST Grant Cycle Information Archive)
- Charter School Capital Construction: CDE website





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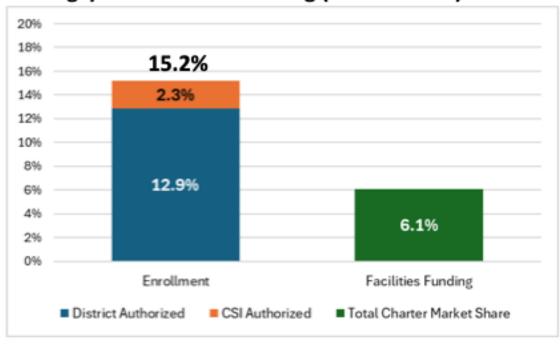
- Review over 10 years (2014-15 to 2023-24)
- Subset = 52 geographic districts
- Total facilities funding = \$14.85 billion (out of \$17.2 billion statewide)
- 6.1% overall went to charter schools



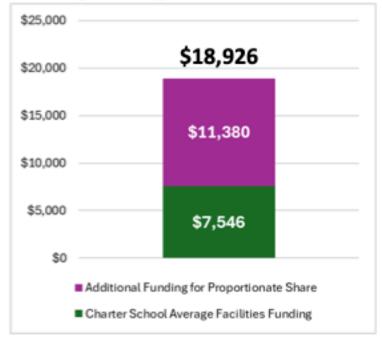


Charter School Shortfall

Charter School Proportion of Enrollment (10 Year Average) and Facilities Funding (10 Year Total)



Average Charter School Facilities Funding Per Pupil from 2015 to 2024

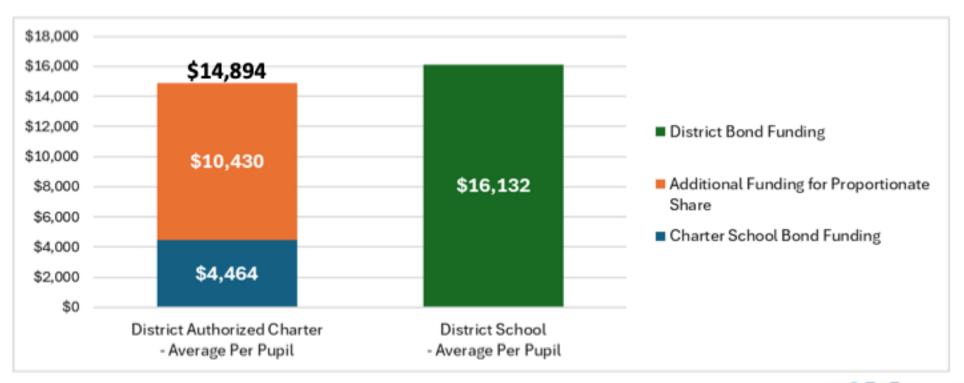


- 6.1% went to charter schools v. the 15.2% charter enrollment proportion (average over 10 yrs)
- A proportionate share, 15.2%, would be \$2.275 billion instead of \$907 million (6.1%)
- That gap equals \$11,380 per pupil over 10 years (or \$1,138 per pupil annually)



District-Authorized Charter Schools – Bonds Only

- Bond elections make up 95% of the overall facilities funding in the 52 districts with at least 1 charter school.
- Average district-authorized charter enrollment proportion at the time a bond passed = 10%
- Average charter school proportion of bond funding = 2.5% (equates to \$4,464 per pupil)





			Charter%						Total Charter
	Difference in Per	Total Facilities	of	10 Yr Average				Charter BEST	Capital
	Pupil (Charter-	Funding from 2015	Facilities	CSI	District	Total Bond Amount	Charter %	Grants Awarded	Construction Over
Geographic District Name	District)	to 2024	Funding	Authorized	Authorized	from 2015 to 2024	of Bond	2015 to 2024	10 Years
Academy 20	-\$5,429	\$322,560,687	10.0%	0%	15.7%	\$313,140,000	7%		\$9,420,687
Adams 12 Five Star Schools	-\$29,937	\$1,207,445,263	2.9%	11.2%	8.2%	\$1,180,000,000	1%		\$23,274,126
Adams-Arapahoe 28J	-\$34,073	\$1,383,252,765	2.3%	2.4%	13.2%	\$1,324,000,000	1%		\$17,349,529
Archuleta County 50 Jt	\$11,907	\$1,204,835	74.4%	0%	4.6%			\$663,820	\$232,275
Boulder Valley Re 2	-\$3,348	\$356,515,956	5.8%	0%	7.8%	\$350,000,000	4%	\$921,525	\$5,594,431
Canon City RE-1	-\$30,176	\$124,005,327	1.6%	0%	7.3%	\$52,700,000	2%		\$696,066
Clear Creek RE-1	-\$50,838	\$43,416,276	3.6%	0%	14.9%	\$42,787,421	3%	\$174,595	\$140,285
Colorado Springs 11	\$2,263	\$14,561,304	79.8%	11.0%	5.9%			\$49,262	\$11,572,984
Denver County 1	-\$12,451	\$2,338,546,373	13.4%	0%	21.4%	\$2,302,000,000	12%	\$408,110	\$31,322,609
Douglas County Re 1	-\$10,767	\$779,535,038	7.2%	1.7%	22.4%	\$740,000,000	2%		\$39,406,386
Durango 9-R	-\$29,161	\$242,571,897	3.7%	8.6%	1.7%	\$240,000,000	3%		\$1,512,648
Elizabeth School District	\$1,936	\$3,066,952	43.0%	0%	19.1%			\$113,748	\$1,206,174
Greeley 6	-\$19,220	\$416,051,427	5.2%	0%	23.7%	\$395,000,000	2%	\$213,882	\$14,458,587
Gunnison Watershed RE1J	-\$21,791	\$96,330,765	1.2%	0%	2.1%	\$95,000,000	1%		\$123,102
Harrison 2	-\$5,218	\$208,790,249	20.1%	2.3%	23.7%	\$180,000,000	10%	\$15,288,952	\$9,447,829
Jefferson County R-1	\$1,497	\$592,368,083	13.4%	0.5%	10.8%	\$567,000,000	10%	\$239,287	\$23,128,796
Johnstown-Milliken RE-5J	-\$49,290	\$187,506,004	1.2%	0%	11.6%	\$149,000,000	1%		\$1,276,514
Poudre R-1	-\$11,026	\$387,892,609	3.4%	7.7%	7.6%	\$375,000,000	0%	\$102,340	\$12,659,384
Pueblo City 60	\$4,119	\$290,067,176	12.4%	0.3%	10.0%	\$218,250,000	1%	\$30,135,957	\$3,832,322
Pueblo County 70	\$11,792	\$105,551,549	22.5%	0%	11.2%	\$75,000,000	1%	\$19,680,496	\$3,286,543
Roaring Fork RE-1	-\$20,239	\$134,688,943	2.3%	8.4%	3.5%	\$122,000,000	0%	\$956,473	\$2,097,503
School District 27J	-\$44,774	\$777,276,246	2.7%	3.7%	19.6%	\$763,000,000	1%	\$355,175	\$13,089,140
St Vrain Valley RE1J	-\$11,377	\$1,011,551,999	6.9%	0%	10.2%	\$999,800,000	6%		\$8,838,367
Steamboat Springs RE-2	-\$14,548	\$93,783,873	5.0%	4.6%	3.5%	\$92,400,000	4%		\$571,140
Weld County School District RE-3J	-\$15,375	\$66,535,368	3.1%	0%	7.0%	\$61,564,700	3%		\$499,660
Weld RE-4	-\$45,806	\$379,516,437	5.7%	0%	18.2%	\$375,800,000	5%		\$3,716,437



Charter v District Average Per Pupil Expenditures

- Financial Transparency Reports from CDE
- 2021-22 to 2023-24
- Removed about 500 schools for being outliers or not in a district with a charter school in the geographic boundaries

		Average of Total Expenditures	Average of Federal	Average of State/Local	Number of Schools
2024 22	Charter % of District Amount	81%	94%	80%	
2021-22	Charter	\$12,198.19	\$1,070.49	\$11,127.71	263
	District	\$14,993.49	\$1,141.84	\$13,851.65	1,181
2022.22	Charter % of District Amount	82%	86%	82%	
2022-23	Charter	\$13,497.07	\$1,064.52	\$12,432.55	260
	District	\$16,381.11	\$1,233.23	\$15,147.88	1,182
2022.24	Charter % of District Amount	81%	62%	82%	
2023-24	Charter	\$14,074.16	\$795.55	\$13,278.61	257
	District	\$17,425.52	\$1,277.57	\$16,147.95	1,145



Facilities Advocacy

What's your story?



Rob Daugherty
Chief Executive Officer
James Irwin Charter Schools



lan StoutExecutive Director
Loveland Classical Schools



Amy Tracy
Principal
Aurora Academy Charter School



Building Advocacy Through Leadership

- Charter Ambassadors Charter community leaders (teachers, staff, board, parents) trained to advocate for fair policies and strong school—community ties.
- Charter Champions High school students empowered with leadership training, charter basics, and advocacy skills.
- Legislative Liaisons School leaders and civic partners engaging directly with policymakers to advance equity, innovation, and choice.





Key Milestones & Events

Building Momentum for Facilities Fairness

- Early December: Adopt 2026 Legislative Agenda & Launch Action Center
- December 9, 2025: Statewide Storytelling Training
- January 29, 2026: Advocacy Day
- Mid-January to Mid-February: Bill Introduction



Closing the Facilities Gap

How will you participate?

www.surveymonkey.com/r/advocacy-clcs-2025





State Facilities Incentive Grant (SFIG) + Great Schools Colorado (CSP)

Paola Paga

Director of Charter Schools, CDE

Tanesha Bell

GSC Project Director, League







Colorado State Facilities Incentive Grant (SFIG)

Paola Paga Director of Charter Schools November 21, 2025



Agenda

- CDE activities under State Facilities Incentive Grant
 - Charter School Facility Finance Certification Program
 - Charter School Facilities Assistance (FA)
 Program
- Available Funding/Allowable Use of Funds
- Important Deadlines & Contact Information







What's the SFIG?



State Facilities Incentive Grant (SFIG)

- One of six federal grants under the larger "Charter Schools Program"
- SFIG is only awarded to State Education Agencies (i.e. CDE)
- Aims to strengthen and sustain state aid programs for charter schools
- Increases targeted funding to offset historic high cost for charter facilities
- CDE was awarded about \$38 million in October 2024 for 2024-2029.

The six CSP Grants:

State Entity Grants (CLCS)	CMO Grants (Direct)	Developer Grants (N/A in CO)
National Dissemination Grants (CSI/NACSA/CACSA)	Credit Enhancement for Charter Facilities (CSFS)	State Charter School Facilities Incentive Grants (CDE)



SFIG Grant Goals

Goal 1

Enhance the State's Charter Capital Construction Program

Starting in FY 24-25 and ending in FY 28-29, CO will disseminate \$35,525,000 of new Federal funds to eligible charter schools through a sub-grant structure. These funds will be highest in Year 1 and will be replaced by increased state funds by the end of the 5 years.

Goal 2

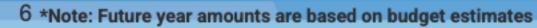
Strengthen State Capacity for High- Quality School Facilities Management and Decision Making

CDE will create a certification program to incentivize charter leaders to participate in high-quality training on charter school finance topics deemed critical for school success.



How did Colorado Qualified for the Federal Grant?

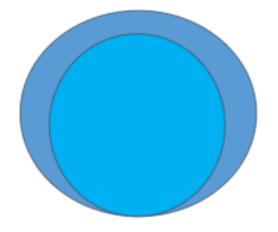
Year	A. State Fund	+ B. Excise Tax Revenue to Charters +C. "One-time" or HB24-1448 Funding		Anticipated State Funding (CSCC)	
FY 22-23	\$ 23,939,893.00	\$ 14,669,783.00		\$ 38,609,676.00	
FY 23-24	\$ 24,379,016.00	\$ 8,855,662.60	\$ 10,000,000.00	\$ 43,234,678.60	
FY 24-25	\$ 23,935,468.00	\$ 7,457,233.96	\$ 11,500,000.00	\$ 42,892,701.96	
FY 25-26	\$ 24,287,686.51 \$ 23,523,071.20	\$ 7,643,864.37 \$ 6,709,709.15	\$ 12,000,000.00	\$ 43,931,550.88 \$ 42,232,780.35	
FY 26-27*	\$ 24,641,675.07 \$ 24,995,664.00	\$ 8,491,264.33 \$ 7,043,700.00	\$ 13,000,000.00	\$ 46,132,939.40 \$ 45,039,364.00	
FY 27-28*	\$ 24,995,663.64 \$ 25,349,652.00	\$ 9,063,803.42 \$ 7,282,200.00	\$ 14,000,000.00	\$ 48,059,467.06 \$ 46,631,852.00	
FY 28-29*	\$ 25,349,652.21	\$ 9,666,187.54	\$ 15,000,000.00	\$ 50,015,839.75	





How do the State and Federal Funds Work Together?

- State Aid Program will work pretty much the same way that it always has - direct to school accounts
- Schools must apply for the Federal Aid Program
 - Not all schools will establish eligibility
 - Funds only for allowable uses
- The per pupil calculation will work like the state aid program (\$ Amount of Federal Award / FTE of eligible schools)







Charter School Facility Finance Certification Program



Facilities Finance Certification Program

- Launching in April 2026 with pilot cohort that will cover 3 modules
- Module No. 1: Strategic Development Master Plan
 - Setting context for future decisions and alignment to mission and vision
 - Gap Analysis
 - Charter School Unique Market Offer
- Module No. 2: Financial Health, Financing, and Debt Capacity
 - Underwriting requirements
 - Sources of Capital
 - Public/Private/Community partnerships
- Module No. 3: Facility Assessments
 - Facility Condition Index
 - Environmental Considerations
 - Operational Costs







Charter School Facility Assistance (FA) Program



Eligibility

- Must meet the Federal definition of a charter school (section 4310(2) of the ESEA)
- Must be serving students in the 2025-2026 school year and currently authorized by an "authorized public charter agency" as defined in section 4310(1) of the ESEA.
- Enrollment policy includes a lottery if more students apply for admission to the charter school than can be admitted.
- Charter schools must also qualify to receive state funds under the Charter School Capital Construction (CSCC) Program (state facility aid program), pursuant to C.R.S. 22-54-124. Online charter schools are not eligible for either the Federal or state facility programs.



Weighted Lottery Plans

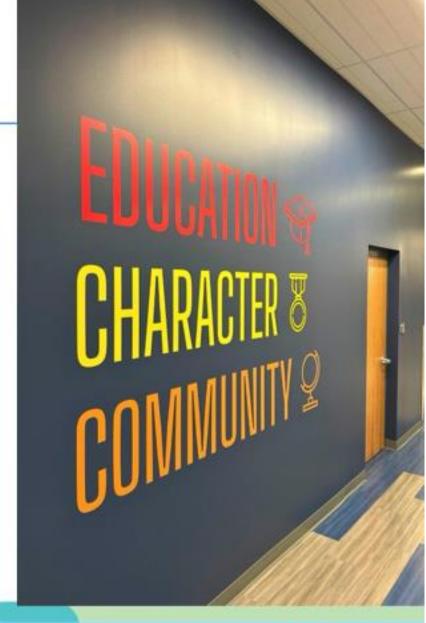
- Under ESEA section 4310(2), a charter school may use a weighted lottery if compliant with section 4303(c)(3)(A)
- Weighting may only provide "slightly better chances" for educationally disadvantaged students:
 - Economically disadvantaged children
 - Children with disabilities
 - Migrant children
 - English Learner
 - Neglected or delinquent students
 - Homeless students
 - Students in foster care
- Weighted lottery plans must be pre-approved by the authorizer
- Must comply with federal civil rights laws, title IX, ADA, section 504, equal protection, and state non-discrimination laws



Allowable Use of Funds

- Debt service on a school facility
- Rent/Lease
- Purchase of building or land*
- Construction* meaning -
 - Preparing drawings and specifications for school facilities projects;
 - Repairing, renovating, or altering school facilities;
 - Extending school facilities;
 - Erecting or building school facilities; and
 - Inspections or supervision related to school facilities.
- Renovation of an existing school facility*
- Leasehold improvements*

*Additional information and monitoring will be required if schools elect to use funds for these expenses





How Much Support Can We Receive?

- The FAP numerator is known. The denominator will vary each year
- The fewer schools that participate, the larger the per-pupil award
- If we estimate ~75% participation from CSCC schools, then we estimate roughly:
 - \$139 per FTE in 2024-25
 - \$117* per FTE this Year
 - \$86* per FTE in Year 3
 - \$56* per FTE in Year 4
 - \$28* per FTE in Final Year

*These are all estimates. Highlighted cells on the next page are also estimates.



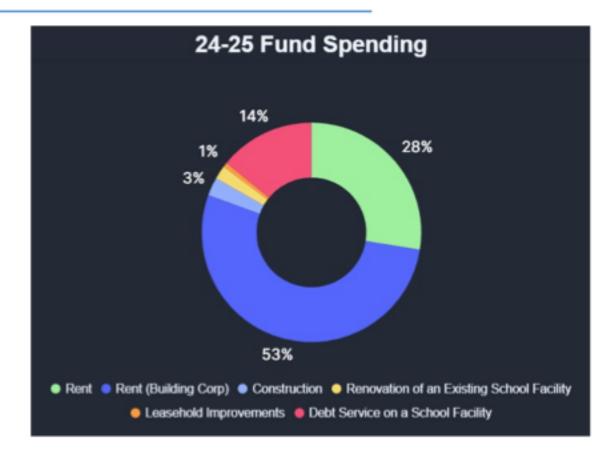
How Much Support Can We Receive? (shading notes estimates)

School Year	CSCC Numerator	CSCC Denominator	CSCC Per Pupil	FAP Numerator	FAP Denominator	FAP Per Pupil
22-23	\$38,609,676	107,655	\$359	-	-	-
23-24	\$43,234,679	109,122	\$396	-	-	-
24-25	\$42,892,702	110,409	\$388	\$11,025,000	79,300	\$139
25-26	\$42,232,780	109,863	\$384	\$9,800,000+	84,000	\$117+
26-27	\$46,132,939	114,000	\$405	\$7,350,000	85,500	\$86
27-28	\$48,059,467	116,000	\$414	\$4,900,000	87,000	\$56
28-29	\$50,015,840	118,000	\$424	\$2,450,000	88,500	\$28



2024-25 FA Program

- 176 Intent to Apply and Eligibility forms completed
- \$139.028 per pupil FTE (full-time equivalent)
- 151 schools completed the FA program application
- 139 schools in "CDE Director Approved"
- CDE Obligated \$9,408,866 for 2024-25
- Unspent funds will be carried forward to 2025-2026





How Do Schools Request Funding?

- Applications for the Charter Schools Facility Assistance Program must be submitted in GAINS. More information about GAINS is available on CDE's website.
- Submission of application materials either in hard copy or via e-mail will not be accepted.
- Intent to Apply and Eligibility section is due by Tuesday, November 25, 2025.
- The application window will open in GAINS on Friday, December 5, 2025, and close on Tuesday, January 6, 2026, at 4 pm.

Accessing GAINS

Charter school applicants must complete the Charter School GAINS Access Request Form.





Important Deadlines & Contact Information



Important FA Program Deadlines

- Intent to Apply and Eligibility Due Date: Tuesday, November 25, 2025
- GAINS Application will re-open for Part II: Narrative & Budget Section on Friday,
 December 5, 2025
- GAINS Application Due Date: Tuesday, January 6, 2026 by 4:00pm
 - Applications must be in "LEA Authorized Representative Approved" to be complete
- Award Notifications: January 23, 2026
- Post-Award Webinar (Mandatory for construction projects): February 4, 2026
- End of Year Report (will be part of the FER) Due Date: November 30, 2026

*Funds must be obligated by September 30th, 2026



Program Contact Information

FA Program Assistance

Facilities Grant Manager Kriselda Craven

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GAINS Assistance

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Fiscal Assistance

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SFIG Project Director

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Questions?

Charter School
Facility Assistance Program Website



GAINS Access Request Form





State Facilities Incentive Grant (SFIG) + Great Schools Colorado (CSP)

Paola Paga

Director of Charter Schools, CDE

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GSC Project Director, League





Great Schools Colorado (GSC) - Charter Schools Program (CSP) Grant

FY24 State Entity (SE) Award: \$68.1M (awarded October 2024) + \$9.3M Supplemental Award (approved September 2025)

Grant Duration & Allocation:

- 5 Years (60 months)
 - 90% → Subgrants to eligible applicants
 - **≥7%** → Technical assistance to schools & authorizers
 - ≤3% → State administration

Purpose of the Grant:

- Support new charter school openings
- Support the **replication and expansion** of high-quality charter schools
- Provide **technical assistance** to applicants and authorizing agencies
- Strengthen authorizing quality, including fiscal oversight and auditing

Grant Objectives:

- 1) Increase high-quality charter schools & seats statewide, with emphasis on academic outcomes for educationally disadvantaged and at-risk students.
- 2) Improve the quality and impact of Colorado's charter school sector, supporting overall school quality and improvement.



Subgrant Award Plan & Results

Subgrant Funding Structure

- Awards up to \$2,000,000 per school across planning and implementation years
- Funds are fully obligated in Year 1 to support the full multi-year scope
- Spending expectations reflect each school's **three-year budget** and GSC-CSP review results

Original Subgrant Award Plan (FY25–FY29)

- Proposed waiver of 6 schools previously awarded under CDE's CCSP grant for Continuation of funding in FY25 (Grant Year 1)
- Proposed **5 schools** in FY25 (Grant Year 1), expanding to **6–7 awards** per year in Years 2–4
- Award projections each year included: **New**, **Expansion**, and **Replication** slots

Year 1 Modification & Updated Award Pipeline (*To advance Objective 1*)

- Increased slots for New School and High-Quality Expansion awards due to higher-than-expected demand and strong applicant eligibility
- Deferred the High-Quality Replication slot to a later fiscal year
- Revised FY25 result: 15 competitive awards, instead of 5 originally planned; +5 continuation awards

Total Cycle 1 Awardees: 20



Subgrant Award Amounts

Cycle 1 Award Ranges:

• The full awards span from approximately **\$425,000 to \$2 million**, which represents the allowable maximum under the FY24 CSP SE grant.

New School Awards:

- New schools require the most intensive planning, staffing, facility preparation, curriculum development, and early operational needs.
- As a result, the minimum award for this group exceeds \$1 million, and several applicants reached the \$2 million cap. This pattern aligns with national CSP trends: planning-year needs drive higher early-year investment.

Expansion Awards:

- Expansion grants support the addition of grades, seats, or specialized programs within existing high-quality charter schools.
- Approximately \$514K to \$1.83M because expansions vary significantly in scope.
- Some schools expanded by grade level; others added full programmatic pathways or new facility capacity.

Continuation Awards:

• These awards were not full \$2M planning-to-implementation packages; instead, they reflect **remaining award balances** and allowable continuation-year activities.



Geographic Distribution

Cycle 1 awardees represent a broad statewide footprint across Colorado, including urban, suburban, rural, and mountain communities.

Front Range / Metro Denver	Mountain & Western Slope	Rural / Small Communities
 Aurora (4) Brighton Colorado Springs Commerce City Fort Collins Golden Littleton Parker Westminster 	 Fairplay Grand Junction Longmont / Foothills Montrose Steamboat Springs 	 Colorado Springs / Rural boundary (2) Elizabeth



Educational Models Represented

Cycle 1 awardees showcase a diverse set of educational models, reflecting the statewide landscape of innovative and high-demand schools.



Cycle 1 Cohort

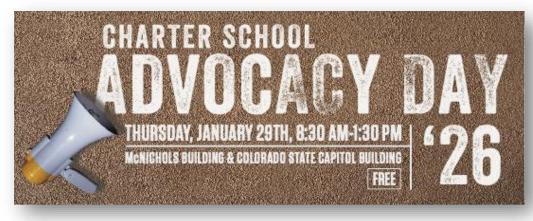
- Classical Education College Prep
- Community-Based
- Core Knowledge
- Expeditionary / Project-Based Learning
- Innovation / Alternative
- Language / Cultural / Global Focus
- Montessori
- STEM/STEAM

Join us for Advocacy Day

Thursday, Jan 29 | 8:30AM – 1:30PM | State Capitol









Stronger Together



The Colorado Charter Schools **Annual Conference**

February 26-27, 2026 Denver Marriott Tech Center



"If you want to go fast, go alone.
If you want to go far, go together."

— African proverb







Contact us

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