



From Eligibility to Application: A Practical Guide to Colorado's BEST Grant

September 5, 2025

www.coloradoleague.org



[Flagstaff Academy]

PLEASE

RE-NAME “name, school”
CHAT when you can
MUTE while not speaking

**Thank You to Our
Dedicated Premium Sponsors**



AGENDA

- Charter Eligibility
- Finance & Funding
- Planning & Preparation
- Timeline



CONTACT US ANYTIME

President

Dan Schaller | dschaller@coloradoleague.org

Civic Affairs and CLCS Action

Kyle DeBeer | advocacy@clcsaction.org

Regional Advocacy

Kyle DeBeer | advocacy@clcsaction.org

Legislation and Policy

Prateek Dutta | advocacy@coloradoleague.org

Events

Caymin Harper | events@coloradoleague.org

Communications and PR

Pete Mason | communications@coloradoleague.org

Board Training and School HR

Bill Knous | boardtraining@coloradoleague.org

New Schools and Enrollment Growth

Bill Knous | growth@coloradoleague.org

Academic Services

Karolina Villagrana | academic@coloradoleague.org

Exceptional Education

Karolina Villagrana | exceptional@coloradoleague.org

Business and Operations Support

Patti Glock | business@coloradoleague.org

League Operations and Billing

Mark Heffner | renewals@coloradoleague.org

Online at: coloradoleague.org > about > who we are > league staff



“...research shows that healthy schools promote positive learning environments and improve student academic performance. Students cannot achieve their full potential if their basic needs are not met. BEST grant recipients report culture shifts (reduced truancy and vandalism), increased student and community engagement, and improved teacher retention. All of which promotes improved learning outcomes and better test scores.”



- **Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST) Grants**

- **Cash funds** are typically used to fund smaller projects, such as roofs, boiler replacements, and fire alarms.
- **Lease-Purchase or COP funds** are typically used to fund larger projects, such as new schools, major renovations, and additions. These grants are financed through Certificates of Participation and repaid with Assistance Fund revenues.

- **Emergency Grants:** available for unanticipated events that threaten health or safety or render all or a significant portion of a public school facility unusable for educational purposes.

- **Other Grants as Assigned:** FY20 Full Day Kindergarten Grants, FY22 Air Quality Improvement Grants

- **Charter School Capital Construction (CSCC) Program:** used for “construction, demolition, remodeling, maintaining, financing, purchasing, or leasing of land, buildings, or facilities...”

- Funded with a percentage of marijuana excise tax revenue and State Education Fund dollars

- **Facility Assessments:** focus on establishing an industry based standard to compare the cost of replacing significant systems against replacing an entire facility.

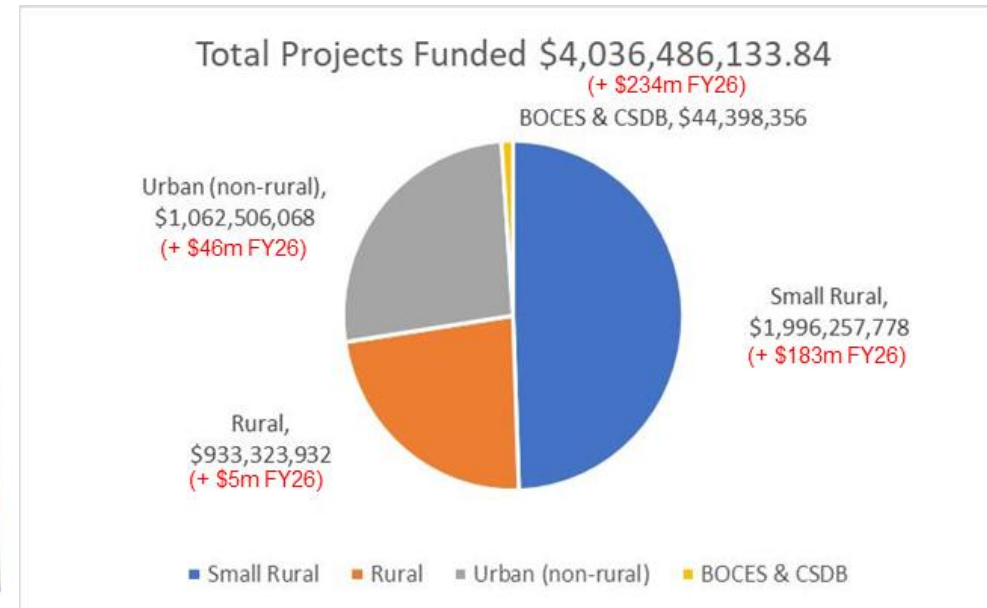
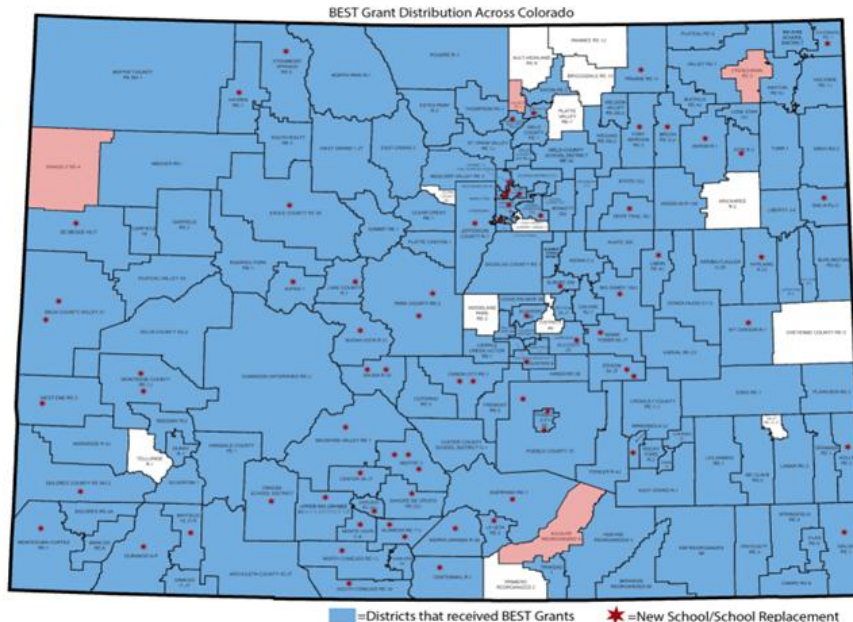
- **Professional Resources:** for facility needs (master planning, design, maintenance, construction, procurement, etc.)



Statewide Impact

Creating equitable educational environments where all students and staff in Colorado thrive.

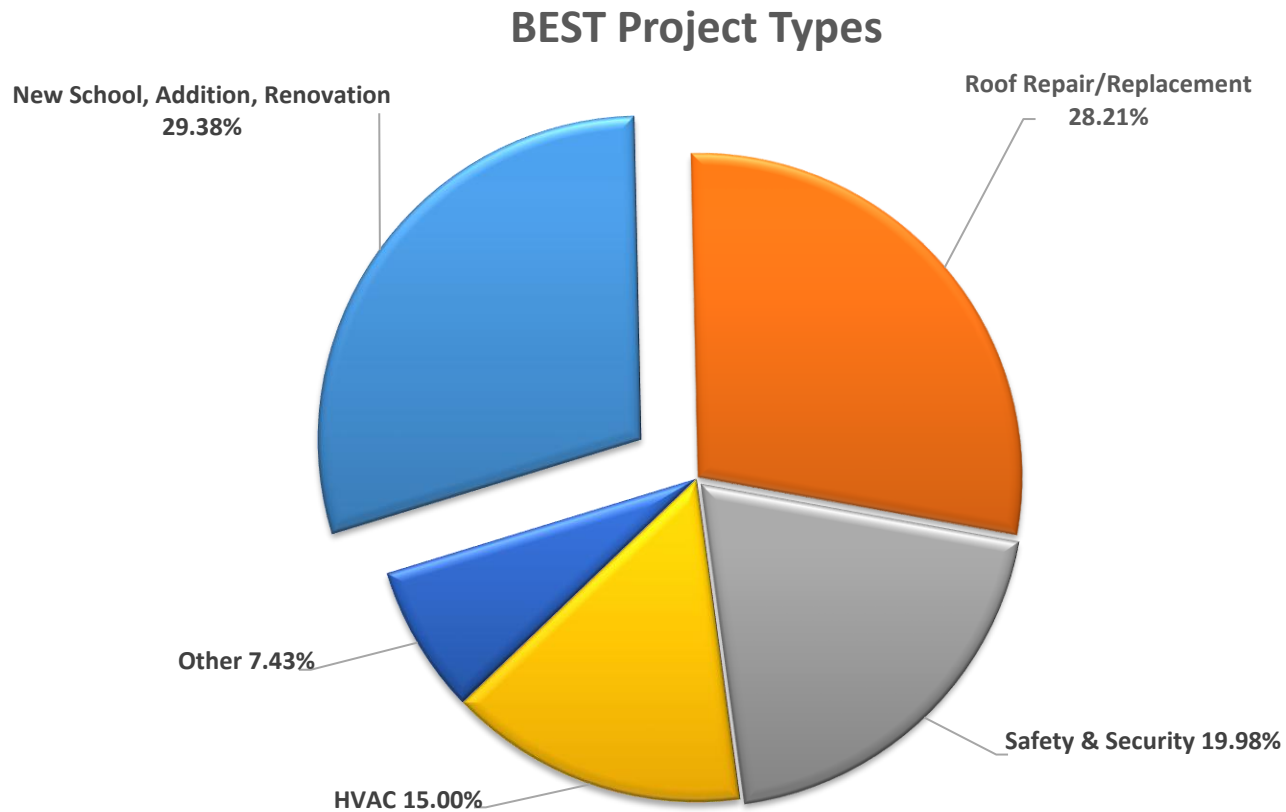
- Over \$4 billion in health and safety improvements in nearly every Colorado school district.
- 17.5 jobs are created or supported for every \$1 million invested (contractors, architects, materials suppliers, restaurants, etc.).
- 75% of Total Project Funded to rural and small rural districts who lack capacity to raise funds locally.
- Fiscal Years 2017-2025, 38% of charter applicants have been awarded funds



Total Cost vs. Project Type through FY24

School Replacements, Additions, and Renovations account for nearly 90% of the total cost.

“Deferred maintenance” accounts for about 70% of project type.



Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST) Grant Program

What is Capital Construction?

Per C.R.S 22-43.7-103, “Capital construction” has the same meaning as set forth in section 24-30-1301 (2); except that the term also includes technology, as defined in section 22-43.7-109 (5)(a)(I)(B), and career and technical education capital construction.

Per C.R.S 24-30-1301 (2), “Capital construction” means:

- (a) **Acquisition** of a capital asset or disposition of real property;
- (b) **Construction, demolition, remodeling, or renovation** of real property necessitated by changes in the program, to meet standards required by applicable codes, to correct other conditions hazardous to the health and safety of persons which are not covered by codes, to effect conservation of energy resources, to effect cost savings for staffing, operations, or maintenance of the facility, or to improve appearance;
- (c) **Site improvement or development** of real property;
- (d) **Installation of the fixed or movable equipment** necessary for the operation of new, remodeled, or renovated real property, if the fixed or movable equipment is initially housed in or on the real property upon completion of the new construction, remodeling, or renovation;
- (e) Installation of the fixed or movable equipment necessary for the conduct of programs in or on real property upon completion of the new construction, remodeling, or renovation;
- (f) **Contracting for the services** of architects, engineers, and other consultants to prepare plans, program documents, life-cycle cost studies, energy analyses, and other studies associated with capital construction and to supervise the construction or execution of such capital construction; or
- (g) (Deleted by amendment, L. 2014.)

Building Excellent Schools Today – Overview

- Available to all public school districts, charter schools, institute charter schools, boards of cooperative educational services (BOCES), and the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind
- Nine member-appointed Capital Construction Assistance Board (CCAB) determines the funding allocation for the annual BEST grants
- Per statute, BEST grants award allocation priorities are based on the following:
 1. **Health, Safety, Security** and Technology
 2. Overcrowding
 3. CTE Programs
 4. American Indian Mascots
 5. All other projects
- All applicants are required to provide matching funds based on the district/school determining factors



Are you eligible to apply?

ELIGIBILITY

- Operate in a school district facility, OR
- Operate in a non-school district facility with a path toward ownership or control of your facility, AND
- Must have been in existence for at **least three years** prior (*after 4th year of October count*) to the date of submission of the BEST grant application.

GOVERNING DOCUMENTS

- Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation for both the school and the building corporation, as applicable
- Reviewed by Attorney General and CDE staff to ensure eligibility requirements are met



How are match percentages determined?

MATCHING FUNDS- Districts range from 11% to 81% (charters 11%-57%)-FY2025

Start with authorizing the district's match- there are three starting points:

- a) District authorized occupying a district facility: match will equal district match
- b) District authorized not in a district facility: 75% of authorizing district match
- c) CSI Authorized School: 50% of the average of all districts, currently equals 25%

Additional factors:

- Attempts (failed or successful) at other funding opportunities
- Enrollment as % of district
- Free and Reduced Lunch %

CDE calculates annually in December if applying for a BEST grant, the following cycle

If the minimum CDE match cannot be met, a waiver to reduce the match can be submitted

Matching Funds



ACTIVITY

What would be your match percentage for your school?

Step 1

Start with your authorizer's match percentage.

District Authorizers-[FY25-26 Match Percentages](#)

CSI Schools start @ 50% (average of all districts)





Step 2- Take your Authorizer's Match %, then...

DISTRICT CHARTER SCHOOL that is occupying a district facility and paying only the direct costs of occupancy	Equals Authorizing District Match
DISTRICT CHARTER SCHOOL not included in subsection (9)(c)(I)(A)	75% of Authorizing District Match
CSI SCHOOL	50% of the average of all districts (25%)

Current Match % _____ (CSI schools are now @ 25%)

Find Your Match Continued...

Step 3-

Does your authorizing district have 10% or less bonding capacity remaining?	5% decrease if YES No change if No (or CSI)
Over the last ten years, how many times has the charter school attempted or obtained funding for capital construction projects? This can include, but not limited to, the following: grant funding from a source other than the assistance fund or state aid, financing, bond proceeds, mill levy for capital needs, etc.	2% reduction in match for each occurrence up to 10% reduction

- About 5% of districts have 10% or less bonding; unless you are aware, keep this as no change
- Brainstorm in the last 10 years if your school has applied for a Capital Construction Grant (over 5k and not BEST/CSCC), financing related to your building, MLO/Bond involvement with authorizer. (MAJOR IMPACT)

Current Match % _____

Step 4-

Charter school enrollment as a percent of district enrollment	Adjustment between 0% and -4% based on relative difference
---	--

Enrollment as % of District

Scale (% of charter students)	Match Adjustment
>15%	0%
15-7.5%	-2%
7.4-0%	-4%

Last Step:

Free/reduced lunch percentage in relation to the statewide average of charter school free/reduced lunch percentage	Adjustment between -4% and 4% based on relative difference
--	--

Free/Reduced Lunch	
Scale (%)	Match Adjustment
>60%	-4%
60-45%	-2%
45-30%	0%
30-15%	2%
15<=0	4%

Your BEST Grant Match:_____%

*No charter match can be lower than the lowest district match %, which is currently 11%.

Considering applying for a BEST grant?

1st- Reach out to your *Regional Program Manager* — Brandon LaChance

- Review or schedule your CDE Facility Assessment, if available
- Review and Revise- Procurement Policy-Local Charter & [CDE Policy](#)
- Identify resources necessary
 - Time
 - Personnel
 - **Funding – *how much can you afford?***
 - School Finance and Building Committees
 - Meet and plan with your Authorizer for potential support
- Hire Professionals
 - Master Planner (for major projects),
 - Owner's Representative,
 - Mechanical contractors,
 - Roofing Consultants, etc.



Where do I start?

MASTER PLANNING

A master plan is a tool for administration/staff/communities to make educated decisions regarding facilities, whether you have one or multiple.

Master Plans are comprised of two major components:

- **Assessment:** A thorough assessment of a school district, charter school, BOCES, or Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind (CSDB) facility inventory, including but not limited to:
 - An assessment of all facilities
 - Demographic Information
 - Summary of the performance of the public school
 - Geographic Area
 - Operations Costs
- **Analysis:** Look at results to identify strengths, weaknesses, and deficiencies that can be improved. Should include a plan to address deficiencies over the next 5 years, including but not limited to:
 - Options for solutions to address deficiencies (ie. replacement, renovation, new)
 - Ability to implement the options (ie. funding, resources, etc.)
 - Impact of implementing or not



What makes a successful Charter BEST Grant project?

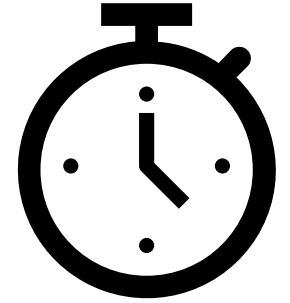
- Appropriate planning is CRITICAL
- Keep in mind the first priority of BEST – health, safety, and security
 - Roof replacement, HVAC upgrades, secure vestibules, and security cameras are usually strong grants!
- Addressing overcrowding and growth is not a number one priority of BEST
- Identify financial means and opportunities
 - Meeting the CDE minimum match
- Engage with your CDE Regional Program Manager and hire professionals to support you along the way!



BEST Timeline-Next Grant Cycle (Tentative until CCAB approval)

Important Dates & Deadlines:

- **Now until December 2025**
 - RPM-Outreach, school assessment, draft match %, review of your intended project
 - Planning and Professionals- Create your school team, identify what professional supports you need
 - Collaborate with fellow school leaders who have gone through the process
- **December 15, 2025 – Notice of Intent to Apply Deadline**
 - CDE must collect data from the charter school in order to generate the matching percentage for the school
 - CDE will also schedule a facility assessment, if not complete
- **December 2025 – Updated Match Calculations Available**
- **January-February 2026 – Application Open**
 - If your charter school applies, it must notify its authorizer.
- **May 2026 – CCAB meeting to recommend project applications for award**
- **July 2026– Award and Contract with successful grant recipients**



<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdefinance/CapConstCharterScIs>



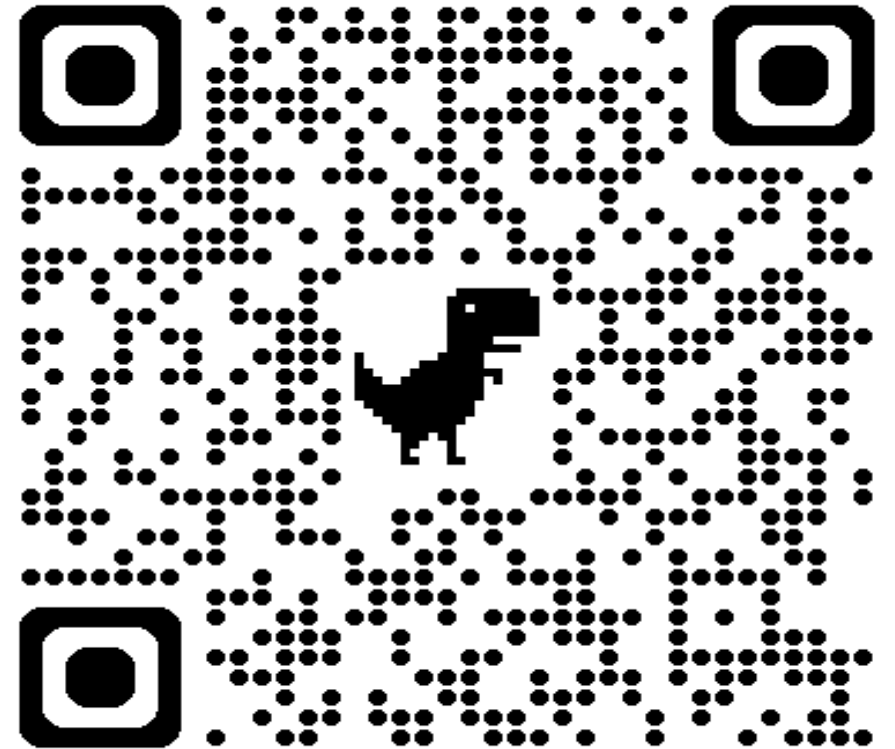
How are Charter Schools in Colorado Obtaining Capital Funds?

- Grants- BEST(Colorado) and USDA (Federal), Foundations
- CSCC Funds*- Annual and dependable
- Loans- [USDA](#), Bank, CECFA & Owner Carry
- Bonds-
 - District Authorized Charters- Charter Schools may be able to work with authorizing districts to gain bond funding.
 - Private Activity Bonds- Gives opportunities to CSI-authorized charter schools and district-authorized charter schools.
 - Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI)- Non-profit, social lending. Loans are short-term
- Capital Reserves (CR)- Learn and devise a capital savings plan for your school. ** Annual CSCC funds can be saved into a Capital Reserve and used for future building needs.*

Take-Aways & Additional Resources

- Determine if your potential project is a Health, Safety, or Security related.
- Fully understand your building deficiencies and work with a construction professional to determine your solutions to your building issues.
- Network with fellow charter leaders, construction professionals, and your CDE-Regional Program Manager who are knowledgeable about the BEST grant process.

BEST Grant Resources



Produced by the Colorado Department of Education - February 2019



HOW DID WE DO?

Please take a moment to help us improve.



<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/League-training2026>



www.coloradoleague.org

charter411@coloradoleague.org