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Georgia Awarded \$38 Million to Support Charter School Growth

The federal Charter School Program (CSP) grant provides funding for grants, training, and guidance to new and existing high-quality charter schools.

ATLANTA, GA (statewide) – October 3, 2022 – The U.S. Department of Education has awarded a grant of \$38,295,000 through the FY22 Charter Schools Program (CSP) State Entity grant competition to the State Charter Schools Foundation of Georgia (SCSF) to support the creation, replication, and expansion of high-quality charter schools throughout Georgia. The five-year grant will be used to provide funds, training, and technical guidance to new and existing charter schools, with the goal of serving 6,000 more charter school students across the state. The SCSF will work in partnership with the State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia (SCSC) and the Georgia Department of Education, the co-applicants for this grant. Together, the coalition will also offer training to school boards on [quality charter school authorizing](#); disseminate charter school best practices to high-need public schools; and maintain a website to provide information about charter schools in Georgia to the public ([FindaGaCharter.org](#)).

“Charter schools use creative approaches to reach their students and prepare them for a bright future. More families in Georgia are asking for new and different educational opportunities for their children, and over 14,000 children are on waiting lists to enroll in charter schools across the state,” said State Charter Schools Foundation President Michele Neely. “This Charter Schools Program State Entity grant will enable us to provide grants and training to open and expand charter schools where they will benefit communities and families.”

The CSP grant will fund the continuation and expansion of the Georgia Strategic Charter School Growth Initiative, which was established with a \$4.1 million grant awarded by the Office of Governor Brian Kemp as part of the Governors Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER II). The

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Charter Growth Initiative was founded by the SCSF, SCSC, and Georgia Charter Schools Association. Nine schools are currently participating in the initiative's cohort programs with extensive training and consultative services, and they will be eligible for grant funds to support their creation, replication, or expansion plans.

With the funding from the CSP grant, additional schools will have the opportunity to participate in the Replication and Expansion Cohort program and New School Leader Fellowship program developed through the Charter Growth Initiative. Eligible schools will also be invited to apply for grant funding up to \$1.5 million per school, with the largest grants awarded to rural schools and high schools. The initiative in Georgia will prioritize funding for schools in neighborhoods without charter schools, schools that engage in significant community outreach, and schools that seek partnerships with local public schools and districts. Grant funds will be awarded on a competitive basis, and charter schools must be approved with an active charter contract prior to applying for funds or technical assistance. Details about grant and cohort opportunities will be published on FindaGaCharter.org when they are available.

“As we emerge from the pandemic and a period of unprecedented learning loss, it is more important than ever that families are empowered with high-quality school options to meet their students’ unique needs,” said State Charter Schools Commission Executive Director Lauren Holcomb. “The Charter Schools Program grant will catalyze our vision of innovative and superior charter schools advancing education in every Georgia community.” The Charter Growth Initiative and additional CSP Grant funding align with the [SCSC's Strategic Plan](#).

Charter schools are tuition-free public schools open to all students in their attendance area regardless of zip code, race/ethnicity, income, or ability level. There are no tests, entrance exams or other special requirements for admission to a charter school. Most charter schools have expanded attendance zones, and many accept students residing anywhere in Georgia. Charter schools use their autonomy to find unique solutions in areas such as curriculum, governance, leadership, and operations. In Georgia, local school boards and the SCSC are permitted to authorize charter schools, granting them a “charter” to operate. Charter schools are required to adhere to all public school laws and requirements, as well as any school district requirements and oversight. Schools authorized by the SCSC are additionally required to adhere to the [Comprehensive Performance Framework](#) and demonstrate strong performance in academic, financial, and organizational performance. Charter schools are governed by nonprofit

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organizations with volunteer boards of directors. Charter school focus areas in Georgia include STEAM/STEM, the arts, leadership development, culturally-responsive education, dual language immersion, International Baccalaureate Programme, Montessori, college or career preparation, K-12 community-based education, among others. Ninety charter schools serving more than 70,000 are operating in Georgia, with several approved charter schools preparing to open in Fall 2023.

“Charter schools offer unique educational opportunities for children, focusing on the specific needs of their communities. Many have also demonstrated improved academic outcomes for children,” said Adria Welcher, Board Chair of the State Charter Schools Foundation. On the 2019 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Georgia charter school students scored at least 13 points higher on average than traditional students in both math and reading. Georgia charter schools are bridging the gap for African-American students who scored at least 18 points higher in reading and mathematics than their traditional peers on the 2019 NAEP. Dr. Welcher continued, “One of the greatest barriers to charter school development and success is access to funding. This CSP grant helps us to address that need, and when partnered with training and community involvement, new and expanding charter schools will be ready to serve more children. We are excited to get to work with charter schools throughout this great state!”

The FY22 CSP State Entity grant award announcements from the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Elementary and Secondary Education can be found on their [website](#).

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About the State Charter Schools Foundation of Georgia

The State Charter Schools Foundation of Georgia (SCSF) is a nonprofit foundation dedicated to supporting high-quality state charter schools serving children throughout Georgia by leveraging resources to help schools launch, build capacity, and grow. For more information about the State Charter Schools Foundation, visit scsfga.org or follow us on social media @SCSFofGA. The SCSF is the charitable foundation for the State Charter Schools Commission.

About the State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia

The State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia (SCSC) is Georgia's state-level, independent charter school authorizing board that seeks to improve public education throughout the state by authorizing high-quality charter schools that provide students with better educational opportunities

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than they would otherwise receive in traditional district schools. Learn more online at scsc.georgia.gov.