

Charter Schools Program (CSP) Distance Learning Grant

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Revised November 6, 2020

What is this grant?

The CSP grant ([see web page for more information](#)) is normally awarded only to new and expanding charter schools, but due to the COVID-19 crisis, the US Department of Education is allowing states to award grants to address the immediate needs of schools to provide high quality distance learning.

Which schools are eligible?

Charter schools that do **not** have the resources to provide for students' educational needs in a context of distance learning, and can demonstrate that need.

Can current CSP subgrantees apply?

CSP subgrantees may **not** apply, but may contact the program director to request an amendment to modify their budget to implement remote learning programs in response to COVID-19. Funds already awarded may be used for distance learning purposes rather than their original purposes. **Update:** Current CSP subgrantee budgets will **not** be increased under the waiver, but New Mexico is requesting a grant amendment to waive this provision. Decision from the US Department is likely to come in late November or December 2020.

How much funding is available?

\$5,000,000 in funding is available. Schools may apply for up to \$180,000 but average awards will be closer to \$50,000. Schools should apply for only as much funding as needed to provide high quality instruction by distance learning. Awards may be less than the amount requested, depending on availability of funding. Funding decisions will be based on need and will consider at-risk indicators.

What expenditures are allowable?

- Hardware*, software, and licenses through 2020-21 school year necessary for remote learning
- Professional development associated with providing instruction by distance learning
- Social work, educational counseling, and family engagement costs relating to the pandemic
- Costs associated with returning to in-person instruction after COVID-19 emergency has passed

Why is there an asterisk next to hardware under allowable costs?

Hardware costs for user devices (laptops, Chromebooks, hotspots, etc.) are listed separately from infrastructure hardware (routers, switches, wireless access points, etc.) in the application budget, because infrastructure needs can be met at a significantly reduced cost through the eRate program, and an internet infrastructure needs assessment can be provided by the Public School Facilities Association (PSFA). Schools applying for internet infrastructure hardware should avail themselves of both of these programs and so indicate in the application.

How long will funds be available?

Funds are available only for the current fiscal year, until June 30, 2021.

How will I receive funds?

CSP is a reimbursement-based grant. Schools expend funds and then submit requests for reimbursement (RfRs) in OBMS.

When will I receive funds?

PED will begin the award letter process as soon as applications have been reviewed and recipients selected. Recipients will be notified immediately upon selection but will not have access to funds until the award letters have been processed and issued. In the past, this has taken some time, but PED has recently streamlined the award letter process and CSP staff will do everything in our power to get funds to schools as soon as possible.

When and where will the application be available?

The application will be released as soon as possible, sometime in November, on the [PED's RFP, RFA, RFI web page](#). An email will be sent to all charter school leaders when it is released.

When will it be due?

Two weeks after it is released.

What is the application format?

It will be a very short and simple application: four questions, a budget spreadsheet, and assurances. The application questions are very straightforward, and should be answered in 500 words or fewer each. The application is designed to collect only necessary information and not be burdensome.

What are the application questions?

Final wording of application questions must still be approved by PED Legal and the U.S. Department, but essentially, the questions will be along the following lines:

- What are the school's distance learning needs that can't be met from other sources?
- What is the school's plan for providing high quality instruction by remote learning?
- How do the expenditures listed in the budget meet students' needs?
- How will use of funds serve student populations that have traditionally been underserved?

How will it be scored?

Applications will be blind scored (i.e., school name will be removed before the application is given to reviewers) by two PED reviewers on the basis of the rubric. If scores are close, the average will be used. If scores differ widely, a third reviewer will score the application, and the average of the three scores used.

Will the rubric be available to applicants?

Yes, the scoring rubric will be included in the application so applicants can see exactly what reviewers will be looking for as they compose their responses.

What if I still have questions?

At least one informational webinar will be scheduled to answer questions. Questions can also be directed to the CSP program manager, Dr. Brigette Russell, at Brigette.Russell2@state.nm.us.