



# INNOVATION & EXCELLENCE

WASHINGTON'S CHARTER SCHOOLS PROGRAM GRANT

Charter School Expansion in Washington State  
July 2022

# WA CHARTERS' - CHARTER SCHOOLS PROGRAM GRANT

Washington's **Innovation and Excellence** Federal CSP Program (Innovation and Excellence Program) was launched through a \$19.9M federal award (contingent upon federal appropriations for the program). The purpose of this program is to help Washington expand opportunities for students to attend excellent and innovative charter public schools that meet and exceed state academic standards. **This five-year grant runs from October 2019 through September 2024.**

At least ninety percent of Washington's federal CSP award will be utilized for competitive subgrants to eligible charter public school subgrantees. At least seven percent will be utilized for state-level technical assistance activities, and not more than three percent will be utilized by WA Charters for the purposes of administering the program.

<b>Federal Program Title:</b>	<b>Expanding Opportunities Through Quality Charter Schools Program (CSP) to State Entities</b>
<b>Federal Agency:</b>	U.S. Department of Education
<b>State Entity:</b>	Washington State Charter Schools Association
<b>CFDA Number:</b>	84.282A
<b>Award Name:</b>	Washington's Innovation and Excellence CSP Award
<b>Award Number:</b>	U282A190002



# WA CHARTERS' CSP GRANT GOALS

Washington's Innovation and Excellence Program has four objectives; this research project contributes to achieving our fourth goal

1. Increase the number of high-quality charter public schools and authorized charter public school seats in Washington
2. Improve student outcomes in Washington's charter public schools, especially for at-risk students
3. Disseminate innovative, effective educational practices that improve student outcomes with key Washington stakeholder groups (i.e., educational partners, traditional public education systems, parents and families, and community-based organizations.)
4. In collaboration with Washington authorizers, support and strengthen our best-in-class authorization process and develop, review, and iterate an authorization renewal process in alignment with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA)'s quality practices

# WA CHARTERS CSP SECTOR EXPANSION RESEARCH

Anticipating that the authorizing window in Washington state could close during WA Charters' CSP grant (2019 to 2024), the grant application and budget proposed using resources to research expansion of charter seats under a closed window and understand how other states have navigated similar authorizing environments.

The RFP and selection of Leslie Talbot of Talbot Consulting was done in collaboration with WA State's two authorizing agencies – The Charter School Commission and Spokane Public Schools.

Leslie Talbot interviewed authorizers and CSO's from across the country, coordinated a symposium of 20+ participants, and finalized the report of findings/recommendations.

*The following slides provide a summary of Talbot Consulting's recommendations and current context for WA Charters work in this space; Talbot Consulting's full report follows these slides.*



# ADVOCACY FOCUSED RECOMMENDATIONS

## **Talbot Consulting Recommendations:**

- Study Washington's Charter Schools Portfolio – types of schools, supporters, pain points/achievements, understanding audiences and messaging, storytelling, and develop cross-sector, multi-jurisdiction coalitions
- Develop a more stakeholder-encompassing advocacy plan – clear messaging by directly impacted stakeholders. Town Halls, Annual Advocacy Calendar, School Visits, etc.
- Amend the Charter School Act – preference for community-driven and innovative applications, additional work done on authorizing performance frameworks
- Create a permanent advocacy group – trainings, annual events, diverse advocates working at each school level
- Create a statewide advocacy portal – newsletters, videos, trainings, advocacy certificate opportunities, calendar of events, etc.
- Connect WA Charters advocacy interests to community-driven interests across the country
- Reduce public-facing connections from non-BIPOC community members, create a network of BIPOC messengers of charter school advocacy
- Tighten connection with National Alliance and other organizations to bring innovative and proven models to Washington

## **Current and Planned WA Charters Work Includes\*:**

- Building an authentic partnership with King County Equity Now with the goal of creating more Global Majority led schools
- Hiring a Stakeholder Engagement Director to work with other K-12 education advocacy organizations and other coalitions to strengthen relationships and advocacy efforts; a permanent advocacy group will be established with the new hire of Director of Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement
- Holding parent and community meetings and coordinating legislator school visits; these have been impacted by COVID and we are excited to welcome supporters and skeptics back into our schools
- Conducting virtual courses, newsletters, videos and a fellowship program to support school growth, outreach efforts and parent training
- Cultivating partnerships with national organizations such as the Diverse Coalition of Charter Schools and the Freedom Coalition
- Growing and maintaining BIPOC advocates through authentic and trusting relationship-building
- Maintaining a strong connection to the National Alliance; Co-President, Natalie Hester, is participating in a National Alliance CSO C4/PAC work group that is supporting CSO leaders in political strategies

\*For more information on any of WA Charters work please visit our [website](#) or reach out to our team – [info@wacharters.org](mailto:info@wacharters.org)

*WA Charters has two near term advocacy goals (1) Lifting the cap on charter schools, (2) Securing equitable levy funding for charter schools*



# STRATEGY FOCUSED RECOMMENDATIONS

## **Talbot Consulting Recommendations:**

1. Work with authorizers to create a 'pre-renewal year' Boot Camp to increase capacity, data and storytelling for the renewal process
2. Consider negotiated acquisitions of poorly-performing charters into high-quality charter organizations (if allowed under law and if it allows 're-using' of that charter slot)
3. Encourage innovation – take stock of Washington's charter portfolio
4. Work with authorizers to design a more equitable RFP process supportive of community developed charter applications
5. Increase enrollment in existing charter schools
6. Partner with non-profit Education Service Providers (ESPs) to create charter-like schools to serve specific under-served populations of students

## **Current and Planned Work Includes:**

1. To date all schools eligible for renewal in Washington have been renewed; WA Charters utilized CSP funds, via a consultant and in partnership with the Commission and Spokane Public Schools, to build the state's first renewal process including process and document codification and gathering feedback after the first renewal to improve the process; WA Charters will continue to collaborate with authorizers and schools around renewal
2. There is precedent for this in Washington's charter sector; Washington's charter accountability mechanisms monitor the performance and sustainability of each school and WA Charters works with schools to provide custom technical assistance that is proactive
3. WA Charters' School Services team (specifically the VP and Director of Innovative Schools) support diverse educational models and promote the diversity of our schools as a strategy for showcasing innovation, in addition charter models in WA State have partnered with districts to share innovative practices (most recently around effective virtual learning models)
4. The Commission is considering refinement of the processes to be more accessible. WA Charters has worked to encourage community voice as part of key expansion and renewal decisions made by the Commission through the public comment processes. Additionally, the newly-created school expansion application contains criteria on how the school partners with the parents and local community
5. Several existing charter schools are looking to expand enrollment based on community demand and are working with their respective authorizer for approval
6. ESP partnerships with now-closed charter schools didn't prove to be successful (SOAR & Green Dot) but this may warrant further exploration for avenues outside of the charter sector if the charter cap is not lifted

# SECTOR ECOSYSTEM RECOMMENDATIONS

## Talbot Consulting Recommendations:

1. Establish a high-functioning charter school ecosystem comprised of a set of interconnected agencies and organizations working together to support the charter sector. Including but not limited to: *WA Charters, authorizers, advocates, funders and philanthropists, civic cultural and advocacy groups and organizations, social entrepreneurs, parent groups, industry, business and industry, and higher education institutions*

2. WA Charters should serve as the intermediary organization for Washington's charter sector

WA Charters serves as a trusted backbone organization, championing innovative and anti-racists organization and sector practices; the organization provides direct TA, advocacy, sector wide connections to other service providers, and supports a growing ecosystems of stakeholders committed to a thriving charter sector at in Washington state

To learn more please visit <https://wacharters.org/> or e-mail [info@wacharters.org](mailto:info@wacharters.org)

A thriving ecosystem is key to growing and sustaining an innovative, community rooted charter sector. Our current ecosystem is strong and continues to grow. Current partners include:



# CONCLUSION

WA Charters values the research, collaboration, and collective problem-solving accomplished by Talbot Consulting, and in cooperation with Washington state and national stakeholders.

Advocacy efforts are a critical component of increasing the number of high-quality, charter school seats available to children in Washington. Additional strategies and collaborative efforts from multiple stakeholders will move the work forward.