

# Iowa Charter Start Up and Expansion Grant

## Information and FAQ

### Introduction

On Friday, May 17, Governor Reynolds announced a new \$7 million charter school grant program to support the expansion of high-quality public charter schools, providing parents and guardians additional public-school choices to best support their children's needs. Charter schools are tuition-free, independently operated public schools that provide unique educational experiences and innovative approaches to best meet the needs of the students they serve. Charter schools are complementary and supportive of district public and nonpublic schools, providing additional choice for families and students. The Iowa Charter School Start Up and Expansion Grant Program supports the launch of newly authorized charter schools and supports the expansion of high-performing charter schools currently operating in Iowa.

### Grant Purpose

The purpose of this grant is to assist Iowa's high-performing, existing charter schools in the improvement or expansion of their offerings and to assist Iowa's newly authorized charter schools in their preparation for operation.

### Requirements

#### Eligibility

All Iowa charter schools currently in operation as well as newly authorized charter schools are eligible to apply for grant funds. Matching funds are not required.

#### Application

Each eligible charter school must submit an application for grant funds in the Iowa Grants system at [lowagrants.gov](https://lowagrants.gov). The application is titled [Iowa Charter School Start Up and Expansion Grant Opportunity](#). The application opens on June 3, 2024, and the deadline to apply is July 16, 2024.

### Quarterly Reimbursement Claims

In order to receive grant funds, charter schools must submit reimbursement claims on either a monthly or quarterly basis. After grants are awarded, the Department will share information with the awardees on how to submit claims. The following is the quarterly schedule for claims:

- Quarter 1: Nov. 1-30
- Quarter 2: Jan. 1-31
- Quarter 3: April 1-30
- Quarter 4: June 1-July 15

### Use of Funds

Funds for this award are provided through State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. For the purposes of this grant opportunity, all funds must be expended in the 2024-25 year.

## Allowable Use of Funds

The table below provides a list of allowable uses of grant funds.

**Table 1. Allowable Use of Funds for Charter Start Up and Expansion Grant Program**

Funding Category	Definition
<b>1. Equipment and Supplies</b>	Acquiring supplies, equipment (including technology), and educational materials (including developing and acquiring instructional materials).
<b>2. Leasing/Purchasing Charter Space</b>	Costs related to leasing or purchasing space for charter school operation.
<b>3. Transportation</b>	Providing one-time, startup costs associated with providing transportation to students to and from the charter school, including purchasing a vehicle for student transportation.
<b>4. Infrastructure</b>	Infrastructure that is not an improvement to leased real property, items that can be removed at the end of a lease without damage to the real property (e.g., removable fixtures, attachable ramp, modular walls) are permissible. Infrastructure investments are permissible if the charter school building is owned by the school district.

## Unallowable Use of Funds

Examples of unallowable uses of these funds include:

- Professional development
- Salaries and benefits
- Operational costs
- Any costs previously paid prior to the release of the Iowa Charter School Start Up and Expansion Grant application
- Recurring costs of any kind

## Timeline

- Grant Application Released: Expansion and Start Up. June 3, 2024
- Application Due to Department: July 16, 2024
- Application Review Completed by Department: Aug. 19, 2024
- Award funds available: Aug. 21, 2024

# Grant Award Process

The Department will accept applications that address the required areas outlined in Table 2.

**Table 2. Required Sections**

Required Section	Description
<b>Cover Page</b>	Applicant type and contact information.
<b>Assurances</b>	Assurances.
<b>A. Executive Summary-Purpose Statement</b>	Summary of the application across charter needs, proposed purpose, and activities.
<b>B. Rationale and Needs Assessment</b>	<p>Description of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Needs assessment; <b>Start Up</b> applications reference needs in <i>Pre-Opening Checklist</i>, program <b>Expansion</b> grants provide student course request survey results or other evidence of student need for the program (see <b>Section E</b>).</li> <li>How activities/funds are directly related to the grant purpose.</li> </ul>
<b>C. Action or Management Plan</b>	<p>Description of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activities that are clearly described with defined responsibilities and timelines for each selected funding category.</li> <li>How each activity described is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tied to the related allowable fund category;</li> <li>Justified, necessary, or critical one-time costs, and related to the purpose of the grant; and</li> <li>Unable to be met by other resources.</li> </ul> </li> <li>The process to procure and purchase services, including vetting processes and criteria to evaluate the quality of those services or potential services.</li> </ul> <p>*Applicants for <b>Start Up</b> funds must link activities to their established <i>Pre-Opening Checklist</i>.</p>
<b>D. Need and Engagement - <i>Expansion only</i></b>	<p>Description of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of student/family interest to expand enrollment or programs (e.g. survey results, event attendance numbers, student schedule request forms) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inventory of student access to a wide variety of programming within a geographic area, ensuring that existing unfilled programs are not duplicated in charter schools, and demonstrating demand for new programming at the charter school.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Resident district/non-public engagement in determining need in the overall portfolio of school program offerings in the geographic area - specifically seeking input from the resident district superintendent, educators, staff, students or families of the resident district/non-public to assess programmatic need.</li> </ul>
<b>E. Budget and Budget Narrative</b>	<p>Provide an itemized budget for each funding category with clear justifications. In addition, applicants are required to provide their current total charter school budget within their proposal for these funds, including operational costs and invested funds.</p> <p>*Applicants for <b>Start Up</b> funds must link the budget to their established <i>Pre-Opening Checklist</i>.</p>

## Reporting and Accounting

Charter schools will provide a year-end report and quarterly updates to the Department documenting the amount of funds spent in each allowable category. The Department may request more frequent updates as needed to meet the federal requirements of the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds.

The spending window for funds begins on the release date of this grant (June 3, 2024), and must be spent during the 2024-25 school year.

## Common Questions

### **Are any charter schools in Iowa eligible to apply for grant funds?**

All Iowa State Board of Education authorized charter schools may apply for grant funds. There are slight differences in the information applicants must provide based on opening date. The application packet provides details regarding these requirements.

### **Are these funds available for charter schools not yet in operation in Iowa?**

Yes. Grant funds are available to charter schools that have been authorized by the Iowa State Board of Education with opening dates set for August 2025.

### **Are these funds available for charter schools not yet authorized to operate in Iowa for funds available in August 2024?**

Not at this time. Grant funds are available to charter schools that have been authorized by the Iowa State Board of Education only. However, this grant may be available for future charters authorized for operation in August 2026.

### **May we use these funds for administrator, teacher or staff salaries?**

No. Grant funds may be used for one-time/ infrastructure costs only, as shown in Table 1. Allowable Use of Funds for Charter Start Up and Expansion Grant Program.

### **How do we obtain funds, if we are awarded this grant?**

Funds are provided to charter schools awarded this grant on a reimbursement basis only. If awarded, the Department will provide training on how to submit claims on the required quarterly schedule.

## Questions and Additional Guidance

If you have questions regarding the Iowa Charter Start Up and Expansion Grant Program, contact [charters@iowa.gov](mailto:charters@iowa.gov)

For IowaGrants.gov assistance, contact Jeffrey Fletcher at [jeffrey.fletcher@iowa.gov](mailto:jeffrey.fletcher@iowa.gov).