



# Alabama CSP Grant Request for Applications

2022 Subgrant Competition



Applications due by 4PM CT  
**December 9, 2022**



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	GRANT INFORMATION	
	a. Description of the Program.....	2
	b. Important Dates.....	2
	c. Grant Details.....	3
	d. Eligibility to Apply.....	5
	e. 2021 CSP Grant Application Timeline.....	7
	f. Application Submission Instructions.....	7
	g. Review of Applications.....	8
	h. Technical Assistance.....	8
	i. Participation, Evaluation, and Reporting.....	9
	j. Additional Information to be Considered.....	11
II.	GRANT APPLICATION	
	a. Executive Summary.....	12
	b. Application Narrative.....	12
	c. Expansions Only: Submitted Amendment Package .....	12
	d. CSP Budget Spreadsheet Instructions.....	12
	e. Required Attachments.....	14
III.	APPENDIX	
	a. Application Narrative	
	b. CSP Application Scoring Rubric	

## I. GRANT INFORMATION

### a. Description of the Program

Under the FY 2019 Charter Schools Program (CSP) State Entities Competition, the U.S. Department of Education (Department) awarded grants to three states. Authorized under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (20 U.S.C. 7221-7221j), the CSP State Entities Program is a competitive grant program that enables state entities to award subgrants to eligible applicants in their state to open and prepare for the operation of new charter schools and to replicate and expand high-quality charter schools.

In August 2019, New Schools for Alabama (NSFA) was awarded a CSP grant of \$25 million to carry out the following activities in Alabama:

1. Increase the number of high-quality<sup>1</sup> charter schools by at least 15 over the next five years, with an emphasis on those serving educationally disadvantaged students; and
2. Advance Alabama's standing as a national leader in authorizing quality, as demonstrated by NACSA's best practices and authorizer evaluations.

CSP grants awarded by NSFA through its Alabama CSP Grant program are federally funded under the US Department of Education CSP State Entities Grant (CFDA number 84.282A) and are subject to the availability of funds through the CSP. Additional federal guidance and related documents can be found at: <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-discretionary-grants-support-services/charter-school-programs/state-entities/>.

### b. Important Dates

Date	Activity
October 3, 2022	Application Open
December 9, 2022	Application Closed
January 24-26, 2023	Applicant Interviews
January 31, 2023	Awards Announced
Upon Final Approval	Funding Available (No sooner than December 9, 2022)

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<sup>1</sup>For purposes of this application, high-quality is defined as (1) a school achieving a letter grade of A or B on the annual state school report card, or (2) a school achieving a letter of grade of C in a school attendance zone in which a traditional public school serving similar grade levels achieves a letter grade of D or F. Additionally, for applicants implementing credit recovery, dropout prevention, or dropout recovery models, the Selection Committee may also consider performance against benchmarks in the applicant's agreed upon contract with its authorizer.

### c. Grant Details

Alabama CSP Grants are competitive grants for the purpose of funding startup, replication, and expansion activities, including during planning and implementation phases. Applicants must apply for all funding as a part of this grant. Grant awards may last up to 42 months, inclusive of planning and implementation periods. The planning period begins no sooner than December 9, 2022, and continues for up to 18 months, unless otherwise stated in the grant award notice. Applications will not be approved by the Selection Committee unless the applicant group has already applied to the charter authorizer.

#### *Grant Activities*

Planning activities eligible for grant funding occur within the first 18 months of each award. A charter may only be eligible for planning funds *after* the proposed charter school receives approval from the authorizer to establish a new school, replicate an existing school, or expand<sup>2</sup> an existing school. Please see section (d) Eligibility to Apply for more details. Implementation activities eligible for grant funding may overlap with the planning period.

Subgrants should support activities related to opening and preparing for the operation of new charter schools or replicating or expanding high-quality charter schools. Associated activities must directly benefit new seats funded through the grant. Activities may include:

1. Costs associated with preparing teachers, school leaders, and specialized instructional support personnel:
  - a. Professional development,
  - b. Hiring and compensating during planning period – teachers, school leaders, and/or specialized instructional support personnel.
2. Acquiring supplies, training, equipment (including technology), and educational materials (including developing and acquiring instructional materials.)
3. Carrying out necessary renovations to ensure that a new school building complies with applicable statutes and regulations, and minor facilities repairs (excluding construction.)
4. Providing one-time, startup costs associated with providing transportation to students to and from the charter school.
5. Carrying out community engagement activities, which may include paying the cost of student and staff recruitment.

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<sup>2</sup> Expansion is defined as a school adding an entirely new grade span (i.e., elementary, middle, or high school) beyond those already approved and open prior to the current CSP Grant application cycle. Additionally, the Selection Committee may consider applications that include significant enrollment increases, especially for instances in which a school does not use actual grade levels or grade spans.

6. Providing for other appropriate, non-sustained costs related to the activities of opening, replicating, or expanding a charter school.

Examples of **unallowable costs** include the following:

1. Any recurring costs, such as lease payments, or utilities incurred *after* the first 18 months of the award;
2. Lobbying;
3. New construction of facilities;
1. Professional dues or memberships;
2. Employee hiring/recruitment expenses such as a placement firm or travel for prospective employees;
3. Non-educational/non-informative promotional/novelty items for advertising, events, or recruiting;
4. Grant oversight expenses;
5. Costs of continuing education credits for professional development coursework;
6. Gift certificates, alcoholic beverages, food;
7. School apparel for staff or students;
8. Fines and penalties;
9. Expenses outside the scope of the school’s charter or K-12 education; i.e., before/after school programs and preschool, activities related to the non-profit organization but not the charter school, etc.; and
10. Out-of-state travel, unless it can be demonstrated that the goal of the travel is directly related to startup activity and cannot be accomplished in-state (expenses for out-of-country travel are not allowable.)

Additional information can be found in the CSP ESSA Flexibilities FAQ document: <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2019/11/CSP-ESSA-Flexibilities-FAQ-2017.pdf> Part C of the ESEA, Expanding Opportunity Through Quality Charter Schools can be found at this link: <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2019/11/Statute-for-website.pdf>

### *Award Sizes*

Startup charter applicants and district conversion charter applicants are equally eligible to apply for funding. The base award is up to \$1,000,000, and schools serving greater than 60% educationally disadvantaged students are eligible to receive a supplement of \$500,000, to be available in October of the initial year of operation and subject to appropriation of funds, for a total maximum award of up to \$1,500,000. The table below further describes such funding.

Award Type	Base Award Max	Supplement	Max Amount	Grant Duration

New School & Conversation	\$1,000,000	\$500,000 <sup>3</sup>	\$1,500,000	Up to 42 months
Replication & Expansion	\$750,000	\$500,000 <sup>4</sup>	\$1,250,000	Up to 42 months

**d. Eligibility to Apply**

To be eligible to receive an award, an applicant must meet the following requirements:

1. Must be a brick-and-mortar charter school with new seats not yet served;
  - a. Including:
    - i. A new open-enrollment charter school
    - ii. A new district conversion charter school
    - iii. An existing charter school that is expanding or replicating
2. Must meet the federal definition of a charter school or charter school developer ([ESEA 4310](#));
3. Must have nonprofit status designation or a pending designation;
4. Must attest to all provisions in a Statement of Assurances signed by the Board Chair;
5. Must have an approved charter contract for a new school or an expansion/replication or evidence of a submitted application to the authorizer for the current application cycle;
6. Must have provided written notice to the authorizer of intent to apply for a CSP subgrant;

The following types of brick-and-mortar charter applicants are eligible for the Alabama CSP Grant:

1. A new open-enrollment charter school that has received approval from the authorizer;
2. A new district conversion charter school that has received approval from the authorizer; or
3. An existing charter school that has received approval to expand from the authorizer. Applicants must meet the definition of expansion or replication in the *Definitions* section below.

**Definitions ([ESEA 4310](#))**

1. Charter school. A charter school is a public school that—
  - A. In accordance with a specific State statute authorizing the granting of charters to schools, is exempt from significant state or local rules that inhibit the flexible operation and management of public schools, but not from any rules relating to the other requirements of this paragraph;

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<sup>3</sup> Supplement available upon evidence of 60% or greater free or reduced lunch student enrollment.

<sup>4</sup> Supplement available upon evidence of 60% or greater free or reduced lunch student enrollment.

- B. Is created by a developer as a public school, or is adapted by a developer from an existing public school, and is operated under public supervision and direction;
  - C. Operates in pursuit of a specific set of educational objectives determined by the school's developer and agreed to by the authorized public chartering agency;
  - D. Provides a program of elementary or secondary education, or both;
  - E. Is nonsectarian in its programs, admissions policies, employment practices, and all other operations, and is not affiliated with a sectarian school or religious institution;
  - F. Does not charge tuition;
  - G. Complies with the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.), section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g) (commonly referred to as the "Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974"), and part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;
  - H. Is a school to which parents choose to send their children, and that:
    - Admits students on the basis of a lottery, consistent with section 4303(c)(3)(A), if more students apply for admission than can be accommodated; or
    - In the case of a school that has an affiliated charter school (such as a school that is part of the same network of schools), automatically enrolls students who are enrolled in the immediate prior grade level of the affiliated charter school and, for any additional student openings or student openings created through regular attrition in student enrollment in the affiliated charter school and the enrolling school, admits students on the basis of a lottery as described in [ESEA 4303\(c\)\(3\)\(a\)](#);
  - I. Agrees to comply with the same federal and state audit requirements as do other elementary schools and secondary schools in the state, unless such state audit requirements are waived by the state;
  - J. Meets all applicable federal, state, and local health and safety requirements;
  - K. Operates in accordance with state law;
  - L. Has a written performance contract with the authorized public chartering agency in the state that includes a description of how student performance will be measured in charter schools pursuant to state assessments that are required of other schools and pursuant to any other assessments mutually agreeable to the authorized public chartering agency and the charter school; and
  - M. May serve students in early childhood education programs or postsecondary students.
2. Developer. An individual or group of individuals (including a public or private nonprofit organization), which may include teachers, administrators, and other school staff,

parents, or other members of the local community in which a charter school project will be carried out.

3. Expansion. The term Expansion is defined as a school adding an entirely new grade span (i.e., elementary, middle, or high school) beyond those already approved and open prior to the current CSP Grant application cycle. Additionally, the Selection Committee may consider applications that include significant enrollment increases, especially for instances in which a school does not use actual grade levels or grade spans.
4. High-quality. High-quality is defined in Alabama as one of the following:
  - A. A school achieving a letter grade of A or B on the annual state school report card; or
  - B. A school achieving a letter of grade of C in a school attendance zone in which a traditional public school serving similar grade levels achieves a letter grade of D or F; or
  - C. For applicants implementing credit recovery, dropout prevention, or dropout recovery models, the Selection Committee may also consider performance against benchmarks in the applicant’s agreed upon contract with its authorizer.
5. High-quality (federal definition). The term “high-quality charter school” means a charter school that:
  - Shows evidence of strong academic results, which may include strong student academic growth, as determined by a state;
  - Has no significant issues in the areas of student safety, financial and operational management, or statutory or regulatory compliance;
  - Has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student academic achievement, including graduation rates where applicable, for all students served by the charter school; and
  - Has demonstrated success in increasing student academic achievement, including graduation rates where applicable, for each of the subgroups of students, as defined in section 1111(c)(2), except that such demonstration is not required in a case in which the number of students in a group is insufficient to yield statistically reliable information or the results would reveal personally identifiable information about an individual student.

**e. 2022 CSP Grant Application Timeline**

Grant application available	Grant application deadline	Grant awards announced
October 3, 2022	December 9, 2022	January 31, 2023

In addition to other scheduled trainings, NSFA will host mandatory grant management webinars for subgrant recipients. Planning grant funds will be made available no sooner than



April 1, 2023, upon completion of additional required documentation and training and will remain available for up to 18 months.

#### **f. Application Submission Instructions**

Unless otherwise notified, all applications must be submitted in accordance with the timeline included in section (e) above. The deadline for submission on each respective date is 4 PM CST. Interested applicants can request the full application package at <https://forms.monday.com/forms/584f1e23f59674aa754c4ffe29dec237?r=use1>.

Applications must adhere to the following guidelines:

1. A complete application includes all required materials in this request for applications. For more details on the application submission requirements, see Section II Grant Application on page 11 of this RFA:
  - i. Executive Summary and Application Narrative
  - ii. For expansions, any materials submitted to authorizer for an expansion amendment request
  - iii. Assurances
  - iv. Required Attachments (see page 12-13 for full list)
  - v. Contract between charter and authorizer (upon approval)
2. All pages of the narrative must be standard letter size, 8½ x 11" using 12-point font in Times New Roman, one-inch margins, and a maximum of 50 pages.

#### **g. Review of Applications**

The Alabama CSP Selection Committee, composed of a minimum of three (3) members, will review, analyze, and grade all subgrant applications.

The subgrant application review process will include two phases:

1. Phase 1 – Desk Audit. Once the Project Director of the CSP Grant has reviewed an application to ensure eligibility, that application will enter Phase 1, which is a desk audit. The desk audit will allow for a thorough review of all subgrant applications by peer reviewers using a scoring rubric to evaluate the application, the budget, and the supplemental materials. This phase includes review of the narrative, budget, and all other critical details. An average of the Selection Committee members' scores will be used for a final score.
2. Phase 2 – Interview. After the desk audit, all applicants deemed eligible will be required to attend an in-person interview before the Selection Committee to present the grant request and entertain questions from the Selection Committee.

After all interviews have been completed, the Selection Committee will finalize the review and scoring of each application. Those applications scoring above the pre-determined cut score

will be considered for awards. The Selection Committee will aim to issue three awards per grant cycle but has discretion to issue more or fewer awards as deemed necessary.

#### **h. Technical Assistance**

Technical assistance meetings for grant applicants can be scheduled upon request; however, all applicants are advised to view the slides from the pre-application webinar, which will be held **on Thursday October 6, 2022, at 11am-12 pm CST**. Additionally, NSFA will host an optional webinar on CSP budgeting best practices **on November 10, 2022, at 12:00-1:00 pm CST** and a mandatory grant management webinar for subgrant recipients to be scheduled after the awards announcement. For individualized technical assistance, please contact NSFA via email at [csp@newschoolsforalabama.org](mailto:csp@newschoolsforalabama.org) to schedule a meeting.

#### **i. Participation, Evaluation, and Reporting**

##### *Participation*

NSFA will hold mandatory trainings for all subgrantees. Each training will focus specifically on grant requirements, required reporting, data collection, financial and operational stability, and the relationship with the sponsor during the grant period. Subgrantees must participate in good faith.

In addition to participation in all required training activities, subgrantees must also agree to make a good faith effort to participate in all reasonable requests by NSFA to share and disseminate best practices. Such participation may include posting resources online via the NSFA website, serving on discussion panels, or providing informational sessions at convenings, and more.

##### *Evaluation*

Each subgrantee will undergo periodic evaluations to assess progress toward achieving the goal of providing high-quality and increased equal opportunities for the academic enrichment of all students, especially for those who are educationally disadvantaged. The results of the evaluations will be used to refine, improve and strengthen performance measures and to share best practices of the program. The NSFA technical assistance team will examine and share all effective uses of subgrant funds in the effort to support NSFA's overall strategy for increasing the number of high-quality charter schools and closing the achievement gap for students across the state.

The technical assistance team will provide both desk monitoring and scheduled on-site visitations to ensure subgrantees are meeting benchmark goals. Further, the technical assistance team will be responsible for evaluating subgrantees to ensure that they adhere to federal rules and regulations.

The technical assistance team will also implement a plan and procedure to identify and notify subgrantees of compliance issues related to their CSP subgrant. Included within the policies will be a detailed timeline providing a subgrantee with thirty (30) days prior written notice to

correct any compliance issue(s) and subsequently be given an opportunity for a hearing to provide justification as to why it should be entitled to remain as a subgrantee in the program. If the subgrantee is unable to fulfill requirements, the grant money will not be distributed to the subgrantee.

### *Reporting*

NSFA staff will regularly liaise with Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) personnel and source data from the ALSDE Data Center to monitor progress. NSFA will conduct at least quarterly reviews, which will include a full review of all available data concerning academic, operational, and fiscal performance. Subgrantees will provide school level academic and operational information requested during quarterly reimbursement requests, budget period closeouts, and end of cycle reviews. At least one site visit will also be conducted by NSFA. Specifically, some of the monitoring activities to be performed by NSFA include the following:

1. Review and approve each subgrant budget;
2. Conduct at least quarterly desk reviews of financial reports and expense reports;
3. Conduct at least quarterly desk reviews on academic achievement, operations, school culture, and compliance.
4. Monitor for timely drawdown of subgrant funds and compliance concerning allowable uses of funding;
5. Provide input and review materials prior to submission for all authorizer hearings concerning finance;
6. Receive and review budget revisions as requested, among other duties.

The following table provides an overview of the standard monitoring and reporting activities to be conducted by NSFA during each respective phase of a subgrant:

Subgrant Phase	Monitoring Activities
Pre-Award Certification & Visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Meet school’s planning committee</li> <li>✓ Review financial procedures/internal controls</li> </ul>
Planning Phase (up to 18 months)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Technical assistance sessions</li> <li>✓ Desktop review (financial and program)</li> <li>✓ Quarterly Report reflections, data, and submissions</li> <li>✓ Period Transmission report, data, and submissions</li> <li>✓ Phone conferences</li> <li>✓ Annual reports</li> </ul>

Implementation Years 1 and 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Technical assistance sessions</li> <li>✓ Desktop review (financial &amp; program)</li> <li>✓ Quarterly Report reflections, data, and submissions</li> <li>✓ Period Transmission report, data, and submissions</li> <li>✓ Phone conferences</li> <li>✓ On-site visit (financial and program reviews) in Year 1</li> <li>✓ Annual reports</li> </ul>
Closeout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Grant final reports</li> </ul>

**j. Additional Information to be Considered**

In addition to the information required to be submitted with this application, New Schools for Alabama will consider the following information from subgrant recipients under this grant opportunity:

1. Information that ensures each charter school receiving funds through the program will have a high degree of autonomy over budget and operations, including autonomy over personnel decisions;
2. Information that ensures that each charter school receiving funds under the program makes publicly available the annual state report card, including on the website of the school, information to help parents make informed decisions about the education options available to their children including the information required in ESEA 4303 (f)(2)(G);
3. Quality controls agreed to between the eligible applicant and the authorized public chartering agency involved;
4. Information that ensures that authorizers are reviewing the schools' independent annual audits of financial statements prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and ensure that any such audits are publicly reported; and
5. This RFA supports the development of diverse charter school models, including models that serve rural communities. The focus on innovative and community-based school design is emphasized in the initial charter application. New Schools for Alabama will collect relevant information concerning the school model from each applicant and catalog such information to ensure that the grant program is funding the development of a diverse portfolio of schools.

## II. GRANT APPLICATION

Applicants must submit the following materials online by requesting access to the application package at <https://forms.monday.com/forms/584f1e23f59674aa754c4ffe29dec237?r=use1> and completing the application in accordance with instructions found therein.

### a. Executive Summary (as part of the Application Narrative)

Provide an executive summary for your grant application using the template provided within the Application Narrative. The executive summary must be 12-point font in Times New Roman. The summary should clearly tell the story of the proposed school or expansion and should include the following information:

- Contact Information and overview of organization and school, including the mission;
- Vision for project;
- 3-5 measurable goals for project; and
- A narrative of the proposed CSP budget including how CSP funds will help achieve those goals.
- Budget Narrative

### b. Application Narrative

The Application Narrative aligns with the Alabama Public Charter School Commission application framework. Applicants should complete all sections of the Application Narrative, **using the template** provided in the full application package. To request access to the application package, applicants should submit the request form at <https://forms.monday.com/forms/584f1e23f59674aa754c4ffe29dec237?r=use1>.

### c. Expansions Only: Amendment Materials Submitted to Authorizer

Expansion applicants should submit all information that was provided to their authorizer during the amendment request process.

### d. CSP Grant Budget Narrative Instructions (as part of the Executive Summary)

Applicants must complete as part of the Executive Summary of the application a budget narrative of planned investments with grant funds for their full grant period. Applicants can request access to the full application package at <https://forms.monday.com/forms/584f1e23f59674aa754c4ffe29dec237?r=use1>. A webinar on budgeting best practice will be held **on November 10, 2022 at 12:00-1:00 pm CST**. Applicants must fully complete the narrative requirement in the executive summary. A finalized CSP funds

budget will be prepared alongside the CSP team should an award be made. Budgets are approved by year of the grant and as such, the year one planning budget would be the first approved budget after awards are made. Subgrantees can spend up to \$750,000 in their first year of planning. The budget narrative guidelines accommodate seven broad categories. Each is listed below with a description of sample items that may be included:

- a. Personnel & Fringe Benefits
  - i. These categories accommodate salaries and benefits to be covered by the grant. Supplanted salaries are not allowable beyond the 18-month planning period.
- b. Travel
  - i. This category includes any travel related to professional development or activity related to training and development for the school leadership team or board.
- c. Supplies & Equipment
  - i. This category accommodates expenditures for assorted equipment related to the startup of the charter school or expansion/replication seats, as well as any supplies related to the planning or operation of the school. This may extend to include any technology equipment and infrastructure, including laptops, tech-supported whiteboards, etc. Additionally, this category supports the purchase of textbooks, software, and other materials related to curriculum, assessments, etc.
- d. Contractual
  - i. This category supports costs related to professional development for leaders, teachers, and support staff as necessary. Costs might include consultancies, travel, materials, attendance at events, and more.
- e. Other
  - i. This category accommodates facilities-related expenditures such as renovations, leasehold improvements, lease payments during the 18-month planning period, or other allowable expenses not covered in other categories.

### **e. Required Attachments**

The following attachments are in addition to the application narrative and required as part of the grant application package:

**ATTACHMENT 1—EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND APPLICATION NARRATIVE**

**ATTACHMENT 2—OVERVIEW OF PLANNED CURRICULUM**

**ATTACHMENT 3**—QUALIFICATIONS, RESUME, AND PROFESSIONAL BIOGRAPHY OF PRINCIPAL/HEAD OF SCHOOL CANDIDATE

**ATTACHMENT 4**—JOB DESCRIPTION OR QUALIFICATIONS, TIMELINE, CRITERIA, AND RECRUITMENT/SELECTION PROCESS FOR PRINCIPAL/HEAD OF SCHOOL CANDIDATE (IF NOT HIRED)

**ATTACHMENT 5**—QUALIFICATIONS, RESUMES, PROFESSIONAL BIOGRAPHIES OF SCHOOL'S LEADERSHIP/MANAGEMENT TEAM MEMBERS/BOARD MEMBERS

**ATTACHMENT 6**—PROOF OF 501(C)3 NON-PROFIT STATUS AND FEDERAL TAX-EXEMPT STATUS (OR COPIES OF FILINGS)

**ATTACHMENT 7**—SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

**ATTACHMENT 8**—FACILITY MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING OR PROOF OF INTENT TO SECURE FACILITY AND BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF LOCATION, SIZE, AMENITIES

**ATTACHMENT 9**—SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS PROVIDING DETAILS OF FACILITY

**ATTACHMENT 10**—DETAILED START-UP/EXPANSION/REPLICATION/CONVERSION PLAN FOR SCHOOLS

**ATTACHMENT 11**—SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

**ATTACHMENT 12**— SCHOOL OPERATIONS BUDGET (COMPLETED BUDGET FOR ALL REVENUE AND EXPENSES) AND BUDGET NARRATIVE INCLUDING DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF ASSUMPTIONS AND REVENUE AND EXPENSE ESTIMATES, ETC.

**ATTACHMENT 13**— PROJECTED ENROLLMENT BY GRADE AND NUMBER OF SEATS FOR EACH YEAR OF THE GRANT

**ATTACHMENT 14**— PROJECTED DEMOGRAPHICS BY ETHNICITY AND EDUCATIONALLY DISADVANTAGED STATUS

**ATTACHMENT 15**— IF APPLICABLE, PROVIDE THE SCHOOL'S MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION/OPERATOR CONTRACT.

**ATTACHMENT 16**— PROOF OF APPLICATION FOR CHARTER OR EXECUTED CHARTER AGREEMENT

**ATTACHMENT 17**— PROOF OF NOTIFICATION OF CSP GRANT APPLICATION TO CHARTER AUTHORIZER

**ATTACHMENT 18**— COMPLETED ASSURANCES SIGNED BY BOARD CHAIR