

## UNCOMMON SCHOOLS

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### Abstract

Uncommon Schools (Uncommon) is a nonprofit organization that starts and manages outstanding urban charter public schools that close the achievement gap and prepare low-income students to enter, succeed in and graduate from college. Uncommon builds uncommonly great schools by developing and managing regional networks that are philosophically aligned and highly accountable. In addition to opening and managing high-performing schools, Uncommon is also committed to expanding its social impact by sharing best practices and advocating for policy changes that provide educational options to under-served families.

Uncommon currently manages 16 schools in New York City; Rochester, New York; Troy, New York; and Newark, New Jersey. This fall, the organization will grow to 24 schools serving nearly 4,000 students in its current geographies and Boston, Massachusetts. After several years of building a strong group of talented leaders and teachers, as well as proven, replicable systems, Uncommon is in the midst of an ambitious growth plan to ultimately encompass more than 38 schools, serving nearly 14,000 K to 12th grade students.

The shared mission of these schools is to prepare students to enter, succeed in, and graduate from college by creating transformative college-prep opportunities for low-income children. Uncommon has achieved outstanding academic results based on nationally-normed tests, statewide exams, and graduation milestones. Schools consistently outperform neighborhood schools, rank at the top of their cities, and are among their states' top-performing urban schools. In addition to academic results, Uncommon tracks the effectiveness of its instructional programs, management services and operational practices in order to disseminate the systems that work best to schools outside of the Uncommon network. The most frequently cited example of this is the *Taxonomy of Effective Teaching Practices (Taxonomy)*, a collection of the 50 techniques that most drive student achievement. To date, Uncommon has shared the *Taxonomy* with over 4,000 external teachers with an estimated impact of increasing teacher effectiveness to over 250,000 students. Uncommon Schools expects to systemize additional tools and practices, and disseminate them, in an effort to influence and catalyze student achievement in schools across the country.

The focus of the following grant is a request for CSP funding to fuel the growth of Uncommon schools in upstate New York and Newark, New Jersey, specifically. Uncommon's strong track record, talented leadership team, and replicable systems uniquely position the organization for federal CSP funding. Although all Uncommon schools will be sustainable on the public dollar at full enrollment, public and private philanthropy is necessary in the start-up funding years when the per pupil cost of running the school is higher due to many one-time expenses and initially low levels of enrollment. State laws in New York and New Jersey do not permit an existing charter to apply for additional CSP grants when opening

new, distinct schools. Federal support of Uncommon's True North network in upstate New York and North Star network in Newark, New Jersey would guarantee that nearly 3,000 additional low-income students in these campuses have an opportunity for a high-quality education and the preparation necessary to succeed in and graduate from college. Uncommon respectfully requests \$5.2 million in federal CSP funding to support the growth of seven new schools and two existing schools in Uncommon's True North and North Star Networks.