

Expanding Opportunity Through Quality Charter Schools Program (CSP)
Grants to State Entities (CFDA Number: 84.282A)

Project Abstract

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation & Improvement
Charter Schools Program

Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board

State:
Mississippi

PR Award Number:
U282A170020

Duration (Years):
5 Years

Year 1 Funding:
\$2,123,299.00

Total Expected Funding:
\$15,000,000.00

Total Estimate of charter school support over lifetime:
15 new, replication, or expansion charter schools

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Today, 1 out of 3 of Mississippi's 482,000 public school students attends a D- or F-rated school. Improving educational outcomes for Mississippi students, particularly these 145,000 educationally disadvantaged students, has been a primary focus of Mississippi's state leadership for the last four years. Mississippi overhauled its charter school law in 2013 as part of a set of ground-breaking education reform laws. The new law created the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board (MCSAB), an independent state agency charged with establishing and overseeing Mississippi's charter school sector. With its authorizing activities grounded in 25 years of national best practices, the MCSAB has authorized 4 charter schools in Jackson, Mississippi.

With this proposal for the 2017 Charter Schools Program grant, the MCSAB seeks to expand the reach and impact of Mississippi's charter school sector while maintaining a high focus on quality. To this end, the MCSAB proposes a 5-year, \$15,000,000 CSP grant that will meet three ambitious objectives:

1. Increase the number of new, high-quality charter schools launching in Mississippi by at least 375% over the next five years to create 15,000 new high-quality charter school seats.
2. Support all charter schools in earning an 'A' or 'B' letter grade on Mississippi's statewide accountability system or significantly improving by advancing two letter grades from their rating by their fourth year of operation.
3. Advance MCSAB's standing as a national leader in authorizing quality, as demonstrated by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers' (NACSA's) State Policy ranking.

Receiving federal CSP funding will serve as a tremendous stimulus to the state's charter school sector, now in its infancy. The MCSAB's proposed CSP grant program features a peer-reviewed subgrant application process. Subgrantee applicants will apply for vital funds to defray the significant start-up costs of hiring administrative staff and teachers during their planning years; securing facilities; conducting recruitment and enrollment activities; and purchasing technology infrastructure, equipment, and curriculum. Additionally, Mississippi will be able to invest CSP funds in operator recruitment, technical assistance to applicants and approved charter schools, and technical assistance to the MCSAB to enhance authorizer quality.

To achieve these lofty goals, MCSAB plans to partner with Mississippi First, a local education policy non-profit organization, and its new "quarterback" entity, the Mississippi Education Accelerator, as well as continue its partnership with the NACSA. These partners will each add to the MCSAB's existing capacity and powerfully leverage 2017 CSP funds to grow the Mississippi charter school sector and ensure that neither income nor zip code determine a student's ability to receive a quality education.