

# New Hampshire Charter School Program, Grant FAQs

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## General Grant Questions

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***Will there be more competitions?***

At this time, there is no plan to hold another competition after the April-May 2024 competition.

***Will the grant still be for three years?***

We are coming to the end of our grant period. NHED's grant expires on 9/30/24. We plan to file for an extension that will allow sub-grantees to work until 9/30/25 on their projects, if approved. As our program currently stands, projects would end on 9/30/24. If our extension is approved, sub-grantees could also request an extension of their projects, provided they do not go beyond the 3-year project limit.

***Are there limits to funding allocations per school?***

Yes, see below.

	Potential Project Award	Potential Innovation Bonus Funds	Potential At-Risk Bonus Funds	Maximum Potential Award
Start-Up	Up to \$1,100,000	Up to \$200,000	Up to \$200,000	Up to \$1,500,000
Expansion	Up to \$500,000	Up to \$50,000	Up to \$50,000	Up to \$600,000
Replication	Up to \$900,000	Up to \$150,000	Up to \$150,000	Up to \$1,200,000

***When will funds be distributed to the awardees?***

We make every effort to notify schools of their selection within a month of the application due date; however, this schedule ultimately depends on the peer review team and the time it takes for them to complete their work. Funds are issued only for planning periods at the start and projects receive continued funding for their implementation periods. Please refer to the RFA for this process. Start-up schools must have an approved charter, non-profit status, registered vendor with NHDAS, and an UEI code from SAM.gov prior to the release of their awards. Existing schools will likely have proof of all these requirements already. For this competition, awards are dependent upon approval of a no-cost extension from USED.

***How do project years work? When will my project year begin and end?***

We will use a calendar year from the time of award. As an example, if you receive your official Grant Award Notification on October 1, 2022, year 1 will be October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2023. The following project years grants will follow on.

***Does getting the application in prior to the due date effect our chances to receive the greatest amount possible, or will NHEd review all apps and then decide on how to fund?***

No, this grant will be competitive in nature and not first come, first serve. We will wait to receive all applications prior to reviewing them.

***How many grants will be awarded?***

Awards will ultimately depend on scores received (applicants must score at least 75% to be funded). New Hampshire’s grant has been fully funded by USED. We have targets to reach 23 new schools, 3 replications, and 14 expansions. To date, NHED has awarded 13 new schools, 1 replication, and 8 expansions.

***What if we underestimate our need in our application?***

NHED will award based on what is asked for in the application. If you find you have underestimated your need, you will need to look to other resources to close the gap.

***Is it possible to apply for dissemination funding as outlined on the federal site?***

The state’s approved grant application did not reserve these funds for applicants, so they are not available with this program.

***Additional guidance on planning and implementation periods.***

We must set distinct periods of time for planning and implementation. NHED has established limits to these periods in order to ensure projects comply with federal requirements. No project can exceed 18 months of planning. The distinction of when you MUST move to implementation is when you have students in the classrooms. For expansion, schools this means the school is open to the expanded grade level(s) or students. School may choose to move to implementation BEFORE students are present. Schools will need to decide what is best based on their individual project milestones and plans and what expenses they are seeking covered via the grant. Sub-grantees will work closely with NHED to navigate this transition in their project.

***Additional guidance on “high-quality” schools***

Expansion and replication grants are available to high-quality New Hampshire Charter Schools. Under section 4303(e)(2) of ESEA, charter schools seeking an expansion or replication within 5 years of a previous award (for example, a start-up grant award) must demonstrate “at least 3 years of improved educational results”. In NHED’s eligibility review, we pull the school’s ireport data to review trends on student achievement, looking for an overall positive trend. As this data is limited in recent years due to covid, schools may offer their own “evidence” of at least 3 years of improved educational results using internal mechanisms for measuring and tracking student performance including alternative testing.

***Additional guidance for developing schools***

Schools that are in the development stage, and do not have an approved charter from an approved authorizer may submit an application for charter school program grant. Schools will not gain access to their grant award until they have an approved charter and met a number of other requirements including:

- Registration as a non-profit (State of NH registration is sufficient)
- Registration at SAM.gov and receipt of a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)
- Registration with the State of New Hampshire as a vendor (NHDAS)
- System access and setup with NHED

The charter school team will assist you through these steps. Please note that due to the current timeframe of our grant, schools that do not receive approval for their charter and can not obtain the list of registrations above by September 2024 may have their award reduced or denied.

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## Application Questions

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### ***What is an expansion of a charter school?***

Expansions are increasing your school's enrollment by a significant amount over the current approved cap or adding grade levels (at least one grade level). Please note, you will need to demonstrate a "need" to expand your enrollment cap through demonstration of demand, waitlists, lotteries, etc.

### ***What is considered a replication?***

A replication is to open a new charter school, or a new campus of a high-quality charter school, based on the educational model of an existing high-quality charter school, under an existing charter or an additional charter. Replication applicants must meet the definition of high-quality under ESEA §4303 (8) A and D, demonstrate 3 years of improved educational results, and apply funds to activities that are not duplicated from previous awarded sub-grants.

### ***How do applying for the additional innovation and at-risk funds work? Do we include those funds in our budgets or should we prepare separate budgets for those funds?***

In the application for the grant, you will see questions regarding the both innovation and at-risk, there is a question for each of these topics that is required for all applicants - regardless of desire to apply for the bonus funds. In addition, in the application form, there is a requirement for applicants seeking these bonus funds to provide a plan for these bonus funds. The application form outlines what is required in the plan – but it includes a description of what your school would do with these additional funds, if you were awarded them.

As you prepare your budget, you will see that the entire project budget goes into a single excel document. The only expenses you will separate are planning and implementation. If you are not using a planning period, you would just leave that tab blank. In your budget, you need show the need for these bonus funds and how they would be used relative to the project phase (planning or implementation). The items you show in your budget should be aligned to what you state in your application. For example, say your school model is a high-tech high school model focused on advanced manufacturing and you are applying for both at-risk dollars and innovation dollars for your start-up. In our application form, you provide how you will be located in a town with a high population of at-risk youth and will offer busing for students in neighboring towns. You also outline a detail career placement plan for seniors to be employed upon graduation with employers throughout the northeast. Since your model is an expensive one, you are seeking the maximum \$1.5 for a new school. Your grant budget needs to be for at least \$1.5M and there needs to be items in the budget that are easily traceable to the answers you provided in the innovation and at-risk answers. These items could include: a bus for transportation, an outreach contractor to assist with building a recruitment plan for students and potential employers, and all the tech your students will need to complete their program. Under this scenario, NHED could award your school the project request amount (\$1.1 million) and the innovation amount (\$200K), but may say your plan for at-risk isn't quite strong enough and doesn't award those funds, making your total award \$1.3 million rather than \$1.5 million.

***What documentation does the NHED require to verify high quality status as identified in the CSP grant application?***

NHED will review the iplatform report for your school looking at:

- Assessment scores and their trends
- Graduation and promotion rates
- In-school incidents, suspensions, etc.
- Attendance Rates
- Student Growth

We will also review with internal NHed bureaus for:

- Regulatory issues
- Compliance with required submissions
- Financial/Operational issues
- Risk profile as determined by Bureau of Federal Compliance

***How do I find a district's ESSA information or Federal Accountability Determination?***

The iplatform does not provide district level ESSA information, please choose instead the school within the district that most resembles your school/population you serve.

Step 1: Visit the State's iPlatform site located here: [iPlatform | Department of Education \(nh.gov\)](https://iplatform.ed.nh.gov)

Step 2: Scroll down and select the iReport Application

Step 3: From the pull down menus, choose the appropriate Town and the school that is most comparable (location, grade span, populations served) and click VIEW REPORT

**TIP:** when selecting items from the pull down menu, hit APPLY before leaving menu

Step 4: Look along the top tabs to the far right and select the ESSA tab

Step 5: The bottom left corner of the new page will list the school's Federal Accountability Determination

***How do I determine the Free and Reduced data?***

You can use the percent economically disadvantaged for the district your school is in available on the iplatform. Here's how to find it:

- 1) Go to ireport
- 2) Select the district your school is in and hit view report
- 3) On the first tab (Profile) along the bottom is the student population breakdown
- 4) Economically disadvantaged is the first percentage.

You should check the most recent data (19/20) vs the previous year (8/19) and use the higher of the two since COVID affected last year's report.

***How do you define at-risk students and how can we show we target them?***

At-risk students are students that are special needs, ELLs, or those who are eligible to receive welfare assistance. New Hampshire also uses location and designates Frontier and Remote (FAR) Zones designated by the USDA as at-risk. For a more detail on these designations see [USDA ERS - Frontier and Remote Area Codes](#) for more data. A method to show you are reaching at risk is to provide details on how you plan to structure your program and outreach to particularly target these students and how you plan to support and retain these students.

***Should we answer the narrative in the application form or create a new document?***

We would prefer you to create a new document and make it your own but follow the guidance in the application with regard to formatting.

***In the section asking for grant goals, does this mean we need 5 academic and 5 non-academic for a total of 10 goals?***

No, we are looking for a total of 5; however, they should be a blend of academic and non-academic. For example, non-academic goals could be operational in nature or around sustainability post grant.

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## Allowable Costs & Budgets

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***How detailed do you want the budget detail tab in the budget template?***

We need to understand how you plan to spend the grant dollars. In general, we need line items that tell us what you will spend it on, how much/many will you get, for whom/what purpose, and when. Please make sure your descriptions are clear enough that we can understand how it clearly fits into the needs of the school and supports the overall story of your application.

***What costs are allowable in the grant program?***

Expenditure claims must be incurred *during* the grant project period, connected to a grant objective, and **cannot** include ongoing operational costs. Items like furniture, equipment, books, training, program/curriculum development, hardware and software are generally allowed. You may also make repairs and renovations to your building if they are required by a state or local official in order to operate a school in the building. Salaries, travel, professional services, and outreach expenses come with limitations. Reoccurring costs are not allowed. Budget guidance is available on the website to provide for more detailed guidance.

***What if we have already incurred expenses or bought items we would have included in the grant?***

Pre-award costs are allowable under certain conditions per uniform guidance. The costs must be allocable, allowable, reasonable and necessary and within the 90 days before the award date (or performance period start). These items must also have been included in your application budget in order to be approved. Please note, in many cases NEW SCHOOLS CANNOT claim pre-award expenses because they would not have all the registrations and approvals in place to make eligible expenses.

***Can funds be used for student transportation?***

Yes, however, funds cannot be used for ongoing transportation needs (ie contracted month rates for busing service) but a one-time fee to support the overall mission of the schools is acceptable or to transport students to and from school (including the purchase of buses).

***Can we use grant dollars to fund an after-school program?***

No, costs associated with running these programs are considered ongoing costs and are not allowable.

***Do start-up expenses need to be separate from our implementation period expenses?***

We have changed the budget template this time and will work with schools post approval to determine the planning and implementation timeframes and budget amounts.

***How long is the planning and implementation period for projects?***

NHED has established a 12 month period for planning with an option to extend for up to an additional 6 months (total of 18 months), if you can demonstrate the need and ability to exit planning in that time. The maximum amount of planning allowed by the federal government is 18 months. A total project can't exceed 3 years. NHED's project currently expires on 9/30/2024. Any no-cost extensions received may be passed down to sub-grantee projects that have not maximized their 3 years.

***Can we use funds to develop curriculum?***

You can include expenses associated with curriculum development. If this is performed by a staff member, the time spent on grant related activities must be tracked completely separately and be well documented. It can also be for a fixed period of time, not a part of an ongoing payment towards salary. As these funds fall under the 2 CFR 200, please see the NH DOE's Federal Fund Fact Sheets for more information and helpful tips located here: [Federal Fund Fact Sheets | Department of Education \(nh.gov\)](#).

***Do moving expenses for faculty coming from across the country count as a start-up expense?***

We would encourage you to make a strong case in your application for how and why this passes the reasonable cost test. Do they have special skills, etc.?

***Are modular structures allowable?***

We have reached out to USED on this topic and were told that this is allowable on a case-by-case review. In NHED's experience of getting these approved, it involved documenting and demonstrating lack of viable building purchase/lease options, long term delays in contractor availability and timeline and plan for removal and resale of the modulares. If you go this route, it is possible but be prepared for pushback and no guarantee of approval by USED. Our interpretation of why this is the case, is that in the past USED approved modulares as a "temporary" solution to facilities challenges and some schools were still using their modulares 5-10 years later.

***Could we use funds for a marketing position to set up a marketing program and create marketing materials?***

Marketing services are allowable for recruitment (staff and students) and for outreach activities. This includes brochures, website creation, etc. Promotional "giveaway" items (like those seen at tradeshow, clothing, etc.) **are not allowable**. PLEASE NOTE: If this work will be done by a staff member who will be performing these tasks either in whole or as a part of their position you must provide a detailing of time and expenses for work which is specifically allowed under the grant. If this will be provided by a contractor, documentation as to exactly what they are providing and the costs must be kept and provided for proof of compliance.

***Can you pay for program relevant field trips during implementation?***

Unfortunately, field trips are considered student activities, which are unallowable under 2 CFR Subpart E (200.469: Student Activities)

***Can you purchase multiple year subscriptions to use throughout the grant period? Can it go beyond the grant period?***

No expenses can go beyond the grant period; however, you could make an initial purchase that covers the school for a portion or all of the grant period. You would need adequate documentation

to ensure that the expense is not a “reoccurring expense”. This would include (but isn’t limited to) a contract that clearly spells out the period of time of service, what was going to be covered, and that it is not an initial expense. For example: If your school is going to contract with a company that provides access to e-books for your school:

- These expenses would be covered: Initial fee for joining, a lump sum fee for the initial period of the subscription; and/or fees per licenses to access content in an initial period
- These expenses would not be covered: Renewal fees, costs associated with renewals of access licenses, reactivation fees, etc.

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## Process Questions

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***I need to amend my charter to apply for a grant to expand my school. How do I do that?***

An amendment to a charter must be submitted prior to the submission of the grant application. The process for requesting a charter amendment through the State Board is:

- Email a letter (on school letterhead) to Commissioner Edelblut and copy the Charter School Office on the email: [Louis.F.Edelblut@doe.nh.gov](mailto:Louis.F.Edelblut@doe.nh.gov); [doe.nhcsp@doe.nh.gov](mailto:doe.nhcsp@doe.nh.gov)
- Provide details of the amendment and justification for the request.
- Once the letter has been received, the request will be an item on the next scheduled State Board meeting

TO SUBMIT A QUESTION NOT LISTED ABOVE, PLEASE EMAIL:

The NHED CSP grant team at:

[doe.nhcsp@doe.nh.gov](mailto:doe.nhcsp@doe.nh.gov)