

THE PETER AND CARMEN LUCIA BUCK FOUNDATION, INC.



New Charter Schools for CT Program Guidelines

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Peter and Carmen Lucia Buck Foundation (PCLB) is excited to offer a funding opportunity to outstanding operators who are ready to open public charter schools in Connecticut.

On March 15th, 2022 the CT State Department of Education [released a Request for Proposals \(RFP\)](#) for new public charter schools. PCLB and its advocacy and community partners want to support this effort to expand Connecticut's charter sector by ensuring that a robust, diverse, high-quality, and committed group of organizations can successfully respond to the RFP.

Grants of at least \$150,000 will be awarded to applicants – schools, operators, community groups, and others – who commit to responding to the upcoming CT State Department of Education RFP. These funds can be used to compile a strong charter application, to cover staff time, and to begin community engagement work on the ground.

If an organization's charter application is approved by the CT State Board of Education, PCLB will invite the successful applicant to apply for the multi-year, general operating grant necessary to take the new charter school forward. We know grant funds alone are not enough, so PCLB will also connect applicants to a network of advocacy, community, local, and research partners that can help along the way.

The PCLB Foundation has long supported the growth of Connecticut's public charter sector and envisions a future in which students and families in all corners of the state have a diverse and thriving set of educational options to choose from.

ABOUT THE NEW CHARTER SCHOOLS FOR CT PROGRAM

Grants are intended to cover a school's investment in the initial application phase. The Foundation wants to make it possible for excellent operators to commit to CT, and to do the necessary work of applying.

Grant Amount

PCLB will award initial grants of up to \$150,000 per school, intended to cover the cost of drafting a charter application and of staffing capacity (existing and/or new) to develop the application and conduct community engagement work. These funds will be dispersed electronically as soon as possible once the application is approved by PCLB. Grant amounts may increase by up to another \$100,000 subject to RFP timelines.

If the charter application is approved by the CT State Board of Education, PCLB will invite successful applicants to apply for ongoing general operating support. These grant amounts are determined based on multiple factors but can be expected to be in the \$250,000 to \$750,000 range.

Application Process

Once interest has been expressed, the Foundation will provide a link to the full application template and upload form for supplemental materials.

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis through April 30th, 2022. PCLB is aiming for an expedited turnaround time for approving applications, with decisions made 3-4 weeks after proposal submission and payment following within two weeks after an approval.

Parties interested in applying should email PCLB to initiate the application process:

CTCharters@PCLBFoundation.org

Eligibility Criteria

PCLB will use the below criteria to determine eligibility for this funding opportunity:

- Applicants must commit to submitting an RFP to CT SDE in the next application round, which is anticipated to open in the Spring 2022.
- Applicants must either be tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, willing to apply for 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, or have a fiscal sponsor.
- Academic and Operational Excellence:
 - All operators must be able to articulate principles and plans for a strong academic program and must demonstrate staff's expertise and experience necessary to run an outstanding school.
 - For replicating schools: average achievement of enrolled students at existing schools/CMO average (based on 3-year trend data) should exceed the host district averages for either proficiency or growth, and/or average college attendance rate at all schools/CMO should exceed 80 percent if such data is available. Trend data from prior to the Covid-19 pandemic is acceptable.
 - For replicating schools: must submit three most recent years' worth of formative assessment data (MAP, STAR, i-Ready, Fountas & Pinnell, etc.).
 - For replicating schools: non-academic data (total enrollment, student retention/attrition, annual average daily attendance, teacher retention, etc.) should indicate strong school culture and climate.
- Commitment, Capacity and Expertise for Operation/Growth:
 - For replicating schools: operator's board of directors must approve CT expansion plans before PCLB will release grant funds (but not necessarily before applying for Foundation support).
 - For first-time operators: founder(s)/applicant(s) (board chair, school leader, etc.) must include in their application to PCLB any initial plans for grade levels served, host community, school model, etc.
- Meaningful Community Engagement:
 - Preference given to an operator that has already demonstrated meaningful engagement with a CT host community – though we also recognize that given the timeline, this may not be realistic for out-of-state operators (and therefore we hope to see a strong track record of community engagement in the operator's current state/community).
 - Preference given to an operator that meets the specific needs/desires of a CT host community (school design, grades served, neighborhood, etc.).
 - Preference given to an operator that is willing to open a charter school in a new host community (i.e., a district that does not already have a charter school).
- Positive Site Visit

- For replicating schools: site visit should include observation of live instruction, as well as in-person conversation with school/network leaders.
- For first-time operators: in-person meeting with school founder(s)/applicants (board chair, school leader, community founders, etc.).

Questions should be directed to Rebecca Greenberg-Ellis, Program Officer: CTCharters@PCLBFoundation.org