

THE PETER AND CARMEN LUCIA BUCK FOUNDATION, INC.



New Charter Schools for CT Funding Announcement April 2024

Funding Guidelines

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

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

In April of 2024, the CT State Department of Education (CT SDE) 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 and individuals can successfully respond to the RFP.

Grants of up to \$150,000 will be awarded to applicants – schools, operators, community groups, and others – who commit to responding to the CT SDE's RFP. These funds can be used to compile a strong charter application, to build and expand internal capacity, and to conduct community engagement work in the area where the new school will be located.

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 general operating support 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 who 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 from which to choose.

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 and individuals 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 applicant, 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.

If the charter application is approved by the CT State Board of Education, PCLB will invite successful applicants to apply for meaningful and ongoing general operating support.

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Application Process

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

kimr@pclbfoundation.org.

PCLB will send instructions to submit an online application as well as a list of required supplemental materials (depending on the type of organization).

Because the CT SDE will accept and review charter applications on a rolling basis until November 5th, 2024, PCLB will consider applications in two rounds between April and November 2024:

- To be considered in the first round of funding, applications must be received by May 10th, 2024. Funding decisions will be made by June 19th, 2024.
- To be considered in the second round of funding, applications must be received by July 19th, 2024. Funding decisions will be made by August 21st, 2024.

Site visits will be conducted before funding decisions, if necessary. Grant payments will be made electronically within three weeks of the funding decision.

Eligibility Criteria

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

- Applicants must commit to submitting a charter school application to CT SDE in the 2024 RFP cycle.
- Applicants must either be tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, be 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:
 - Achievement of enrolled students at existing K-8 schools/CMO should outperform the host district or state in proficiency (in both ELA and Math), based on a 3-year rolling average of available Grade 3-8 state assessment data.
 - High school applicants should outperform the host district or the state on a 3-year rolling average of college entrance data.
 - Exceptions to these criteria may be made on a case-by-case basis for applicants with alternative school models.
 - For replicating schools: please submit three most recent years' worth of formative assessment data (MAP, STAR, i-Ready, 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 a grant from PCLB may be approved.

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- For first-time operators: founder(s)/applicants (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 about this funding opportunity should be directed to Kim Raccio, Program Officer:

kimr@pclbfoundation.org.