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\$4 MILLION IN FEDERAL FUNDS AWARDED TO FIVE IDAHO PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

Five Idaho public charter schools have been awarded \$800,000 each in federal funds in a first round of funding aimed at increasing the number of new, high-quality charter school seats for the Idaho students who need them most.

The grants will allow the five schools to add a total of 2,484 new seats in schools for students from kindergarten through high school. Funding comes from a \$17.1 million U.S. Department of Education grant awarded last year to Idaho's Communities of Excellence consortium.

Members of the consortium include project lead Bluum, a Boise-based statewide nonprofit charter school support entity; the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation; the Idaho State Board of Education; the Idaho Public Charter School Commission; and Building Hope, a national organization with expertise in charter school facilities financing.

The program aims to create new charter school seats for Idaho's most educationally disadvantaged and rural students.

Schools receiving this first round of \$800,000 grants are:

[Compass Public Charter School](#), K-12, Meridian
[Forge International School](#), K-5 (becoming K-12 by 2024), Middleton
[Future Public School](#), K-3 (becoming K-8 by 2023), Garden City
[Gem Prep: Meridian](#), K-6 (becoming K-12 by 2022), Meridian
[White Pine Charter School](#), K-8 (becoming K-12 by 2022), Ammon

Winning narratives and scoring rubrics available here: <https://www.bluum.org/subgrantees/>

Eight schools competed for the grants, either for startup, expansion, or replication. Winners were selected through a rigorous third-party review process.

Schools selected to receive funds were evaluated on a number of criteria, including instructional leadership, governance, the ability to attract and retain talent, sustainable financial practices, demonstrable market demand, and an innovative and effective educational model.

Evaluators also selected winners based on their commitment to serving a diverse student body. Schools were required to provide evidence that they actively seek out and welcome children of all ethnic, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds.

“Over the next five years we hope to see positive impacts among charters for some of our most disadvantaged and rural students. This is baked into the grant’s design. The grant supports transportation and lunch programs to help charter schools remove these barriers to school access,” says Terry Ryan, Bluum’s CEO.

These grant dollars are also available to public school districts interested in converting and redesigning struggling traditional schools that may operate in their communities.

Under the \$17.1 million federal Charter School Program grant, the Communities of Excellence consortium has pledged to add 8,200 new, high-quality charter school seats over the next five years.

Additional competitive funding rounds of roughly the same dollar amount are scheduled for October 2019, October 2020 and October 2021.

Idaho’s charter sector has grown dramatically since the first charter school opened in the Gem State in 1998, serving 168 students. Today, Idaho is home to more than 55 public charter schools, with a total enrollment of more than 24,000 students.

For more information about the grant, visit www.bluum.org/idaho-csp-grant

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About Bluum

Bluum is a nonprofit organization committed to ensuring Idaho’s children reach their fullest potential by cultivating great leaders and innovative schools. For more information visit www.bluum.org

Subgrantee School Snapshots

[Compass Public Charter School](#), Meridian, ID (Expansion Grant to add 319 New Seats)

Compass was opened in 2005 with the mission of “preparing students for life-long excellence through exceptional academics, character development and the ability to define and defend a personal worldview.”

Compass is annually one of Idaho's highest performing public schools, and was ranked in the top five of all Idaho high schools on the 2018 SAT. Compass students scored a 1,206 while the state average was 989. The school is currently in the process of expanding to serve roughly 1560 students (approx. double current capacity) and unite the K-8 grades and the upper grades into one campus.

[Forge International School, Middleton \(Start-Up Grant to create 653 New Seats\)](#)

In Fall 2019, Forge International School will open its doors to K-5 students from Middleton, portions of Caldwell, Greenleaf, Notus, Parma, New Plymouth, Emmett, and Star. The school will add one grade per year to eventually serve grades K-12.

Forge International School "engages students within an inclusive international learning community, challenging all members to take risks and contribute locally and globally through open-minded inquiry." It is a sister school to Sage International School, a high-performing public charter school in Boise.

"Forge is the result of five years of work by a wide group of people and organizations to bring International Baccalaureate (IB) education to rural Idaho. Forge is being created at the right time, in the right place by the right people," says Board Chairman Bryan Moore.

[Future Public School, Garden City \(Start-Up Grant to create 576 New Seats\)](#)

Future Public School will finish its first full year of operations in June 2019. The school's vision is to "equip students with the knowledge, skills and character to succeed in college and the future world." That means preparing kids for a vastly different future, where, 30 years from now, 60 percent of current jobs won't exist. To do this, Future Public School will place emphasis on rigor in the STEM fields, and also on crucial soft skills like collaboration, creativity, communication, and critical thinking.

In several years, when Future Public School is operating at full capacity, grades K-8, it will serve 576 students. The school offers free transportation and a free meal program, which helps remove two of the most significant barriers to families with limited resources often face when choosing a school for their children. The school also provides all-day kindergarten to help children catch up.

[Gem Prep: Meridian, Meridian \(Start-Up Grant to create 582 New Seats\)](#)

Currently serving students K-6, Gem Prep: Meridian will finish its first year of operations in June of 2019. Part of Gem Innovation Schools, it will add a grade per year until it serves students K-12. Gem Innovation Schools is Idaho's first home-grown charter management organization. Founded in 2004 as the Idaho Distance Education Academy (I-DEA), a K-12 online school, Gem Innovation launched its first brick-and-mortar school, Gem Prep: Pocatello in 2014. Gem Prep: Nampa launched in 2016, and Gem Prep: Meridian began serving students in Fall 2018.

Gem's brick-and-mortar schools follow a unique blended learning model; a 'station rotation' format, in which students move through three different stations during a 90-minute block. Each

station uses a different learning method; computer-adaptive software, direct instruction from the teacher, and the third station varies from day-to-day. It can include independent work, additional small group work, or extra tutoring.

[White Pine Charter School, Ammon \(Expansion Grant to add 354 New Seats\)](#)

Founded in 2001, White Pine Charter School currently serves more than 500 students in kindergarten through 8th grade, with students coming from Idaho Falls, Ammon, Rigby, and Shelley. White Pine has a diverse student body - 34 percent of students receive free and reduced-price lunch, and roughly 10 percent receive special education services. Regardless of socio-economic status or cognitive abilities, White Pine focuses on a mission of “success for every student.”

About Public Charter Schools

A public charter school is nonsectarian in its programs, admissions policies, employment practices, and all other operations, and is not affiliated with a sectarian school or religious institution. Public charter schools are open to all students who apply and cannot charge tuition. A charter school receiving CSP funds must use a lottery if more students apply for admissions to the charter school than can be admitted.

About the Federal CSP Grant

Idaho received \$17,111,111 in funding over five years. At least 90 percent of these dollars will flow to public charter school subgrantees for school start-up, school replication and school expansion. At least seven percent must be utilized for state-level technical assistance activities and program evaluation/research; three percent of this to the Idaho Public Charter School Commission for technical assistance and new school supports. No more than three percent for Bluum administration.

Federal CSP Program Description

The CSP State Entities program is newly authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (20 U.S.C. 7221-7221j). Prior to enactment of the ESSA, the ESEA, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), authorized the Secretary to make awards to State educational agencies to enable them to conduct charter school subgrant programs in their States. The CSP State Entities program is under new law and has different eligibility requirements, priorities, definitions, application requirements, and selection criteria.

The major purposes of the CSP are to expand opportunities for all students, particularly traditionally underserved students, to attend charter schools and meet challenging State academic standards; provide financial assistance for the planning, program design, and initial implementation of public charter schools; increase the number of high-quality charter schools available to students across the United States; evaluate the impact of charter schools on student achievement, families, and communities; share best practices between charter schools and other public schools; encourage States to provide facilities support to charter schools; and support efforts to strengthen the charter school authorizing process.

The CSP grants to State Entities (CFDA number 84.282A) is a competitive grant program that enables State entities to award subgrants to eligible applicants in their State to open and prepare for the operation of new charter schools and to replicate and expand high-quality charter schools. Grant funds may also be used by the State entity to provide technical assistance to eligible applicants and authorized public chartering agencies in opening and preparing for the operation of new charter schools, or replicating or expanding high-quality charter schools; and to work with authorized public chartering agencies to improve authorizing quality, including developing capacity for, and conducting, fiscal oversight and auditing of charter schools.