

Utah Association of Public Charter Schools

Utah Charter Schools Program (UCSP) Grant Project

State:

Utah

PR Award Number:

S282A240002

Duration (Years):

5 Years

Year 1 Funding:

\$6,822,374

Total Expected Funding:

\$44,444,445

Number of Subgrants:

20

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Utah's charter schools are diverse, popular, and effective. Utah has the nation's fourth largest percentage of rural students enrolled in charter schools, and the state's charter schools enroll special education students, English learners, and students who identify as ethnic minorities at higher rates than the state's district schools. A 2023 study of state performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress by charter school students ranked Utah 9th out of 36 states in terms of charter school student performance, but a distant 32nd in terms of student achievement at all public schools. This finding was evidence that "charter-school performance is not simply a function of the educational environment of the state as a whole." That is, Utah's charter schools are *defying the odds* rather than simply benefiting from the structural and demographic advantages that are often the proximate cause of impressive student learning outcomes. Incredibly, 19 Utah charter schools had an overall Median Growth Percentile on the 2023 state English Language Arts and Math assessments higher than the top-ranked public school district. Utah's charter schools have thrived despite serious resource constraints; Utah perennially ranks among the states with the lowest average per-pupil spending and is currently second-to-last nationwide on that measure. Through the UCSP, the Utah Association of Public Charter Schools will build on the sector's existing strengths while addressing key opportunity areas for continued growth. UCSP—which addresses the Absolute Priority and all five Competitive Preference Priorities—will pursue two overriding objectives over the course of its five-year project:

Objective #1: Increase the overall quality of Utah's charter school sector.

Objective #2: Enhance the sustainability of Utah's charter school sector.