



**U.S. Department of Education
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
Charter Schools Program
Video Transcript – May 2024
Approaches to Addressing the Needs Analysis Requirement**

NARRATOR

On July 6, 2022, the U.S. Department of Education issued new guidelines for the Charter Schools Program or CSP State Entity, Developer, and Charter Management Organization, or CMO, grant programs. The objective of these guidelines was to ensure that the federal CSP funds are utilized to create, replicate, and expand high-quality charter schools that promote positive student outcomes, educator and community empowerment, and school diversity.

Additionally, the guidelines aim to ensure greater fiscal and operational transparency and accountability for CSP-funded charter schools. To ensure that CSP applicants and subgrant applicants adequately address the need for proposed charter schools and their anticipated benefits to the community, a new requirement was introduced for applicants to conduct a needs analysis. This video showcases two grantee stories regarding how they address the needs analysis requirement.

TEXT ON SCREEN

1. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
2. Success Charter Schools Academy

NARRATOR

Please note that the following video is intended to provide informal guidance to prospective applicants implementing the activities or strategies presented in the video, either in part or in full, does not guarantee funding approval. Funding decisions are based entirely on the independent evaluation of each eligible application by peer reviewers. As per the needs analysis requirement, each developer, and CMO applicant, and state entity subgrant applicant must provide a needs analysis and describe the need for the proposed project, including how the proposed project would serve the interests and meet the needs of students and families in the communities that charter school intends to serve.

The state entity must certify that it will require each state entity subgrant applicant to provide a needs analysis. The needs analysis, which may consist of information and documents previously submitted to an authorized public chartering agency to address need, must include, but is not necessarily limited to the following. Descriptions of community support, interest, and benefits to the community for the charter school; information on projected student enrollment; an analysis of the proposed charter school's projected student demographics; and the impact of the proposed charter school on the enrollment demographics of other public schools from which students will be drawn.

A description of how the applicant plans to establish and maintain a diverse student body or a description of why it is unlikely to establish and maintain a racially and socioeconomically diverse student body; a robust family and community engagement plan, including how families and the community will be meaningfully engaged and inform the vision and design for the charter; how the plans for the operation of the charter school reflect the needs of students and families in the community, including how the school's location will facilitate access, for example, access to transportation options for the targeted school population.

A description of the steps the applicant has taken or will take to ensure that the proposed charter school would not hamper, delay, or negatively affect any desegregation efforts in the public school districts from which students are drawn. Applicants should thoroughly review each program's notice inviting applications or NIA published in the Federal Register for the full text and complete listing of all eligibility and application requirements, priorities, definitions, and selection criteria, including instructions for completing and submitting an application.

Links to each program's NIA in the Federal Register may be found on the department's website, on the charter school's program web page. Scroll to the bottom of the page and select the program you are interested in.

TEXT ON SCREEN

A link to the Department of Education Charter Schools Program webpage is shown:

<https://:oesed.gov/offices/office-of-discretionary-grants-support-services/charter-school-program/>

[link opens on any browser except Google Chrome]

NARRATOR

Now, let's hear from the two grantees.

TEXT ON SCREEN

1. State Entity: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
2. CMO: Success Academy Charter Schools

How did you approach the needs analysis requirement in your CSP application?

Michael McCabe, Charter Schools Program Director

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

State Entity Grantee

MICHAEL MCCABE

A significant change from the last grant that we were in was this need for a community needs assessment or a needs analysis. And when we at the state agency saw that, we thought, "Okay. We need to do two things." One, we need to include this in our next application. So, for our competition, we have an appendix, it's appendix B, which directly follows our narrative and it is the needs analysis. And then, two, we knew that we needed people in the field to have access to it, and so we turned to WRCCS. We went to our, which is a Wisconsin Resource Center for Charter Schools, and we said, "Please help us design a toolkit." And they exceeded our expectations. They developed something fast, I mean very, very, very fast that people in the field were able to use.

TEXT ON SCREEN

Teri West, EdM, Director of Government Grants
Success Academy Charter Schools
CMO Grantee

TERI WEST

We made a list of the data that we needed to gather. Obviously, that was informed by the grant application requirements and also by our target student population. Some of this data, and this was a really important piece, is looking at what the data was for the demand for seats in the communities where we wanted to open our charter schools. So, we made sure that we included that data because it was quite compelling: 27,000 applications for little over 8,000 open seats. And then, we further broke that down by borough where we wanted to open new schools.

And so, in Queens, for example, there were a lot more applicants than there were open seats in comparison to some of our other boroughs and Queens was one of the locations where we wanted to open several schools. The other thing that was really important is collecting demographic data to compare achievements in our schools to that of the district schools. We also collected data on students with disabilities from the local school district and compared it to our student achievement data and showed that Success Academy Schools outperformed New York City schools on students with disabilities.

One other thing that we did is we developed a communications plan for outreach to the community. And so, that involved identifying and reaching out to our key community stakeholders and partners. There's a requirement for public hearing and we planned and facilitated a public hearing for families and made it available online. We posted announcements in the *Daily News*, which is a widely read New York City newspaper and *El Diario*, which is a widely read Spanish language newspaper. We spread the word through our families and solicited participation in the public hearing through as many channels as we possibly could, taking stock of who your student target population is and framing your data to really address the needs of that target student population.

TEXT ON SCREEN

What support did you provide to subgrant applicants or charter school developers in your state to implement the needs analysis requirement?

Sarah Hackett, PhD, Director
Wisconsin Resource Center for Charter Schools (WRCCS)
State Entity Grantee

SARAH HACKETT

When WRCCS set out to make the community needs analysis, we took a few things into account. We already had quite a few resources developed and had been doing similar work, related work, with schools over many years, and so we partnered that with our new associate director who had just come from the field and was really solid in data analysis and school design to help create something that married together the needs in the federal language, the tools that we already had, what we were seeing out in the field from schools, and the expertise that we had in-house.

TEXT ON SCREEN

Tim Scottberg, Associate Director
Wisconsin Resource Center for Charter Schools (WRCCS)
State Entity Grantee

TIM SCOTTBERG

When Sarah and I began discussing the community needs analysis and what I could bring from the field, I immediately thought of the different components as a former subgrantee that I was consistently collecting when it came to data, what we needed to find out to make sure that our charter school is sustainable. So, what we did is we looked at that as well as the federal description of community needs analysis and started to create some tools. One of those tools was a comprehensive spreadsheet for demographic and testing data, and another set of our tools that we had already created and used previously were surveys that we would send out to the community that design teams regularly used. From there, we continued to look at the questions and make sure that design teams had a way to collect data that would speak directly to answering questions that were rooted in the data they had been collecting from the community as well as looking at that demographic piece and looking at the testing pieces to make sure that all components could be answered in a community needs analysis for the grant application.

SARAH HACKETT

We did some backwards design where we took the components from the NIA that were required like the demonstrating a need for the project or being able to show data that would inform your student enrollment for the school and those different features. Here's some data, here's how we interpret it, here's how we're discussing that data and informing our practice with it, and then here's how we answer those questions to then be able to meet those needs of the community needs analysis per the federal guidance. And there's so much existing data. That's the other piece that I think we can't highlight enough—things that are already out there in our field, in related fields, community health fields, public data, county data, city data. There's so much there and it's just about knowing where to find it and then how to use it properly to inform your practice.

MICHAEL MCCABE

We took the language as it was actually written in the NIA and brought it into our application. So, on the front end, we wanted to make sure that we had the needs analysis language right in our application for subgrantees and putting that federal language into our application then forces some of that conversation of what exactly is the needs analysis, what is the main thing here, and what are we trying to do? And that's what our colleagues at the resource center did such a wonderful job of taking the needs analysis requirements and breaking it down into manageable parts that people in the field are able to take apart and use, and leverage, and bring that back together so that it works with multiple stakeholders. It works with a governance board. It works with an authorizer. It works with a school level conversation. And then, when put together, it also works in our application.

SARAH HACKETT

One of our favorite parts of the community needs analysis spreadsheet is challenging the schools to think beyond just the simple state data around academic report cards, but also look more broadly at what's going on in their community. One of the tabs in our sheet is to look at physical health trends in your community. What are those needs around physical health, mental health? What are the employment trends? What are employers looking for? What are the universities and higher ed institutions and tech colleges looking for? What are they seeing?

TIM SCOTTBERG

Within the spreadsheet, embedded into it are these questions, and the goal is to get our groups, our design teams to essentially answer all questions right away based off of that data. When you bring it all together and then you're answering questions based off of what you have just collected, we knew that those teams were going to have to face some hard answers, some big truths, but then they were also going to be able to look at the federal description. Again, we have a tool where we break the requirements down to the federal description and show them on this page in your spreadsheet, you will find the answer to these questions so that you can actually give answers to it. So, the goal was to get it to all marry together, but then to all flow directly into something that they can copy and paste from their own answers and their own data into the CSP grant application.

TEXT ON SCREEN

What parts of the needs analysis requirement resonated with you most?

SARAH HACKETT

This opportunity challenged us to really create one comprehensive tool that every team could access and utilize to move their work forward. So, some of them have more easy access to those tools. If they're part of a school district team, they may have access to tools that do some data analytics for them. And, if they're an independent charter school design team, they may be more challenged and have to use some of the community data or more public-facing data exclusively. So, we think that our tool is able to help support them.

MICHAEL MCCABE

The open-ended questions that are involved in this tool are phenomenal. One of the components that I know at the state educational agency, how are you going to accommodate students and families from diverse backgrounds? How are you going to get the kids to school? How are you going to feed the kids once they're at school? How are you going to retain these families over time? And I feel like our needs analysis now brings that in on the front end of the application, and it's not something that our team is just going to catch two-thirds of the way through the grant when we do our high-stakes monitoring. So, having that information on the front end, having to be transparent and open and really having those conversations put out on the table, I think is also a really valuable add-on that the needs analysis brings to our entire program.

TERI WEST

There are high percentages of our students in our communities who are significantly below standard on the math and ELA exams, high numbers of students from low income and ELL families, there is tremendous demand for charter seats in the communities that we target. And the number of unique applications compared to the number of open seats is quite significant. So, I think demonstrating the need for the project and community support was the component that really resonated with us. And this is primarily because we know who our target student population is. We know what their needs are.

TEXT ON SCREEN

What challenges did you encounter in conducting the needs analysis?
How did you and your team overcome the challenges?

SARAH HACKETT

We started with our expertise. We started with the guidance that came through the NIA and then just put it together piece by piece until it felt like something really cohesive. So, it includes the questions for the subgrantees. It includes a then set of worksheets and tools to help the subgrantee applicants fulfill that requirement. I think later then, the other challenge that arose is just the challenge of implementing something new with schools and with these charter school design teams. Where our work has come in is helping hit pause and really dissect the data and really challenge the team—even teams that are pretty forward-thinking and pretty responsive to their community, we're finding that they often rush through this step and were really encouraging them to pause, go slow, and dig in even deeper.

MICHAEL MCCABE

This is an added workload onto anyone in the field who's already taking on a high-stakes grant where you are saying, "We are a high-quality charter school, or we are going to be a new high-quality startup charter school." And so, we're adding on another component. We need to make sure that we match it with quality support. And so, we feel really good about sending folks who are in the field who are already some of the busiest professionals out there to the resource center, to WRCCS to get the support that they need, realizing that we are asking people to do more, and we're asking people who are already taxed a lot of times to do more.

TERI WEST

There were two main challenges that we faced. One was being able to project new school openings and expanding grades. So, we depend on New York City DOE to open or expand our charter schools. Sometimes we are allocated space, and then at the last minute, that space does not come through. But to adjust this challenge on our application, we were transparent about this challenge and we provided information about the process in New York City and the challenges we have faced in opening new schools. I think most importantly is just being transparent about what those challenges are and how we address them or how we plan or hope to address them.

The other big challenge that we faced was the turnaround time to conduct the public hearing. The amount of time needed to plan and implement the public hearing was definitely a challenge. To resolve this, what we did is we pulled out all the stops. We reached out to all of our available resources. This was a huge lift. I would say that one thing that was really, really helpful was the ability to hold the public hearing virtually because not only did that reduce the amount of logistics that were involved to coordinate the hearing, but it also allowed for a lot more people to participate.

TEXT ON SCREEN

What lessons learned can you share regarding your approach to the needs analysis requirement?

TIM SCOTTBERG

We as a team recognized as we were creating these sets of tools that this is a core component of charter design. And not just for design teams, but for already existing charter schools. That looking at this data, being in touch with your community is absolutely essential in the creation and sustainability of a charter school in any community. This isn't just a requirement for the CSP grant, this is essential work that needs to be done for high-quality schools.

And it's also something that as we worked with some of the larger authorizers in our state, they have adopted this set of tools as a requirement in their phase one or phase two applications because they have recognized the necessity of their schools to do this if they're going to be high quality. So one of the

other components that we learned was we needed to make sure that all the data that we were expecting schools to be able to find or design teams to be able to find was accessible, because you might be able to find something if you're a superintendent within your data, but others in the community, if you're an independent charter school or if you're a community member that wants to start a charter school, you might not be able to find this information. So, it was really essential to us to make sure that we looked at all components and then gave resources, and gave links, and showed people where to find this data for themselves.

MICHAEL MCCABE

There's a part of the needs analysis that I am excited to see over time, and that is maintaining accurate projections of enrollment. That's something that we have struggled with greatly in Wisconsin. We get applications in which the projections don't actually match the enrollment, and I'm hopeful that the needs analysis that the Wisconsin Resource Center for Charter Schools has developed, some of those conversations will take place much earlier and with multiple stakeholders. It's not just a school developer, or just a superintendent, or just a passionate governance board member. Now, that enrollment conversation is being worked in a way that's separate from the traditional narrative question and answer that we get, and it's brought into the needs analysis in a way where you're really looking holistically at the school design and the number of kiddos that you're looking to have at your school.

SARAH HACKETT

We have a checklist as an artifact in our community needs navigator guide as well. And so, the checklist is there to say, "Here are the things that you actually have to be able to answer if you're going to fill in the Wisconsin CSP sub-application." We created a separate checklist that just allows them to find whatever way they want to get to that end goal and check off to make sure that they've met all of those requirements. So, we tried to give them multiple pathways to success.

TERI WEST

I would say the most important thing is to start early, especially for the public hearing. Develop a detailed plan to conduct your needs analysis—I think that was really important. We assigned a project director to coordinate and manage the whole process of just the needs analysis section because there were so many different stakeholders and constituencies internally and externally to the organization that needed to be involved in that. Reach out to families you want to serve through physical mailings, flyers in community locations, supermarkets, laundromats, neighborhood Facebook pages. Really think as broadly as you can to get the word out about your plan to open a charter school and to understand what their perspectives are, what they see as the needs are, and invite them to your public hearing.

NARRATOR

As a reminder, potential applicants should thoroughly review each program's notice inviting applications or NIA published in the Federal Register for the full text and complete listing of all eligibility and application requirements, priorities, definitions, and selection criteria, including instructions for completing and submitting an application. Potential applicants should not rely on this video for a complete listing of the needs analysis requirement. Thanks for watching.