



Presentation to the Federalism Subcommittee on Education

“Federalism in K-12 Education”

October 7, 2019

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Students from Future Public Charter School

What's Bluum?

- Bluum is a Boise-based 501(c)3 nonprofit organization founded in 2014 to seek out, vet, develop and support innovative leaders and high-performing school models.
- We believe that school choice helps families, children and educators achieve more and do better.
- We share research and lessons learned widely in Idaho and beyond.
- We currently receive support from the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation, the New Schools Venture Fund, the Charter School Growth Fund, the Louis Calder Foundation and anonymous Idaho-based donors.

Summary of Current Efforts

- Since 2014, we invested **\$20 million in direct grant support for 18 new or expanded schools.**
 - Almost 90% of these direct grants have been allocated to support the launch, growth and expansion of 15 public charter schools.
 - The remainder to two private schools and a district innovation school.
- During the same time, an **additional \$25 million has been invested by the Foundation through program related investments (PRI) managed by our important partner Building Hope.** This has supported the construction of nine charter school facilities.
- We have **leveraged another \$3.54 million in funding from seven additional partners** (e.g. Charter School Growth Fund, New Schools Venture Fund, Louis Calder Family Foundation).
- We applied and received **\$17.1 million in 2018 from the USDOE's Charter Schools Program** to fund the start-up, replication and expansion of new charter school seats. Based on revisions and amendments shared with the USDOE **this number was increased to \$22 million in September.**

Impact

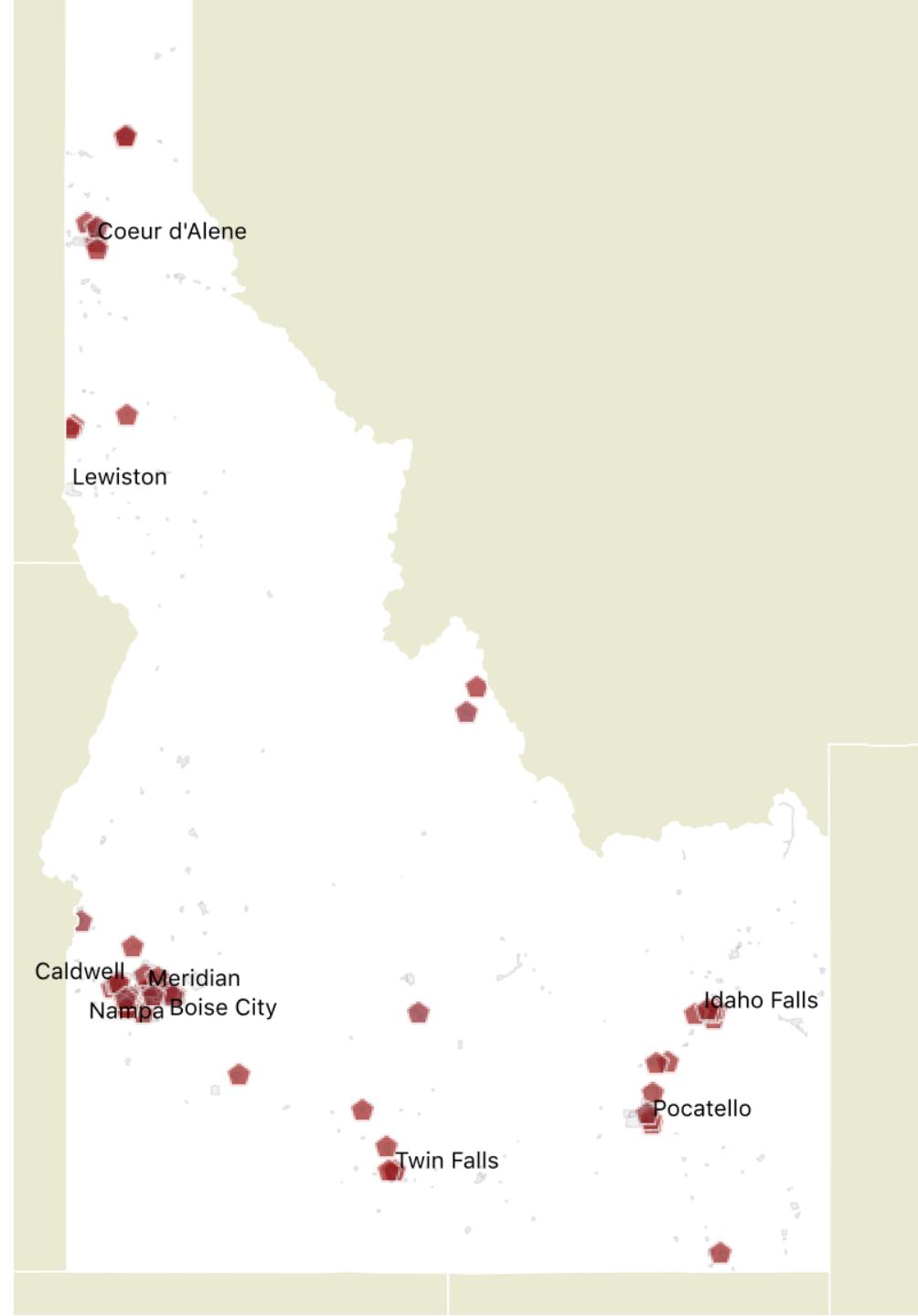
- Idaho Ed News reported in March that
 - The state's total 2019 public K-12 school enrollment was 307,416; **up 5,084 from a year earlier**
 - **Four in ten of these new seats were public charter schools**
 - Charter schools enrolled 24,006 in February 2019; **up 2,070 students from the year before**
- In late June, Macke Raymond from [Stanford's CREDO](#) shared a presentation on Idaho charter school performance with the Idaho State Board of Education. She reported charter school students “significantly outperformed their peers in reading tests.” Students in one of **Idaho’s rural charter schools** “gain 30 days of learning in reading and 59 days of learning in math over a year compared to students in traditional rural district schools.”
- Since 2016, Bluum has worked with the Albertson Family Foundation to invest \$1,330,000 in the Idaho New School Fellowship. The fellowship has provided **nine fellows with paid, one or two-year fellowships**, giving fellows the time and access to expertise to create and execute plans to open high-performing public charter schools.

Current Idaho Charter Schools

51 charter schools serving 19,500 students

6 virtual charter schools serving 4,500 students

If all students in Idaho's charter schools were in one school district it would be the third largest district after West Ada and Boise



Idaho's Communities of Excellence Program (Federal CSP Program)

This is a competitive public charter school grant program funded under the Congressional *Every Students Succeeds Act* (ESSA, Public Law 114-95), which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 (ESEA).

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 can not 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.

OVERVIEW OF FEDERAL CSP GRANTS PROGRAM

The CSP Grants to State Entities program is funded under the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA).

It enables sub-grants to:

- Open and prepare for the operation of new, high-quality **public charter schools.**
- Replicate and expand high-quality public charter schools.

OVERVIEW

Idaho's Consortium (private/public partnership)

- **Bluum** – project lead and grant recipient.
- **J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation** – critical nonprofit funding partner.
- **Idaho State Board of Education** – ultimate state quality control agent.
- **Idaho Public Charter School Commission** – lead authorizer for new and expanded public charter schools.
- **Building Hope** – nationally-recognized facilities finance experts.

The 2018 CSP Competition

- \$400 million in funds with Idaho competing against 15 states: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, Guam, Indiana, Michigan, New York, Puerto Rico, Colorado, District of Columbia, Iowa, New Hampshire and North Carolina.
- Eight states won: Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Idaho, Delaware, Michigan, New York, North Carolina.
- **Idaho received \$17,111,111 over 5-years; \$8,939,900 in the first two years.**

OVERVIEW

Idaho's Grant Rationale

- *Supply of school seats is tight.* Idaho and Nevada were the nation's fastest-growing states between July 2017 and July 2018. Both states' populations increased by about 2.1 percent in the last year alone. – “Our schools are overcrowded.”
- *Idaho's charter sector is well established, capable of adding students, and high performing.* For over 20 years the number of schools and enrollment have steadily grown, on average adding two to three new schools a year.
- *Public support and demand for charter schools in Idaho is robust* – 3 out of 4 Idahoans favor charter schools described as “public schools that have a lot more control over their own budget, staff and curriculum, and are free from many existing regulations.”

Who Supports Idaho's CSP Effort

- Governor Butch Otter
- Senate President Pro Tempore Brent Hill
- House Speaker Scott Bedke
- Senate Education Chair Dean Mortimer
- House Education Chair Julie VanOrden
- Representative Wendy Horman
- Idaho State Board of Education Executive Director Matt Freeman
- Idaho Public Charter School Commission Chairman Alan Reed
- US Senator Mike Crapo
- Congressman Mike Simpson
- Congressman Raul Labrador
- J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation Executive Director Roger Quarles
- Idaho Farm Bureau President Bryan Searle
- Building Hope President Joe Bruno
- Public Charter School Leaders across Idaho
- Business and Philanthropic Leader

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Idaho's CSP Grant Objectives (set by us in Idaho):

- Increase the number of quality charter school seats by 8,200 students, **especially for our most educationally disadvantaged and rural students**, through start-up, replication and expansion;
- Support the PCSC in expanding its quality authorizing efforts while disseminating and supporting best practice for other authorizers statewide (trying to recruit districts and colleges/universities to authorize charter schools); and
- Evaluate and disseminate widely the successes and lessons of high-quality charter schools to impact the broader education system.

PUTTING NEW GROWTH INTO HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Idaho's Growing Charter School Sector 1998-2019

Year	# of Schools	Enrollment	Year	# of Schools	Enrollment
1998	1	168	2009	31	11,959
1999	2	184	2010	36	14,611
2000	8	915	2011	40	16,048
2001	9	1,083	2012	43	17,808
2002	10	1,478	2013	44	18,782
2003	13	3,058	2014	47	19,367
2004	16	4,767	2015	48	19,700
2005	18	5,975	2016	48	20,340
2006	24	8,003	2017	50	21,351
2007	28	9,543	2018	52	21,872
2008	30	10,768	2019	57	24,004

DEFINITIONS

CSP grant applicants must be approved by a state-sanctioned charter school authorizer (as defined in Idaho Code 33-5202A) as:

- **New Charter School** – approved and in planning year or 1st-year of operations.
- **Replication of a High-Quality Charter School** – open a new charter school or campus based upon the educational model of an existing high-quality charter school.
- **Expansion of a High-Quality Charter School** – significantly increase enrollment or add one or more grades to a high-quality charter school.

DEFINITIONS FOR REPLICATION/ EXPANSION

High-quality for schools currently in operation (emphasized by Communities of Excellence application. This is what we in Idaho said we think matters.)

- Evidence of strong academic results, including above state average growth and proficiency on ISAT.
- No significant issues identified by authorizer in areas of student safety, school finance, operational management, or statutory/regulatory compliance.
- Success in significantly increasing student achievement, including graduation rates for all students and for each subgroups defined by ESSA (e.g. economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, Hispanic or Latino, and ELL).
- Good standing with authorizer and lenders.
- Evidence of a student waitlist.
- Evidence of strong and stable leadership and governance.

DEFINITIONS FOR NEW SCHOOLS

High-quality for start-up schools (emphasized by Communities of Excellence application. This is what we in Idaho said we think matters.)

- Evidence of a committed board of trustees that own the charter school process and have the demonstrated capacity to deliver for children and families.
- Identified quality instructional leader who is either experienced or proven in running a high-performing school and/or has received first-class charter specific training.
- Demonstrated ability to attract, recruit, retain and develop top teaching talent.
- Sustainable business plan.
- Well-conceived facility plan.
- Evidence of market-demand for the school.
- Innovative and effective learning model that meet the needs of disadvantaged and/or rural students.
- Defined and clear transportation plan for students.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

- Competitive Grant Process.
- Must have an approved charter petition from a state-sanctioned public charter school authorizer.
- Bluum will fund only high-quality plans.
- Applicants that submit proposals that are high-quality and meet the definitions for new, replication or expansion will be considered after a rigorous peer review process.
- We provide preference points for schools serving **rural students**, for schools with **high school grades** and for schools serving a student population of more than **50% economically disadvantaged** students.

GRANT LOGISTICS

Idaho's \$17,111,111 Application Distribution

- At least 90 percent must be provided in competitive subgrants to eligible applicants.
- At least 7 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 3 percent for administration.

GRANT LOGISTICS

Four Competitive subgrant competitions

- In March 2019 we awarded five available subgrants for up to \$800,000 each (Compass, **Forge**, **Gem Prep Meridian**, **Future** and White Pine).
- In October 2019 there will be up to 7 available subgrants for up to \$800,000 each (we expect seven to 9 applications).
- In October 2020 there will be up to 5 available subgrants for up to \$825,000.
- In October 2021 there will be up to 2 available subgrants for up to \$837,500.

Total subgrant period is up to 42 months, of which up to 18 months may be designated for planning and up to 24 months for implementation.

Note: Last week, Bluum received supplemental funds to increase the CSP grant award from \$17.1 million to \$22.47 million. This supplemental funding would allow Bluum to issue up to \$1.25 million subgrants for schools serving at least 450 students.

GRANT LOGISTICS

Subgrant allowable activities

- (a) Preparing teachers, school leaders, and specialized instructional support personnel, including through paying costs associated with –
 - (i) Providing professional development; and (ii) Hiring and compensating, during the eligible applicant's planning period specified in the application for funds, one or more of the following: (A) Teachers. (B) School Leaders. (C) Specialized instructional support personnel.
- (b) Acquiring supplies, training, equipment (including technology), and educational materials (including developing and acquiring instructional materials).
- (c) Carrying out necessary renovations to ensure that a new school building complies with applicable statutes and regulations, and minor facilities repairs (excluding construction).
- (d) Providing one-time startup costs associated with providing transportation to students to and from the charter school.
- (e) Carrying out community engagement activities, which may include paying the cost of student and staff recruitment.
- (f) Providing for other appropriate, non-sustained costs related to opening, replicating, or expanding high-quality charter schools when such costs cannot be met from other sources.

GRANT LOGISTICS

Restrictions

- No construction; funding cannot be used to build buildings.
- Our application is a “contract” with the USDOE. Bluum will be held accountable for what is written in the grant.
- Funding cannot be redirected for other uses (e.g. traditional public schools that are not charters).
- Virtual charter schools are not eligible to apply.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Seven percent of total funding must be utilized for state level activities.

Bluum's plan includes:

- Capacity building for new schools, educators and community members.
- Support for Idaho Public Charter School Commission and other authorizers.
- Develop innovative practices and instructional models to share across schools settings (e.g. International Baccalaureate, STEM, Career Technical).
- Focus groups with stakeholders and town hall style meetings for sharing findings.
- Research study to evaluate impact of charter schools on student achievement (Boise State's Idaho Policy Institute).
- Technical assistance workshops with state and national experts.

EARLY LESSONS

- This is a private/public partnership. Innovative in allowing statewide nonprofit education organizations like Bluum to apply for and manage the federal grant.
- Rules for the grant program are outlined in Federal law, but there is much influence and flexibility locally in actual program design.
- The federal CSP dollars are one-time competitive dollars specifically for start-up, replication and expansion of public charter schools. No maintenance of effort requirements connected to this CSP program.
- In the case of Idaho's *Communities of Excellence* CSP grant there is no mission creep as the purpose of Bluum has been from its origins in 2014 to start, replicate or expand great public charter schools (or other schools).
- Federal CSP dollars do come with far more strings attached than do philanthropic dollars. But state funding, accountability and certification rules and regulations have proven more onerous and burdensome than are the federal ones when it comes to public charter schools.



Questions, comments or concerns

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