

Your Question: You asked for some general information about charter schools in rural areas.

Our Response: Research and resources specifically about charter schools in rural areas is fairly limited. However, we tracked down three relatively recent resources that address this issue, plus a brief addressing rural education generally. I also included links to a few news articles that address this issue and may be of some interest to you.

In addition, we recommend reviewing and researching the charter school policies for states that also have significant rural considerations, such as Colorado, Idaho, or Wyoming. Many states have statewide charter associations – such as the [Colorado League of Charter Schools](#) or the [Idaho Charter School Network](#) – that may also have some useful information about charter schools in rural areas.

Finally, our 50-state overview of state charter school policies provides a high-level overview of each states' charter school policies and is available [on our website](#). The National Association of Charter School Authorizers also provides state-level data about charter schools [on their website](#), although the information is geared towards the charter school authorizing environment.

Resources

In reading through the reports below, the recommendations section have a few common elements: using technology to supplement available resources, flexible teacher certification programs, and addressing policies that may adversely affect rural areas (such as prohibiting full-district charter conversion when some rural districts contain just one school).

[Harvesting Success: Charter Schools in Rural America](#), National Charter School Resource Center, February 2016:

This paper discusses the challenges faced by rural charter schools (page 4) and then provides examples of strategies some high-impact charter schools are using to overcome these challenges (page 7).

- Notable and common challenges facing rural charter schools:
 - Lack of diverse and qualified human capital.
 - High costs for transporting students long distances.
 - Difficulty in securing facilities (page 4.)
- School and program spotlights:
 - “Grow-Your-Own” teacher program at the Upper Carmen Charter School in Carmen, Idaho (page 7).
 - Project-based learning approach at the Walton 21st Century Rural Life Center in Newton, Kansas (page 8).
 - Four-day school week in Idaho (page 10).
 - Supplementing in-house resources with technology in Arizona (page 11).

[A New Frontier: Utilizing Charter Schooling to Strengthen Rural Education](#), Bellwether Education Partners, J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Foundation, and Rural Opportunities Consortium of Idaho, 2014: This report examines charter school policies and practices in five states – Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, and Ohio – and provides policy recommendations for states with significant rural populations. The authors specifically discuss issues around charter school caps (page 6), human capital (page 14), and charter school funding (page 21).

Recommendations:

- **Replace growth barriers with flexible policies** that allow communities, districts, state officials, and school operators to jointly identify when and where charters schools could be a useful reform strategy. Many states have policies that essentially limit the growth of charter schools in rural areas – for example, in some states entire districts may not be converted to a charter district, but in some rural areas the district only has one school.
- **Provide flexibility for teacher certification**, as many rural areas have a difficult time recruiting and retaining effective educators.
- **Provide fair funding**, including transportation and facilities funding.
- **Allow rural charter schools to access unused or underused public assets.**
- **Leveraging technology in rural charters** to provide blended learning experiences helps rural charters augment school resources and students' access to course content.

[Beyond City Limits: Expanding Public Charter Schools in Rural America](#), National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, February 2012: This report provides an overview of the common challenges in rural education (page 3), the landscape of rural charter schools (pages 4-8), and key hurdles to launching successful rural charter schools (pages 9-10). The authors also provide examples and recommendations for both state leaders and state-based charter support organizations (pages 10-14). The section on the rural charter school landscape is particularly robust, and there are charter school examples from Arkansas, California, Colorado, and Kansas.

Recommendations for state leaders include:

- Pass charter laws in rural states.
- Remove charter school caps.
- Provide flexibility for online public education.
- Ensure transparency and equitable access to facilities.
- Improve charter school funding parity.
- Support research on academic performance of rural charter schools.

[The Rural Solution](#), Center for American Progress, 2010: While not specific to charter schools, this report provides information about education in rural areas and how community schools can benefit the rural communities in which they are located.

News Articles and Additional Resources

- [Rural Charter School Webinar – Building Bridges](#), National Charter School Resource Center, 2016
- [The Story Behind Oklahoma's First Rural Charter School](#), National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2016
- [School Reform for Rural America](#), Education Next, 2015: This article touches on a number of issues related to school reform in rural areas, including a discussion about school choice.
- [Rural Charter Schools Face Special Challenges](#), Education Week, 2014
- ["Off-the-grid" charter school brings innovation and choice to rural reservation students](#), American Federation for Children, 2016