



Missouri's Teacher Recruitment and Retention Grants

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Missouri used \$50 million of its federal funding to create [Teacher Recruitment and Retention Grants](#) awarded by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in the 2021-22 school year. The grants are part of a state effort to stimulate innovative approaches to recruit and retain teachers — particularly, male teachers, teachers of color and teachers in [areas](#) like special education.

Districts applied for the funds to establish [grow-your-own](#) programs or implement retention strategies such as allocating stipends for mentors, addressing concerns raised in staff climate surveys and increasing leadership opportunities. The department awarded a fixed \$10,000 grow-your-own grant to districts and retention grants in different amounts. Larger grants were awarded to districts with higher percentages of students of color and students from low-income backgrounds.

The grants are part of a statewide initiative — called [TEACH Missouri](#) — that works to increase teacher compensation and identify, cultivate and support teachers. The initiative includes:

- The [Career Ladder Program](#) that covers 60% of the cost of a voluntary salary supplement for teachers, counselors, mental health staff or speech pathologists who take on additional responsibilities.
- The [Teacher Baseline Salary Grant](#) where the state pays 100% of the costs to increase full-time teacher salaries to a minimum of \$38,000.
- A digital recruitment and retention [platform](#) to serve as a centralized hub for prospective and current teachers.

In addition to these efforts to improve the teacher workforce, Missouri also used ESSER funds to create a [School-Based Mental Health](#) Recruitment and Retention Initiative.

The department awarded the \$50 million in Teacher Recruitment and Retention Grants for the 2021-22 school year to 508 school districts, 42 educator preparation programs and 13 community colleges. Missouri contracted with the Community Training and Assistance Center to determine the use and effectiveness of the recruitment and retention strategies.



Identify the Needs of Local Communities

Missouri has struggled to recruit and retain teachers, partially because of low [starting teacher pay](#) and average salaries compared to other states. About [54%](#) of teachers leave within the first five years of teaching in Missouri compared to national estimates of [19% to 30%](#) of teachers. To address this issue, Missouri created a [Teacher Recruitment and](#)

[Retention Blue Ribbon Commission](#) to develop actionable steps that include policy changes and measurable strategies to improve teacher recruitment and retention. The commission had diverse representation that included teachers, business leaders, the governor's office, state legislators, members of the state board of education and staff at the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. They also distributed online surveys to teachers, principals and district leaders and held a public hearing to get input on challenges and prioritize solutions. The [commission's report](#) offers short and long-term priorities, which include increasing starting teacher salaries, providing sustainable funding for grow-your-own programs and prioritizing funding for the career ladder program. Missouri has used the commission's report to inform policy in designing and implementing the TEACH Missouri initiative.



Equitably Direct Resources to Students

Missouri created three priority levels to award the retention grant funds to districts based on data showing higher teacher turnover rates in certain districts. Priority level I districts received \$1,200 per teacher. These districts have 70% to 100% of students eligible for free or reduced priced meals and 50% to 100% of students of color. Priority II districts received \$800 per teacher and had 70% to 100% of students eligible for free or reduced priced meals and 0% to 50% students of color. All other districts were classified in priority III and received \$500 per teacher. This allocation directs state resources to where the dollars can have the biggest impact for improving teacher retention.



Technology-Based Solutions

To compliment the teacher recruitment and retention grants, the state created a [digital recruitment platform](#) that offers prospective teachers a variety of services. Services include one-on-one support to find and apply for educator preparation programs and navigate financial aid. The website also offers career coaching for teachers new to the profession who need mentorship or guidance. Comprehensive [mentoring and induction programs](#) can both improve teacher retention and effectiveness. In addition to these personalized services, the platform also has a long list of resources, such as application checklists, search tools for job openings and certification guides.



Monitor Performance to Support Students

To ensure funds are used effectively, Missouri contracted with the Community Training and Assistance Center to complete a four-phase evaluation. [Phase I](#) examined the diversity of applicants and proposed strategies for teacher recruitment and retention. The evaluation found a high-level of collaboration with more than half of districts partnering with a higher education institution for recruitment. It also found a focus on increasing teacher diversity as more than one-third of districts and a majority of educator preparation programs prioritized male candidates and candidates of color. [Phase II](#) reviewed implementation and potential impact of the funding. Some initial impacts included increased interest in teaching positions, recruiting teachers in specific content areas and greater collaboration between schools and the community.

More Information

See additional state profiles in the series: [Innovative State Strategies for Using ESSER Funds](#).