

FUNDED



GRANTS OFFICE

GRANTS OFFICE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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NEW GRANTS FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

LEARN MORE ABOUT
CURRENT OPPORTUNITIES
NOW AVAILABLE, P2

IT'S NOT ALWAYS WHAT YOU SAY... IT'S HOW YOU SAY IT

WRITING YOUR BEST, P3

BRINGING HOME THE BACON

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE
DISTANCE LEARNING &
TELEMEDICINE GRANT P4

MEDICARE & MEDICAID INCENTIVES

PART 2 OF 3 EXPLORING
MEANINGFUL USE
REQUIREMENTS, P6

UPCOMING EVENTS!

REGISTER FOR OUR SERIES OF
FREE WEBCASTS EACH
MONTH P8

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

FINDING GRANTS AMID DEFICIT REDUCTION P1



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Survival of the Fittest: FINDING GRANTS AMID DEFICIT REDUCTION

BY CHRISTOPHER HAIGHT, GRANTS DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT

At the heart of the debates in Washington and in state capitals across the country is the ongoing crisis in public finance as politicians, unions, lobbyists, policy wonks, and others debate just what it will take to align revenues to outlays. With the 111th Congress having left Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 appropriations unfinished, it remains up to the 112th Congress not only to finish the FY2011 spending bills but also begin work on the budget for FY2012.

This charge is proving even more insurmountable than anticipated as freshmen House Republicans won an intraparty battle with House leadership to force the equivalent of \$100 billion in cuts for the remainder of the fiscal year. With Democrats at the helm in the U.S. Senate pushing for far fewer cuts in the current budget, however, it has pushed negotiations to the brink of a possible government shutdown - bringing to memory the 1995 and 1996 shutdowns of the Clinton years.

As this issue of *FUNDED* went to press, the government continued to operate on a Continuing Resolution (CR) until March 18. This CR, which extended the previous CR from

March 4 eliminated funding for annual education grant programs such as Smaller Learning Communities and Arts in Education. With Republicans, Democrats and the administration agreeing to eliminate such programs completely, it is unlikely we will see their return anytime soon.

Furthermore, additional cuts to popular programs seem likely in any final spending plans. The Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT) program, a popular pass-through grant program that awards districts with money to supply classroom technology and professional development for teachers, is also ripe for elimination. Since its inception nearly a decade ago, EETT has seen its annual funding level slashed by approximately \$600 million (excluding 2009's one-time infusion of funds from the Recovery Act) to \$100 million. The administration has repeatedly indicated its preference that the program be eliminated and funds be consolidated into other grant programs - and may be getting at least the first part of its wish.

(continued on page 2)

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(continued from page 1)

Despite this seeming onslaught of inauspicious news for grantseekers, alternative sources of funding remain available. For example, the Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) grant is still accepting applications, due April 25, 2011 (for more extensive coverage, see article on page 4). This program is targeted at rural school districts and, much like EETT, is heavily focused on technology and equipment acquisition such as hardware and software for educational purposes. Likewise, the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries program, due March 28, 2011, supports technology upgrades and acquisitions in school libraries. This program is targeted towards districts that serve student populations with greater than a 20% poverty rate.

Grantseekers who had initially

anticipated pursuing the Smaller Learning Communities program can also find alternative options through existing programs. For example, the Federally funded 21st Century Community Learning Centers continues to receive backing at around \$1 billion per year. This program supports expanded learning time opportunities, such as after-school or summer programming, and gives schools the flexibility to design new projects aimed at a variety of purposes, including remedial education, science/math education, literacy, and recreational programs.

Private funders, like foundations, are also stepping in to fill the void left by the Federal government. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in partnership with EDUCAUSE has been implementing their new joint initiative, Next Generation Learning Challenges.

The Next Generation Learning Challenges program supports schools in implementing technology-based learning projects by addressing specific education levels through multiple grant application solicitations during the year.

Deficit reduction will continue to be a top concern over the next few years for policymakers and grantseekers alike. Organizations should respond to this new fiscal reality by retooling their grantseeking strategies to seek alternative programs that command more popular support or seek new, nongovernmental sources. Grantseeking remains an evolutionary process where succeeding and surviving often means proving yourself adaptable to ever-changing circumstances.

GRANT SPOTLIGHT: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND CONNECTIVITY GRANTS

Career Pathways Innovation Fund (CPIF)

Competitive grants funded through this program will continue DOL's support for community colleges, with a particular focus on career pathway programs implemented by community colleges in partnership with other organizations in the community. Local workforce investment boards and community colleges may apply by March 31, 2011. Approximately 40 to 50 grants ranging from \$1 million to \$5 million are expected.

Green Jobs Innovation Fund (GJIF)

The Green Jobs Innovation Fund is designed to equip workers with the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities to succeed in green industry sectors and occupations. The Department is committed to funding projects that integrate evidence-based activities into education and training programs. Labor organizations are eligible to apply by March 29, 2011. Five to eight awards ranging from \$5 million to \$8 million are expected.

Community Connect Grant Program

The purpose of these grants is to provide financial assistance in the form of grants to eligible applicants that will provide currently unserved areas with broadband transmission service that fosters economic growth and delivers enhanced educational, health care, and public safety services. Any legal entity may apply by May 3, 2011. Awards range from \$50,000 to \$1.5 million.



It's Not Always What You Say, It's How You Say It

BY VINCE SIRAGUSA, GRANTS DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT

From one of the more memorable movie scenes of the past 20 years, you may recall a phone conversation between Tom Cruise and Cuba Gooding, Jr. that portrays the amusing contract negotiation of an agent and one of the professional sports figures he manages. A repeated and emphatic shouting of “Show me the money!” helped endear *Jerry McGuire* to movie viewers and helped Cruise’s character succeed in achieving his intended task—the movie scene ends with Cruise receiving a simply stated, “Congratulations, you’re still my agent,” from his star-in-the-making. It’s not necessarily the aggressiveness of the message itself but rather its impassioned delivery that may best carry over to grant applications.

Expressing demographic, economic, and other pertinent figures is advised and will likely be required for a number of grant proposals. Inevitably, you’ll use facts and statistics to backup your argument on why financial assistance is necessary. Rather than presenting these figures matter-of-factly or without emotion, however, you should offer some perspective that helps make the information more relevant. For instance, it may be true that your rural sheriff’s department is ill-equipped in their duty to patrol a 5,000 square mile county. But does

the grant reviewer understand that your rural county, roughly the size of Connecticut, requires each individual deputy to be responsible for thousands of disparate rural residents over hundreds of square miles? Perhaps the addition of one or two grant funded positions will decrease the geographic scope of the deputies’ individual service areas and improve the average response time by 20% (or about enough time to watch the first half of your favorite Cruise film).

Make your arguments clear and concise but, at the same time, feel comfortable to know that there’s nothing wrong with a little personality and organizational culture coming through to provide some context for your application. In many cases, peer reviewers would welcome project applications that read as interesting stories, which is what the narrative element is all about in its simplest terms: a story about why your project is more important than any other that the reviewers will encounter.

Historically, a good application was able to answer the question, “If this project is so essential, why haven’t you implemented it before?” That’s a pretty straightforward request but finding the right way to answer it may take some effort and it carries a lot of weight. It’s likely true that the economic downturn

has hurt your local economy, tax base, funding levels, capital reserves, etc. and hindered your ability to push forward with your initiative.

Unfortunately, that scenario does not carry as much ascendancy as it once did, especially as it becomes more commonplace among applicants.

Perhaps the new approach should be centered on the idea that any project worth doing *with* grant money should be worth doing *without* grant money. If that statement holds true for your own local setting, a redirected focus on explaining exactly *what* has been attempted in the past (and proven unsuccessful without sufficient funding) will be better received than citing excuses for why you have not yet attempted to address the gaps in your project.

As the country moves forward into FY2011 and defines a number of new variables, feel comforted to know that various avenues of grant support will always be available. However, we have transitioned into a time when those awards are not solely contingent upon the needs for your project. Granted, the need to finance programmatic deployment is and always will be at the root of grant support, but these decisions are not always made on paper. Painting a more colorful picture for your grant project by tapping into the human element may prove the best way to leave a lasting impression upon your grant reviewers after the theater goes dark.



Bringing Home the Bacon: Maximizing your "D"LT Score

BY SUSANNAH MAYHALL, GRANTS DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT

The USDA's Distance Learning and Telemedicine (or DLT) program is one of the most popular annual federal grant programs. Highly competitive, the DLT program makes awards ranging from \$50,000 to \$500,000 for organizations that provide education or healthcare telecommunications services to rural populations. DLT also has one of the more complex application packages, and requires applicants to provide population tables, maps, and poverty rates for each proposed service area (end-users), as well as hub sites from which services will be delivered.

The scoring criteria for DLT is broken down into two main portions, objective and subjective. While an applicant's subjective score is more difficult to anticipate because it is partially based on how the application compares to others, the objective scoring is very straightforward and should be maximized as much as possible to raise your score. Of the 220 points available, 125 points are based on objective criteria, so working to get the highest objective score possible can significantly increase your odds of receiving an award. While it is

(continued on page 5)

DLT Objective Scoring Criteria:

Rurality (as determined by census data)	45 points total possible
Economic Need as determined by school district NSLP (National School Lunch Program) scores	35 points possible
Matching Funds (leveraging)	35 points possible; Minimum match of 15% required
Empowerment Zones	10 points possible if project is located in an Empowerment Zone



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(continued from page 4)

crucial to write a well-thought out, compliant narrative, we will focus here on the objective scoring criteria, which are easier to control. Missing out on objective points is avoidable, and can be detrimental to your chances of pulling down funding.

Four factors can contribute to your objective score. One of these factors is whether or not your end-user sites are located in designated Empowerment Zones. Up to ten points are available based on this criterion. EZ designation is based on federal funding received by communities participating in the Empowerment Zone program. For more information on this program, see the USDA Rural Development website, <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.

The three factors that are most malleable are the rurality and poverty levels of end-user sites and matching funds provided by the applicant. Rurality scores are based on the population levels of the hub/end-user and end-user sites included in your application. Applicants must qualify

for a minimum of 20 points in the category to apply at all. However, up to 45 points are available based on this criterion. If your score in this category is not as high as it could be, you might want to consider adding additional end-user sites in exceptionally rural or rural areas (populations under 5,000, and between 5,001-10,000, respectively) or removing some more highly populated areas to increase your rurality score. This score is determined by calculating the mean of the rurality scores of each hub/end-user or end-user site, so including more rural areas or removing more populous areas can help to raise your score.

Poverty levels are determined based on National Student Lunch Program eligibility and scores in this category also are reached by calculating the average of each hub/end-user and end-user's NSLP percentage. Similar to adjusting your rurality score, you may want to consider including areas with higher NSLP percentages or removing areas with lower NSLP eligibility to increase



your poverty level score. Up to 35 points can be awarded based on this factor.

The fourth objective scoring criterion is determined by the amount of matching funds the grantee will provide if awarded funding. Determining your points in this category is very simple; the more funding you can contribute, the higher your score will be. Although a minimum of 15% is required, if possible, providing a higher match can not only increase your objective score, but will also demonstrate your commitment to the project. Up to 35 points can be awarded based on the percent of matching funds.

It is highly recommended that you attain an objective score of at least 90 points before applying to DLT. Applicants with scores below this range very rarely receive funding, and because the objective score can be easily determined and potentially altered, working to raise this score can greatly increase your likelihood of a successful DLT application.

GOING THE DISTANCE - LEARNING ABOUT THE DISTANCE LEARNING AND TELEMEDICINE PROGRAM

To learn more about the DLT grant, including a walk-through tutorial on how to calculate your rurality score before submitting, be sure to sign up for our free webcast on April 5th. Presented by Christopher Haight, Grants Development Consultant. Register online at <http://tinyurl.com/4jkb5dg>.



Making Sense of the Medicare and Medicaid Incentives Packages: Meaningful Use Requirements

BY CHRIS LAPAGE, GRANTS DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT



So you have checked a few items off your list: (1) You determined you are an eligible health care provider, (2) You have calculated an estimate incentive payment and realize what's at stake in terms of reimbursement, (3) You have begun the registration process with CMS (Medicare) or the agency in your state administering the Medicaid program, and (4) You purchased an EHR system that is certified by the Office of the National Coordinator Authorized and Testing Certification Body.

Unfortunately, the real work is only just beginning. In order to take advantage of the incentives package, you must meet the objectives and measures established by CMS that proves you are a meaningful user of the EHR you put in place. This is true regardless of whether you seek incentives through the Medicare or

Medicaid program. One caveat being that in the initial year of payment, providers going through Medicaid will not have to meet the meaningful use requirements. Instead, Medicaid providers only need to show evidence that they have adopted, implemented or upgraded their EHR to receive the initial payment. However, they must demonstrate meaningful use in the remaining 4-5 years of payment.

Further complicating the situation is the fact that the definition of "meaningful use" is not static, but will evolve over time (3 total stages) as more stringent requirements are put into place. Stage 1 criteria focuses on electronically capturing health information (in a coded format) and using it to track key clinical conditions and communicating that information for care coordination purposes (in a structured format whenever possible).

In stage 1, many of the objectives simply require an EHR feature to be activated or available (e.g. - drug-drug, drug-allergy cross-checks) while others require baseline measures to met (e.g. - 30% of patients seen by provider have at least one medication entered using CPOE). Stage 2 meaningful use criteria will expand upon Stage 1 to encourage the use of health IT for continuous quality improvement and the exchange of health information in a structured format. A draft of stage 2 criteria suggests that the measures will be more stringent (e.g. - CPOE requirement moves from 30% to a 60% threshold) and new requirements will take hold, such as adding lab and radiology to the CPOE requirement (rather than just medications in stage 1) and requiring online secure patient messaging (absent from stage 1).

(continued on page 7)

This article is the second part of a three-part series exploring the various components of the Medicare and Medicaid EHR Incentives programs. The focus for this month's article moves from eligibility and funding levels (part I) to meaningful use requirements. Look out for the third part of this series in a future "Funded" publication, which will explore grant funding available on the front-end for providers trying to comply with meaningful use and realize their incentive payments.



(continued from page 7)

Stage 3 criteria will focus on promoting improvements in quality, safety and efficiency with an emphasis on decision support for national high priority conditions, patient access to self-management tools, access to comprehensive patient data and improving population health.

Similar to the structure of the funding levels which provide the most incentives to early adopters, the staging of meaningful use is supposed to support that philosophy. For the initial year of payment, providers will only need to demonstrate that they meet Stage 1 meaningful use criteria. However, in each subsequent year of payment providers must meet the most recent stage defined in final rules issued by CMS. In other words, if you wait until 2013 to become a meaningful user (meet stage 1 criteria)

and Stage 3 criteria have been finalized by CMS, the incentive payments will stop if you cannot meet the definition of the more difficult stage 3 meaningful use in 2014. Stage 1 requires individual practitioners to meet 15 required objectives while hospitals are required to achieve 14 objectives. Both types of providers must then select 5 out of 10 objectives (5 deferrals) from a menu set. If an objective does not apply to a certain type of provider, then that item is excluded without counting towards their 5 deferrals. For example, chiropractors do not prescribe medicine so they are excluded from the e-prescribe requirement. The draft of Stage 2 meaningful use requirements indicates that CMS will eliminate the deferrals and add the 10 menu set

items to the list of required objectives.

The CMS has provided charts that offer an overview of the various features that must be enabled and objectives that must be met for stage 1 meaningful use. There are a couple of things to keep in mind when reviewing this material. First and foremost, providers can defer up to 5 measures on the charts entitled "Menu Set Objectives" while they must meet all the required objectives. Finally, place close attention to the beginning of each objective as it will note if an objective is solely for an individual practitioner (EP) or hospital. If it has no indication, then the objective applies to both types of providers.

You can access these charts at
https://www.cms.gov/EHRIncentivePrograms/Downloads/MU_Stage1_ReqSummary.pdf

Example Chart from the CMS:

Health Outcomes Policy Priority	Stage 1 Objective	Stage 1 Measure
Improving quality, safety, efficiency, and reducing health disparities	Use CPOE for medication orders directly entered by any licensed healthcare professional who can enter orders into the medical record per state, local, and professional guidelines	More than 30% of unique patients with at least one medication in their medication list seen by the EP or admitted to the eligible hospital or CAH have at least one medication entered using CPOE
	Implement drug-drug and drug-allergy interaction checks	The EP/eligible hospital/CAH has enabled this functionality for the entire EHR reporting period
	EP Only: Generate and transmit permissible prescriptions electronically (eRx)	More than 40% of all permissible prescriptions written by the EP are transmitted electronically using certified EHR technology
	Record demographics: preferred language, gender, race, ethnicity, date of birth, and date and preliminary cause of death in the event of mortality in the eligible hospital or CAH	More than 50% of all unique patients seen by the EP or admitted to the eligible hospital or CAH have demographics as recorded structured data
	Maintain up-to-date problem list of current and active diagnoses	More than 80% of all unique patients seen by the EP or admitted to the eligible hospital or CAH have at least one entry or an indication that no problems are known for the patient recorded as structured data

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 2011 Webcasts

- **March 29, 2011:** Higher Ed Collaboration with Department of Labor
- **March 21, 2011:** Distance Learning & Telemedicine Grant Program for Healthcare initiatives, *sponsored by Cisco*

April 2011 Webcasts

- **April 5, 2011:** Distance Learning & Telemedicine
- **April 14, 2011:** Justice Assistance Grants (JAG) & Justice Earmarks, *sponsored by Cisco*
- **April 19, 2011:** Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG)
- **April 26, 2011:** Energy Efficiency Funding for Municipalities

May 2011 Webcasts

- **May 17, 2011:** Exploring the Telehealth Network Grant Program (TNGP)
- **May 24, 2011:** Justice Assistance Grants (JAG)
- **May 26, 2011:** Engaging AHRQ for Health IT, *sponsored by Cisco*
- **May 31, 2011:** Keeping Schools Safe: COPS Secure Our Schools (SOS)

June 2011 Webcasts

- **June 9, 2011:** Funding Higher Ed: Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP)
- **June 14, 2011:** Tribal Funding Overview

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