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THE END OF NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

COOL & CONNECTED: PILOT GRANTS TO PLAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH BROADBAND

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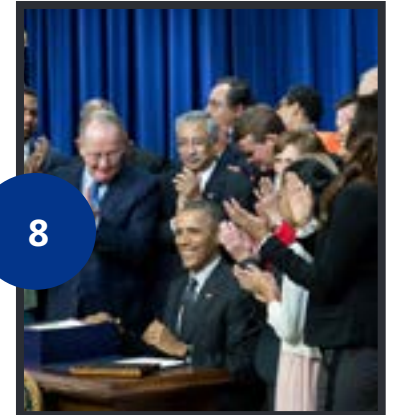## CONNECT WITH GRANTS OFFICE ON TWITTER AND FACEBOOK

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ON THE COVER
In this issue we're covering how further changes to No Child Left Behind could mean a brighter future for kids in our education system. (Photo: Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)

Dear Readers,

If you or someone you know has gone through the education system in the past 14 years or so, you've probably heard a lot about No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Introduced in 2002 by the Bush Jr. office, it became clear fairly quickly that the bill would not be the panacea it promised to be. Whether you feel it was well intentioned or not is a debate for another day, what is important is that Congress and the Obama administration are taking the necessary steps to put the United States on the track to educational success.

In that spirit, contributer Elizabeth Evans takes us on a journey through the newest addition to the now smorgasbord of new education bills meant to right NCLB, the Every Student Succeeds Act. Not only does this bill give states new flexibilities when it comes to their education system, but also introduces new Pre-K standards.

But first, this month columnist Chris LaPage breaks down the 3 C's to a successful grant proposal: Comprehensive, compelling, and competitive. Following these tips will help your organization or school guarantee a higher success rate in grant proposals.

As always, if you have any questions, comments, or topics you would be interested in seeing in future issues, feel free to email me at ksleeman@grantsoffice.com

Sincerely,
Kirsten Sleeman
Editor, FUNDED

WINNING MADE SIMPLE: THE 3 C'S OF A SUCCESSFUL PROPOSAL

BY CHRIS LAPAGE

Sometimes winning is the easy part. When it comes to grants, the process that precedes victory can be so complicated and intense that for some, the ends do not quite justify the means.

There are many reasons why the proposal development process can be painful. For example, applicants may be simultaneously developing their projects and the funding proposal. This situation is common, and can lead to frustration as modifications to the project late in the application cycle often require significant revamping of the grant proposal. In other cases, the frustration may result from a lack of familiarity with grants. This is especially true when the process includes program personnel and executives that are not routinely involved with the development of grant proposals. Most of these obstructions in the proposal development process stem from a tendency to over complicate the situation.

The laser focus and intense attention-to-detail that is required in the world of grants often results in a proposal development process that lacks the big-picture perspective. A process that sweats the details but fails to establish a clear vision for the project and proposal will likely end in frustration. In establishing a vision, the most important consideration is to avoid unnecessary complexity. In other words, it would be wise to adhere to the old adage: Keep it simple, stupid. In this context, every proposal development process should aim for an outcome that meets three criteria: Comprehensive, Compelling, and Competitive.

Writing a successful grant proposal can be frustrating, if you keep the 3 C's in mind you'll be well on your way to funding!
(Photo: Thinkstock)

THE 3 C'S: COMPREHENSIVE

In a world where project and proposal development processes are inherently linked, comprehensiveness applies to both. In order for a project to be fundable through grants, it is generally expected that it will be well-rounded, or comprehensive. In order to be successful, the project will typically need personnel, equipment, consultant services, training, facilities, and several other integral components. Likewise, the funder is looking for proposals that will have a long-lasting and sustainable impact, which typically requires a widespread solution.

Applicants that propose to tackle only one facet of a problem or rely too heavily on one type of project input (e.g. equipment) will not fare well compared to comprehensive approaches. However, do not confuse comprehensiveness with broadness. Funders need the project to be defined narrowly enough that they are convinced it will be successful. As a general rule, applicants should err on the side of making their projects comprehensive, but be careful not to bite off more than they can chew.

THE 3 C'S: COMPELLING

In order to receive funding, applicants must make their proposals compelling. In other words, they must develop a strong case for funding. There are essentially two primary components to making a compelling case for funding. First, you must document a need within a certain community or target population. The funder must be convinced that the circumstances of a particular setting on a target population warrants an influx of funding to alleviate a

Funders shouldn't need a Magic 8 Ball to find out if your project is worth their money, your proposal should convince them! Be sure to include specifics as to how you'll use the grant money to further your project. Funders will pass by a project that could succeed without their help. (Photo: Thinkstock)

problem. For instance, a mountain range in an area may make it necessary for the rural population to travel over an hour to receive urgent medical care. This would be a compelling need that might warrant funding for a telemedicine project that overcomes these transportation barriers.

The other piece of making a proposal compelling is convincing the funder that a project wouldn't be feasible without their support. If the applicant has access to funding and resources to complete the project regardless, a funder will divert their resources to other projects that would otherwise go unfunded. As a general rule, making a compelling case for funding requires a well-documented need and establishment that the project would not move forward without support from the grant-maker.

THE 3 C'S: COMPETITIVE

In order to be competitive, the proposal must accomplish the first two objectives in being comprehensive and compelling. However, to take it to the next level and be competitive, the proposal must stand out amongst the other applications.

The best way to do this is by making the project innovative. This requires an understanding of what projects have

previously been funded and the solutions they deployed. Doing your research can provide valuable insight into the recipe for a truly innovative project. For instance, you may be able to adapt an existing technology in a unique way, deploy a completely new technology as part of the solution or propose innovations in personnel configurations, work processes, and training mechanisms. Remember, a funder is looking for cutting-edge solutions to a problem... that's the reason they issued a request for proposal in the first place. As a general rule, they will fund innovative approaches over predictable solutions.

IN CONCLUSION...

It's easy to get lost in dotting I's and crossing t' when it comes to developing grant proposals. Losing yourself in the minutiae of detail can lead to a proposal development process that sticks in the mud and leaves a bitter aftertaste for all involved. Establishing a clear vision with achievable goals for the project and proposal can go a long way in determining success. It can also create a process that promotes buy-in rather than turmoil. So the next time you set out to create a winning grant proposal, remember to make it comprehensive, compelling and competitive.

As we often say at Grants Office: There's no shortage of money! Don't be shy about applying for funding that your project needs to succeed! (Photo: Thinkstock)

TELEHEALTH RESOURCE CENTER GRANT PROGRAM

SUMMARY: Telehealth Resource Centers (TRCs) assist health care organizations, health care networks, and health care providers in the implementation of cost-effective telehealth programs to serve rural and medically underserved areas and populations.

This FOA will fund two different types of TRCs. This FOA will support twelve TRCs that focus on State-wide and regional telehealth activities and are referred to as Regional TRCs (RTRCs). This FOA will also fund two National TRCs (NTRCs) that focus on telehealth policy or technology activities with a national scope. This funding cycle will support up to twelve RTRCs, with one per region as shown below. RTRCs will serve as focal points for advancing the effective use of telehealth technologies in their respective communities and States.

- Northeast Region
- Southeast Region
- Upper Midwest Region
- Northwest Region
- Mid-Atlantic Region
- South Region
- West Central Region
- North Central Region
- Pacific Region
- Southwest Region
- West Region

NEXT DEADLINE: The deadline to submit applications is March 4, 2016

ELIGIBILITY: Eligible applicants include:

- Nonprofit entities
- Faith-based organizations
- Community-based organizations
- Tribal nonprofit organizations
- Healthcare organizations
- Healthcare networks
- Healthcare providers

AWARD AMOUNTS: The estimated total program funding will be $4,550,000 to be split between 14 awards.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=280809

THE END OF NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

BY ELIZABETH EVANS

Graduation rates are at a historic high. Moreover, America's young adults are now pursuing post-secondary education more than ever before. The new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is hoping to build upon that momentum.

This past December, President Obama signed a bipartisan law expanding (and revising) the work of the 2002 No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Over the last 7 years, through other presidential initiatives, such as Race to the Top, incredible progress has been made in America's education system. We've seen unprecedented coordination among educators, parents, students, and communities when it comes to attempts to improve current educational practice. Often times, however, these groups felt stifled by the "cookie cutter" approach of NCLB, noting that the requirements were too prescriptive and didn't account for variation across student traits such as disability, native language, race, or socioeconomic status.

Hearing the call for a solution, Congress began working on a new measure to use as part of the elementary and secondary education act reauthorization. But now that ESSA has been approved, what will this mean? And how exactly is ESSA different from NCLB?

NCLB put into place measures that showed where achievement gaps existed between traditionally underserved students and their peers. Awareness of this gap spurred a national discussion about the need for improvement within the education system. NCLB also focused heavily on accountability measures to ensure quality education. The challenge was that both the measures for student achievement and accountability were set at the federal level. This means the program took on a "one-size-fits-all" approach to education, an approach that proved ineffective.

Considering that a wide range of variables contribute to student success, it was

As President Obama goes forward with changes to the No Child Left Behind Act, we will likely see the American education system continue to improve as we learn more about how best to educate our students. (Photo: https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2015/12/10/fix-no-child-left-behind-will-give-more-students-shot-success)

clear that ESSA would need to take a similarly broad range of factors into account. So, while there is still the expectation of annual state-wide assessments (as there was with NCLB), states now have the opportunity to develop for measures of student performance targets for themselves.

Furthermore, states now have the ability to develop accountability and intervention supports for those schools which struggle to meet standards and must dedicate funding towards supporting these lowest-performing schools.

Also built into the bill are supports for Pre-K (an area excluded from NCLB), expectations that students will be taught in a way that readies them for college (or a career post-high school), room for educators to innovate in piloting new methods which show evidence of promise, expansion and replication of high-quality charter schools, and expectations that encourage wrap-around support services for vulnerable communities. In essence, ESSA reduces the burden of testing put in place by NCLB while promoting local innovation and investment.

> *"...states now have the ability to develop accountability and intervention supports for...schools that struggle to meet standards and must dedicate funding towards supporting these lowest-performing schools."*

ESSA will spur several changes to how education funding is distributed as well. For Title funds, we will see a slight shift wherein School Improvement Grant (SIG) program funds will be merged into the whole of Title I. And rather than 4% set aside for school improvement, as mandated by NCLB, states must now set aside 7% of their education budget. Other than this, the only marked change is to Title II funding, now enabling additional assistance to rural states for improving teacher quality.

As part of ESSA, $1.6 billion will also go towards a new block grant that consolidates dozens of previous programs including physical education, Advanced Placement, school counseling, and education technology. Other programs that we have come to know and love, such as the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant, will now be featured as a separate line item within the education budget.

Replacing NCLB's Teacher Incentive Fund is the ESSA's Teacher and School Leader Innovation Program, which will provide grants to districts implementing performance pay or other teacher quality improvement measures. Meanwhile, the Investing in Innovation grant will now live on through new, refocused, evidence-based research and innovation grant programs (which have yet to be named).

As mentioned previously, Pre-K will also be supported through the ESSA. The Preschool Development grant program is now officially part of education law (and to be coordinated jointly by the Department of Education and Department of Health and Human Services).

Not to be forgotten, are a series of new and returning stand alone programs for parent engagement, arts education, gifted and talented education, and Ready to Learn television.

State legislatures will now be taking a leading role in deciding how ESSA's assessment, accountability, and evaluation measures will be implemented within their own state. As such, the education grants landscape will certainly be in flux over the next year. To make sure that you don't miss out, be sure to stay apprised of updates as they occur both at the federal level and within your own state's Department of Education.

COOL AND CONNECTED GRANT PROGRAM

SUMMARY: Cool & Connected is a pilot program sponsored by USDA Rural Utilities Service and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Sustainable Communities. Through Cool & Connected, a team of experts will help community members develop strategies and an action plan for using planned or existing broadband service to promote smart, sustainable community development.

The Cool & Connected program will provide assistance to this end, helping communities take advantage of new or existing broadband service to create walkable, connected, economically vibrant main streets and small-town neighborhoods.

Community representatives are encouraged to describe community needs and challenges related to downtown revitalization or other place-based development, and how a planning process might help. Applicants should indicate any areas of interest related to internet service and place-based development, such as:

- Using new or existing broadband service to attract new types of businesses to main streets or existing rural communities;
- Combining internet service with other local amenities to attract new investors, visitors, and residents;
- Developing or marketing downtown Wi-Fi zones;
- Extending broadband service beyond anchor institutions in ways that promote main street development; and
- Selecting centrally located anchor institutions or community facilities that will receive broadband service.

Community representatives submitting letters of interest are also encouraged to indicate partners that can be expected to participate in a planning process, such as local internet service providers, local officials, business associations, or local schools or colleges.

NEXT DEADLINE: Letters of Interest must be submitted by February 24, 2016.

ELIGIBILITY: Any community representative is welcome to submit a letter of interest to participate in Cool & Connected. Special consideration will be given to small towns and rural communities that face economic challenges. Special consideration will also be given to communities in places where the USDA has previously provided loans or grants in support of broadband or other internet-related services.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/cool-connected-announcement-federal-planning-assistance-broadband-and-sustainable

KNIGHT NEWS CHALLENGE ON LIBRARIES

SUMMARY: For the 2016 News Challenge, the following question must be answered: How might libraries serve 21st century information needs? The Knight Foundation does not have any specific projects in mind for this challenge. The only prerequisite is to have an idea that advances how libraries provide information to communities in a rapidly evolving, increasingly digital world.

NEXT DEADLINE: Ideas must be submitted between February 24th and March 21st 2016.

ELIGIBILITY: This challenge is an open call for ideas. It is open to anyone, from public libraries to universities to businesses, nonprofits and individuals.
Deadline Details

AWARD AMOUNTS: Approximately $3,000,000 is available in total funding for FY16.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: **https://www.newschallenge.org/challenge/how-might-libraries-serve-21st-century-information-needs/brief**

This grant opportunity is one of the most open ended out there. So, get creative, remember your 3 C's, and you could be on your way to another successful grant proposal. (Photo: Thinkstock)

GRANTSCAST EVENTS

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UPCOMING GRANTSCAST EVENTS

- **In Plain Sight: Funding Body-Worn Cameras and Other Video-Based Policing Initiatives** - Sponsored by WatchGuard

March 15, 2016 at 2:00 pm EST
Register: http://tinyurl.com/zzmheza

RECENT GRANTSCAST RECORDINGS

- **2016 Healthcare Grants Forecast: Funding Increased Data Agility in an Era of Data Mobility** - Sponsored by NetApp

January 19, 2016 at 2:00 pm EST
Register: http://tinyurl.com/hzglmat

- **Tapping Into Technology: Best Practices for IHEs to Leverage Technology in Their Grant-Funded Research & Education Projects** - Sponsored by NetApp

January 26, 2016 at 2:00 pm EST
Register: http://tinyurl.com/oadaxc4

- **Funding to Help You Do More with the Data You're Collecting**- Sponsored by NetApp

Watch: http://tinyurl.com/po967dl

- **Technology and Strategies to Ramp-up and Fund Your Workforce Development Project** - Sponsored by NetApp

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