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**THE “ART”
OF GRANT
FUNDING**

**Q&A:
THE FY 2013
BUDGET**

**TIPS FOR
COMPANIES
PROVIDING
GRANTS
SUPPORT**

**RACE
TO THE
TOP:
A NEW
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RACE TO THE TOP: DISTRICT COMPETITION (RTT-D)

SUMMARY The purpose of the Race to the Top – District competition is to build on the lessons learned from the State competitions conducted under the Race to the Top program and to support bold, locally directed improvements in learning and teaching that will directly improve student achievement and educator effectiveness.

PROJECT PRIORITIES

Mandatory for all applicants:

Personalized Learning Environments. Projects must focus on building on the core educational assurance areas to create successful learning environments that accelerate student achievement and prepare students for college- and career-readiness upon graduation.

Competitive preference priority:

Results, Resource Alignment, and Integrated Services. Applicants who propose to integrate public or private resources to augment schools' resources will receive priority.

DEADLINE The deadline to submit a letter of intent is August 30, 2012. The deadline to submit a full application is October 30, 2012.

ELIGIBILITY Local Educational Agencies (LEAs), or a consortium of LEAs

AWARD AMOUNTS The estimated funding available through this program is \$383 million. The Department of Education expects to fund between 15-25 grants that will range from \$5 million to \$40 million.

FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-district/index.html>

Q&A: THE FY 2013 BUDGET & IMPACT ON GRANTS

By Chris LaPage

1. WHY IS THE FY 2013 BUDGET SO IMPORTANT TO GRANTSEEKERS?

As we approach the end of Fiscal Year 2012 and start a new one on October 1st, now is the perfect time to start projecting the 2013 grant funding landscape. Knowing what to expect in 2013 is important to any organization that takes grant-seeking seriously. Understanding what is coming down the pipeline can inform an organization's strategic planning and budget processes. For instance, if it is known there is some potential grant funding to fund a distance learning project in rural Kansas, then that school district may allocate their own funds to professional development activities instead. Furthermore, the heads up can provide a much longer runway than the typical 4 to 6 weeks that organizations typically have to respond to a grant solicitation. There is a direct correlation between the amount of time an applicant spends on a proposal and the overall quality and competitiveness of their submission. The federal budget is critical as it represents the primary data source for projecting grant programming and funding levels in any fiscal year.

2. SO WHAT DOES THE 2013 BUDGET TELL US?

At the moment...absolutely nothing! Unfortunately, a 2013 budget has not been passed by both chambers of Congress and signed by the President. Once a budget is passed, the final bill and accompanying committee reports will contain volumes of information on grant programs that will come out in FY 2013. You can garner some limited information based on the separate and distinct budgets that have been worked out amongst each of the major players in the process. For instance, you can look for areas where the President's proposed budget meshes with those passed by the House and Senate, separately. If you were to analyze all three budgets, you would be able to identify some grant programs that all can agree are necessary, albeit they may disagree on funding levels. For instance, all three versions floating around have the traditional homeland security funding for municipalities and Justice Assistance Grants (JAG) for law enforcement. While you may be able to identify some commonalities, there is still a great deal of uncertainty without knowing the amount of potential funding that will be available. Furthermore, when all sides move forward to conference in an attempt to resolve the differences in their

respective proposals, there is no guarantee the compromise package will include the programs they all seemed to endorse individually.

3. WHEN CAN WE EXPECT A FY 2013 BUDGET TO BE PASSED AND SIGNED INTO LAW AND HOW WILL THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS IMPACT THE TIMING?

March 29, 2013. I will be the first to admit that the lottery holds better odds of winning than picking the exact day of a future event based on politics and ideological compromise. Certainly it is guess work to a large degree, but a working knowledge of history and politics leads me to such a conclusion. Those that are unfamiliar with the federal budget process may wonder how I could possibly pick a date past the end of the fiscal year, or September 30, 2012. The government has to fund itself, so how can they push this process out to next Spring? In the last quarter century, the truth is the federal government misses the mark more often than it hits the target. When a budget is not passed and the end of the fiscal year is approaching, they have shown a willingness to adopt a continuing resolution that keeps the federal agencies operating at the same funding levels of the previous fis-

cal year. Such a resolution typically has an expiration date and is meant to provide more time to negotiate a budget to fund the government through the rest of the year. Unfortunately, in many years one continuing resolution leads to another and funding can remain uncertain deep into the fiscal year.

The fact that this is a huge election year with many government posts up for grabs will likely increase the odds of a continuing resolution and delay passage of a formal FY 2013 budget. In addition to the Presidency, all 435 seats in the House of Representatives and one-third of the Senate are up for reelection. The last thing that politicians want to do ahead of an election cycle is to take controversial stands on taxes and spending items, the two primary hallmarks of a federal budget. Thus, there will be incentives for both Democrats and Republicans to delay an official budget and pass a continuing resolution to at least get through the elections.

Following the elections there will be about six weeks of what is considered a lame duck session before the newly elected officials replace the ousted incumbents. History shows

that this will be a particularly unproductive time for Congress as all sides are usually reluctant to push anything forward. In early January, the new Congressional Session will begin and newly elected representatives will go through orientations, leadership may change hands, and there will be some reorganizing with offices and committee assignments. It is plausible that 4 to 8 weeks may pass before the logistical considerations have been resolved and the respective bodies are ready to legislate. If a new President is elected and inaugurated January 20, 2013, the transition period will be much longer. Keeping these considerations in mind, it very well could be March or April before all parties are in a position to finalize a federal budget. Depending on what parties control each branch of government, a compromise can take anywhere from a few weeks to months.

So even though most people realize that a FY 2013 Federal Budget is not a realistic possibility until after the election, the truth is that we might see continuing resolutions passed as stop-gap measures until next Spring.

4. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR GRANT PROGRAMS IN FY 2013?

The absence of a FY 2013 budget does not necessarily mean we have no idea what is on the horizon in terms of grant programming for the year. First and foremost, the budget is not the sole piece of legislation that makes appropriations. For instance, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) of 2010 appropriated funds for various grant programs for several years. As long as that law remains in effect, there are certain grant programs flowing out of the Prevention and Public Health Fund that are funded through FY 2020. In addition, you can look at the last several fiscal years and get a historical snapshot of the programs typically available on an annual basis. Continuing resolutions typically will keep funding levels consistent with the previous year, so you can expect the status quo for many grant programs we see on an annual basis. The most important thing is to identify the general areas where grants are targeted so that you can build grantseeking into your organization's strategic planning and budget process. ♦



PROGRAM SNAPSHOT



mHealth Tools to Promote Effective Patient-Provider Communication, Adherence to Treatment and Self Management of Chronic Diseases In Underserved Populations (R01)

SUMMARY The purpose of this initiative is to stimulate research utilizing Mobile Health (mHealth) tools aimed at the improvement of effective patient-provider communication, adherence to treatment and self-management of chronic diseases in underserved populations.

With the rapid expansion of cellular networks and substantial advancements in Smartphone technologies, it is now possible - and affordable - to transmit patient data digitally from remote areas to specialists in urban areas, receive real-time feedback, and capture that consultation in a database. mHealth tools, therefore, may facilitate more timely and effective patient-provider communication through education communication around goal setting, treatment reminders, feedback on patient progress and may improve health outcomes.

DEADLINE Applications are due February 5, June 5, and October 5 annually. The next available deadline is October 5, 2012.

ELIGIBILITY Nonprofit and for-profit organizations, small businesses, state and local governments, institutions of higher education, Indian tribal governments and organizations, U. S. territories or possessions, regional organizations, and others

AWARD AMOUNTS Award amounts vary.

FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-11-330.html>

THE “ART” OF GRANT FUNDING

By Ali Palmieri

Arts councils and organizations are essential to enriching the culture and diversity within a community. Whether it is an art show, a music festival or something as simple as a day program for children, it has lasting effects that can only make the community a better place. With the economy in its current state, funding for the arts is not seen as a priority, so state arts organizations must step up to raise money or work even harder to receive funding or to make grants for their communities.

The National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) is a great source when looking into funding for arts projects. Where these grant programs generally support projects that are larger in scope than just a local community, you can still get a general idea of what is being funded and what arts projects are trending in the funding landscape. If you are looking to fund a local arts project, a grant such as Art Works, from the NEA, which funds 25 recipients with \$10,000-\$100,000 might not be the best solution for you. The good news is, many states have arts organizations that present grants that may be useful to you on a smaller scale.

A few of the states that have the best arts organizations for grant-making are Arkansas (Arkansas Arts Council), South Dakota (South Dakota Arts Council), Minnesota (Minnesota State Arts Board), Vermont (Vermont Arts Council), Nebraska (Nebraska Arts Council) and Washington (Washington State Arts

Commission, to name a few. Most of these programs are broken down into who they fund or with whom they partner. Many times there is funding for individual artists, organizations, operating support and arts education. Individual artist grants may depend on state in terms of what artists they may fund. They may enhance an artist's career or recognize artists for the impact they have had in a community. Grants for organizations may assist in resources like materials travel or program development. When grants are created for operating support are most likely for day to day needs within an arts organization.. Arts education could mean specific programs educating the community in arts or getting artists into schools in different ways; either during school or for after school programs.

Keep in mind that these types of grants may have much smaller awards. Awards may range from as little as \$250 for an Artist in Schools program in Vermont to as high as \$100,000 for an Arts Access grant in Minnesota. The size of these awards may get a program started, cover the cost of travel for a program or even fund an entire program. It is up to your organization how to best use these smaller pools of funding. One thing that is for sure is that these grants are much more accessible for smaller communities than the larger NEA grants.

Another tip to remember is that just as all states are different, so are their arts organizations. They have different names, application

processes, guidelines and opportunities. Check with your local or state arts organization for the best results in trying to achieve funding. Arts organizations make communities diverse and unique. We can only hope that funding at the state and local level will continue with the help of the government and the many people who work daily to keep these programs and organizations thriving and in place. ♦



A MODEST PROPOSAL: FIVE TIPS TO COMPANIES PROVIDING GRANTS SUPPORT TO PUBLIC SECTOR CUSTOMERS

By Michael Paddock

Companies selling into the public sector are increasingly offering their customers help with identifying and pursuing grant opportunities in support of the community's efforts to initiate projects that, not coincidentally, make use of the company's products or services. Indeed, the US federal government alone provides over \$400 billion each year in grants, much of which goes to support purchases of products and services by public sector organizations in their communities. State governments and private foundations also deliver a significant amount of their support through grants.

Grants Office has been a leader in providing expert grant consultation and funding information that powers successful grant support initiatives at some of the world's largest and most trusted companies. After ten years of providing these services on behalf of our clients to gym teachers, college presidents, police and firefighters, and public servants at other institutions around the world, we have worked through many of the challenges associated with navigating this potentially very profitable process.

It's a widely held belief among the community of grantseeking professionals that grants development pursuits that are not driven by the applicant/potential recipient will be doomed from the start, because the projects would lack the authenticity of an initiative that had been developed organically by the municipality, school, or hospital.

Of course, grant-funded projects around the country that have been entirely developed by the applicants have advantages. For one, they address what at least some local officials believe to be pressing needs among their constituency – a group with whom they ostensibly have

regular and direct contact. Home-grown projects also usually have buy in from at least a sampling of community leaders, particularly those whose personal and organizational objectives are likely to be advanced by the project.

But projects developed in conjunction with vendors – even vendors who stand to profit from the project they are espousing – can be well-conceived and provide a major benefit to the community receiving the funding, particularly for projects that require some technical sophistication. After all, many vendors are experts in their businesses. Whether you're talking about a planning grant to improve the efficiency of school bus routes, a telehealth grant to expand cardiology services to remote rural clinics, or a networked monitoring system to enhance the security of your water system, you can leverage vendors (who will probably be getting business from the funded project anyway) for their experience in implementing similar projects, their understanding of local needs in the context of a technical project plan, and their access to pricing estimates and configuration drafts for the elements of the project that fall within their spheres.

For companies offering grant support and the community institutions considering accepting it, here are a few things to keep in mind – tidbits we at Grants Office have developed over the years and which might help set appropriate expectations on all sides.

1. START BY IDENTIFYING THE NEED

The community's need should drive their purchase specifications, not the other way around. Funders can easily recognize (and reject) applications that appear to be for securing toys for the applicant. Instead, focusing on addressing a need in the community or in the applicants' capacity to advance its mission will not only make the project more appealing to funders, but it will also lead to a much more successful collaboration between vendor and customer.

2. GRANTS FUND PROJECTS, NOT PRODUCTS

Funders frown on proposals that look like wish lists, without a clear objective and a credible action

plan. Therefore, the project plan should not be an afterthought. Instead, work out what needs to happen to make the project successful at achieving specific, measureable objectives. Then calculate what products and services will be needed to support the plan.

There are many grant programs aimed at supporting specific local projects, and they have names like the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program, Investing in Innovation, and Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grants. There is not likely to be a “specific product” grant (unless you sell body armor to police departments or body scanners to airports), so don’t look for it. If you’re having trouble finding grant programs that can include specific products, consider getting help from a professional grants development firm.

3. FOLLOW NORMAL PROCUREMENT

Grants can create additional budget for products and services, but grant-funded procurements still have to

follow local policies and procedures. Customer’s should avoid making guarantees to the vendors they’re working with about follow-on business, just as vendors should avoid pressuring customers for promises they can’t legally make. Rest assured, in most cases, the trusted vendor who has brought added value to the customer relationship will get the business, though it may not be a sure thing from the outset.

4. THINK BIG, BUT NOT FAST

Although federal funding in particular can enable even small, rural organizations to make big purchases, the process is lengthy. It’s not unusual for a federal grant to be \$300,000 to 500,000 or more, which may be more than a small applicant would ever be able to spend on a single project. Depending on the grant program(s) you are applying to, it may take up to 18 months from the time the application is submitted to begin spending money. Of course, it often happens in less time, but it pays to be prepared for a long-term commitment.

5. KEEP IT IN CONTEXT

Vendors contribute valuable expertise as well as products and services to the project, but the public sector customer receiving the funding is ultimately accountable to the funder for how they use the money. For that reason, the recipient of the funding should take the lead in managing the project, to ensure they can directly address any changes to the initial plan for the project and accurately report their progress to the funder.

Even well-meaning vendors can derail a project from its original intent, often just because the vendor’s problem solving strategy often tends to rely more on a product or solution-centric approach. Therefore, the recipient agency should never relinquish oversight of the project to anyone else, even if it may seem easier in the short term to do so. 📌



RACE TO THE TOP: A New Hope (for School District Budgets)

By Susannah Mayhall

The Department of Education's Race to the Top program, initiated during the Recovery Act as a state competition, espouses four core educational reform areas: implementing student data systems, adopting college- and career-readiness standards and assessments, building teams of effective teachers and principals, and reforming struggling schools. These four priorities have been at the heart of the program's three state-level competitions. In 2011, an additional reform area centered around early learning and development programs was introduced through the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, jointly administered by the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services. With the release

of the Race to the Top: District Competition (RTT-D), the program enters a new realm of possibilities.

1. A NEW CONFIGURATION

In May 2012, the Department introduced a new version of the Race to the Top competition, this time opened to local educational agencies (LEAs). Awards totaling \$383 million are on the table for this round of funding. The district competition will build on the cornerstone four core reform areas to create personalized learning environments focused on college- and career-readiness, accelerated student achievement and deeper learning, effective educators, and decreased achievement gaps. With only 15-25

grants expected, the competition for this program is expected to be fierce. To gain a competitive edge, applicants should try to address both the required Absolute Priorities and the Competitive Preference Priority, which focuses on public and private partnerships and integrated services.

2. PRIORITY PROJECTS

All applicants must respond to the first Absolute Priority: Personalized Learning Environments. This priority encompasses multiple facets of the educational environment, from infrastructure and capacity to teacher supports to personalized learning trajectories that include both rigor-



ous study in the core standards and opportunities to explore students' areas of personal academic interest. Successful applicants will take a broad approach to education reform, demonstrating capacity to implement change and innovative plans for achieving student and teacher success.

3. POTENTIAL CONTENDERS

Eligible applicants for this program include local educational agencies (LEAs) and consortia of LEAs. LEAs may apply for all or a portion of their schools, for specific grades, or for subject area bands such as lowest-performing schools, secondary schools, feeder pattern, middle school math, or preschool through third grade. In addition, LEAs from one or more states may apply as a consortium; however, individual LEAs may not be involved in more than one Race to the Top District application. Additional requirements include a required total program impact of at least 2,000 students. To preclude smaller districts from being excluded from the competition, the Department has allowed for consortia of at least ten smaller districts that do not meet the 2,000-student threshold to apply. However, with applications due October 30, this impact requirement may very well result in a competition comprised mostly of larger school districts. Despite this probability, the solicitation's unique priority setup (priorities 2-5 serve strictly as objective district identifiers rather than programmatic aims), the Department may use applicants' rurality and/or their states' participation (or lack thereof) in Race to the Top to even out the playing field to some extent.

4. GEARING UP

Interested applicants should begin mapping out their proposed projects as soon as possible. Letters of intent, though not required, are strongly encouraged. Prior to submitting a notification of intent to apply, applicants must determine whether they are applying as an individual LEA or as part of a consortium and what their anticipated budget request will be. The web-based notification of intent form is due August 30, 2012. The Department anticipates publishing a summary of the letters of intent online. Would-be applicants are also encouraged to participate in the Department of Education's technical assistance webinars. For more information on the webinars, visit <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/race->

tothetop-district/resources.html.

5. FUTURE IMPACT

With the state approval obstacle removed, freeing districts to apply at-will, this Race to the Top competition is likely to take a very different shape from its predecessors. Additionally, with applications due just days before the contentious November election and awards announced towards the end of the year, this program could play a big role in the future of grants for education, rounding out President Obama's first term and ushering in what's next, whether that be a continuation of the current administration's educational goals or the start of a new roadmap for education funding. Whatever the results, this program is certainly one to watch. 

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EVENTS



GRANTS OFFICE

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- Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program: Revitalize Your Community with Grant Funding Coming Soon-Sign up for an invitation at <http://www.grantsoffice.info/Webcasts.aspx>
- Community Challenge Planning Grant Program: Bring Innovative Projects to your community Coming Soon-Sign up for an invitation at <http://www.grantsoffice.info/Webcasts.aspx>
- Practice Makes Perfect: Funding Health Professional Education & Training Initiatives
October 23, 2012 at 2:00PM EST

RECENT WEBCAST RECORDINGS

- Funding Decontamination for Emergency Management—Sponsored by RSDecon
Recorded August 16, 2012
- Plan Ahead: Prepping for Funding in 2013
Recorded August 7, 2012
- Getting the Most out of your 2012 Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) Application
Recorded June 20, 2012
- Making the Most of Expected Homeland Security Funding – Sponsored by VueTOO
Recorded May 22, 2012
- Maximizing K-12 Title Funding for Technology Initiatives – Sponsored by Cisco
Recorded May 17, 2012
- Transforming Healthcare: Grant Funding for Promising Innovations in Service Delivery & Patient Safety – Sponsored by AT&T
Recorded May 1, 2012

These and other recordings are available for playback or download at <http://www.grantsoffice.info/Webcasts.aspx>

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