



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

General

Goal of the grant

Community Connectors is one of the key education reforms signed into law by Gov. John R. Kasich last June (2014), and seeks to bring together parents, community organizations, faith-based groups, businesses and others to support Ohio's schools and to mentor students.

Community Connectors provides \$10 million in lottery profits in 3-to-1 matching grants that will help give more Ohio students access to role models who can help motivate and inspire them, as well as help them develop skills that lead to success in school and the workplace.

Community Connector grantees will carry out the five core principles of the program:

1. Setting Goals to be Prepared for the 21st Century Careers
2. Building Character
3. Developing Pathways to Achievement
4. Building a Sense of Resiliency
5. Believing in a Positive Future

Who can apply for a grant?

A nonprofit entity. Faith-based organizations, houses of worship, community nonprofits and nonprofit entities associated with a for-profit business are eligible. If the lead applicant is a community nonprofit or nonprofit associated with a for-profit business, a faith-based organization must be included as a partner.

Examples of Collaborations:

- If your organization is a community nonprofit, you will need three additional entities: a school district, a faith-based organization or house of worship, and a business. If the lead applicant is a faith-based organization or house of worship, two additional partners – a business and school district – are required.
- Nonprofit organizations from the faith-based, business and civic communities are eligible to lead a project, and must team up with an eligible public school district and a business and a faith-based organization to establish a mentorship program.

[Eligible school districts](#) are those in which at least 40% of the student population is economically disadvantaged or has a graduation rate below 92%. All students from the eligible district, regardless of socioeconomic status, will be eligible to participate in the program. Local partnerships will develop programs that serve students grades 5 – 12 (programs may serve students in one or more grade levels).

Applicant Eligibility & Qualifications

Community Connectors programs will reflect broad and deep collaborations in the community. Lead applicants will be responsible for building those collaborations among faith-based organizations, community nonprofits, the business community and school districts.



Lead applicants must *all of these criteria* to be eligible:

- Be a nonprofit entity. Faith-based organizations, houses of worship, community nonprofits, and nonprofit entities associated with a for-profit business are eligible. If the lead applicant is a community nonprofit or nonprofit associated with a for-profit business, a faith-based organization must be included as a partner.
- The lead entity **MUST** partner with an [eligible school district](#) in which at least 40% of the student population is economically disadvantaged or has a graduation rate below 92%. The partnership must include the school district; however programs can target one school within a district. Nonprofit organizations may partner with multiple school districts provided that one of the districts meets the 40% or higher economically disadvantaged student population or less than 92% graduation rate threshold.
- Collaborate with at least one business or industry partner. (Lead nonprofit organizations affiliated with for-profit companies may partner with those companies.)

What districts and charter schools are considered eligible to take part?

Programs can partner with an [eligible school district](#) in which at least 40% of the student population is economically disadvantaged or has a graduation rate below 92%. Charter (community) schools, like school districts, are not eligible to be the lead applicant, but can be considered as a partner. Charter schools are considered districts unto themselves for the purposes of this grant. You can find the list of eligible charter schools [here](#). Charter schools not on this list, may also be a partner as long as there is at least one eligible school district or charter school partnering on the grant.

Can you partner with just one school within the district?

The partnership must include the school district; however, programs may choose to target one school within an economically disadvantaged or low-performing school district.

What is the timeframe to apply and when will the grant be awarded?

Deadline for application submission is Friday, February 20, 2015.

- Grants are expected to be awarded March 2015.
- Assessment, planning, and training must be complete by September 2015.
- All awardees must be ready to **implement selected programs by September 2015.**

What funds are available and how will the funds be awarded?

This program has \$10 million to award from the lottery profit funds for initiatives that encourage community-led and values-driven mentoring relationships that benefit students and schools, and result in high levels of hopefulness for all involved. The maximum award is \$500,000, which will be awarded over three years. In year one the state will match up to \$3 for every \$1 local cash/in-kind investment, year two the state will match up to \$2 for every \$1 local cash/in-kind investment, and year three will be a up to \$1 state match for each \$1 local cash/in-kind investment. The local cash/in-kind contribution does not have to be constant



across the three program years; however, the total grant award will not be greater than three times the local contribution.

General

1. Can I submit more than one grant application?

While nothing prohibits multiple grant applications, organizations should be cognizant of the time and resources necessary for each successful program. Additionally, each application must meet the program's requirements for collaboration for each grant submitted and include all required documentation and paperwork for each submission.

2. Is there a word limit for the project proposal?

There is no specific word limit, but applications must be in 11-point Arial-type font, single-spaced, and submitted on the application template. There can be no more than 12 pages of text, excluding the attachments.

3. Can the application be worked on over several days and saved?

Yes. You can download the application. Save it to your computer's desktop, and upload it when it is complete.

4. Are programs that use college students as mentors eligible for the grant?

As long as the application, at a minimum, has all of the requisite partners, then the type of programming is up to the applicant.

5. Is there a minimum amount of time required for mentoring?

There is not a minimum amount of mentoring required as long as it meets the needs of the students involved.

6. Can students be mentored virtually?

All groups applying for grant funds can develop their own innovative and unique mentor programs; however, all programs must include Community Connector's principles of hope building and utilize best practices to ensure program success.

7. What standards/best practices will be used for child safety?

Mentoring best practices are expected to be utilized in the Community Connectors program and how those practices will be included in the program is required to be described in the application. Background checks are required in accordance with local school policies and applicants should budget for background checks. The school or school district have an obligation under Ohio law depending on the role of the individual working with students, the level of access to students, and its own policies. Boards that have adopted a background check policy for volunteers must do so according to ORC 109.575. Contractors must receive a background check if required per ORC 3319.391.

8. Is the mentoring curriculum provided or is it up to the applicant organization to develop a program that follows the core principles?



It is up to the organization to adopt or develop a program that addresses the Community Connectors core principles and meets the needs of students served.

9. Is there a required mentor-mentee ratio?

There is not a required mentor-mentee ratio. Partners are required to make sure that the ratio meets the needs of students being served.

10. Can grant funds be used to hire an external evaluator?

Yes. Grant funds can be used for external evaluation.

11. Is there any funding available to provide mentoring to students?

Community Connectors is a 10 million dollar grant program that is funded by the State of Ohio that focuses on connecting at-risk students to mentors in their community. The grant provided 3-to-1 matching grants that will help give more Ohio students access to role models who can help motivate and inspire them, as well as help them develop skills that lead to success in school and the workplace.

12. Can Community Connectors funds be used for already existing projects?

Community Connector funds can be used for already existing projects as well as a new program. All Community Connectors projects, however, must address the program's five core principles.

Application

1. What supporting documents does the lead organization need to apply for the grant?

Applicants will need an IRS determination letter as proof of nonprofit status to apply. Applicants are required to submit a signed "Nature of Partnership" agreement that demonstrates collaboration, a signed Community Connectors Grant Assurances document, as well as several documents that describe specific program elements. These documents are listed in the "How to Apply" section of the application.

Applicants are also encouraged to submit letters of support, copies of consent or assent forms, or previous evaluation or research studies. These documents are optional.

Grant Partners

1. How many projects may a school district be a partner?

A district can partner with as many applicants as their capacity allows.

2. Do we need to have signatures from all of the school districts involved in the grant proposal or only the school districts that meet the eligibility requirements)?

Signatures are required for all school districts included in the grant proposal.

3. Can a non-public school serve as the district partner on the grant application?

No. A nonpublic school does not meet the school district eligibility requirement, but is welcomed as an additional partner once the minimum required partners are included.



4. **Is the Buckeye United School District eligible?**
Yes, the Buckeye United School District is eligible.
5. **Do lead applicants and partners need to have a full audit conducted?**
No. Lead applicants and partners should keep in mind that a state audit is a possibility as the receiver of state funds and are required to utilize standard accounting procedures and principles.
6. **Can an applicant partner with more than one faith based or business organization?**
Yes, as long as the applicant meets the basic eligibility requirements.
7. **Does the faith-based organization partnering with a school district need to be located within the district boundary?**
There is not a geographic restriction for partners.
8. **Can state-wide organizations submit one application to work with multiple school districts?**
Each application must reflect local partnerships.
8. **Can a partner be a school in an eligible school district or do you need to form a partnership with the entire district (e.g., administration)?**
The district must agree to and sign the partnership agreement. However, the proposed program can focus on a single school within the eligible district.
9. **Is there a limit to the number of schools that can be served within the eligible district named on the application?**
No. The capacity of the organization will determine the number of schools that can be served.
10. **Is a for-profit organization an eligible lead applicant?**
A for-profit organization cannot be the lead applicant.
11. **Are non-profit parochial schools eligible to participate? What types of partners besides a business are needed?**
A non-profit parochial school that qualifies as a faith-based organization would need to partner with both a business and an eligible school district to participate in the grant.
12. **Can an ESC be the lead applicant?**
ESCs, as government entities, are not eligible to be the lead applicant on the grant and do not qualify as a school district partner. As long as the application reflects the minimum partnerships, additional partners, such as ESCs, are welcomed.
13. **Are eSchools eligible for the Community Connectors grant?**
Yes. As charter (community) schools, e-schools are eligible to participate in the grant as a partner as long as they meet the other eligibility criteria. A list of charter schools that meet these criteria is posted on the website.
14. **Can a community foundation serve as the fiscal agent?**



A community foundation that is a nonprofit entity can serve as a fiscal agent for a Community Connectors program.

Funding

1. Are there limitations on the use of funds?

Yes, funds must be spent in accordance with state and federal laws. Specific limitations are outlined in the Community Connectors Grant Assurances document that must be signed by each lead applicant. The program plan and budget will also serve as a limitation because programs must adhere to terms of their grant award. To the extent an applicant proposes to use funds in a manner otherwise prohibited, a grant may still be awarded on the stipulation and agreement of the lead applicant that such usage will not occur. The Department of Education will work to notify any potential applicant prior to the grant award to ensure the program is workable under such restrictions.

2. How do you define in-kind contribution? Are in-kind contributions allowable for the local match?

Local contributions may take the form of in-kind contributions or cash. In-kind contributions are limited to personnel time. If the personnel are currently funded by another source, the applicant must pay particular attention to all rules associated with that funding source and ensure that they are not supplanting existing funds. Cash contributions may include donated funds from applicant partners including businesses, community nonprofits, other faith-based organizations, and school districts (excluding state funds).

3. How can the funds be used?

Grant funds must go toward supporting activities and personnel that deliver the Community Connectors mentoring program. The grant does not allow for indirect costs.

4. Is there any general guidance regarding match funds?

Local cash contributions restrictions are, in large part, dictated by the terms of the funding rather than restrictions of the Community Connectors program. Applicants should review the restrictions of any funding they currently receive to determine whether those funds can be used as a local match for a state grant.

Website

1. Where on the Community Connectors website can I find the list of eligible school districts and charter (community) schools?

The list of eligible school districts and charter (community) schools can be found here.

2. How do I receive an application for Community Connectors?

Applications are available on the Community Connectors website under the "Apply" tab. You can find the Community Connectors application here.

The Community Connectors Advisory Board consists of diverse members of the faith-based, civic and community and business organizations and will advise the State Superintendent of Instruction on the awarding of grants to the lead organizations and school(s)/or school districts. [The Advisory Board](#) will



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CommunityConnectors.Ohio.gov



review the grant applications and scoring, and make recommendations to the Superintendent of Public for the grant awards.

How do I get a copy of the application? Visit www.CommunityConnectors.Ohio.gov. All applications must be submitted by 5:00p.m., February 20, 2015.

Thank you for your interest in Ohio's innovative Community Connectors grant program.

For questions, visit: www.CommunityConnectors.ohio.gov and [register for the grant webcast](#).