

Request for Grant Application for Community Connectors

Introduction

In 2014, Governor John R. Kasich and the Ohio Legislature designed the Community Connectors program to bring together students, their families, schools, communities, faith-based groups, and businesses in mentoring programs. The Community Connectors program seeks to strengthen communities, encourage mentoring opportunities, and create new pathways for civic engagement that will result in higher educational achievement, higher levels of well-being and health, and workforce readiness for our state. Most specifically, this approach to social connectedness will impact school performance and economic productivity while also creating new ways for schools to promote a positive, goal-oriented, and hopeful atmosphere for success.

Many local organizations desire to make these connections and want to ensure a brighter, more productive future for their local youth while adding meaning to their members' lives.

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 kids 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 \$3 for every \$1 local cash/in-kind investment, year two the state will match \$2 for every \$1 local cash/in-kind investment, and year three will be a \$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. ([See Attachment for examples of the funding structure.](#)) Community Connectors seeks to make a long-term impact on Ohio communities; programs must be sustainable after award completion. Grant recipients will be those organizations that propose creating sustainable, replicable, and innovative programs that impact the lives of Ohio's children.

Community Connectors Core Principles

The Ohio Department of Education releases this Request for Grant Application (RFGA) in order to award funding to qualified applicants to implement the Community Connectors program. This RFGA seeks to assist community nonprofit, faith-based organizations, the business community, and local school districts in developing programs that build hope in their students and families. Local partnerships will develop programs that serve students grades 5 – 12 (programs may serve students in one or more grade levels).

High levels of hope and hopefulness are strong predictors of one's belief that one can accomplish one's goals; therefore, hope will be a central focus of this program. 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: 1) Setting Goals to be Prepared for 21st Century Careers, 2) Building Character, 3) Developing Pathways to Achievement, 4) Building Resiliency, and 5) Believing in a Positive Future. Each of these desired outcomes is central to long-term student personal and academic success.

- **Setting Goals to be Prepared for the 21st Century Careers**

Goal setting is commonly regarded as an important success strategy that affects performance and enhances achievement. Specifically, the ability to appropriately set goals can lead to higher achievement, better performance, higher levels of self-efficacy, and stronger ability to self-regulate ([Moeller, Theiler & Wu, 2012](#)). Research supporting the importance of goal setting skills is strong; however, research also shows that few adults report learning to set goals during their school years, and many teachers overestimate their students' ability to set goals ([Moeller et al., 2012](#)).

There are two important components for goal setting to be effective. First, the goals must come from a thorough and high-quality process. For example, stronger outcomes are found when students go through a process to create S.M.A.R.T. goals; goals that are Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely ([O'Neil, 2004](#)). Doran first wrote about S.M.A.R.T. goals in 1981 ([as cited by Moeller, et al., 2012](#)). This framework has stood the test of time and can be found in current publications for a variety of domains including teacher training, student success, medical training, business management, and leadership. Second, students need to participate in creating their own appropriate goals. Students who set their own goals and evaluate their own progress perform at higher levels than students who are not actively engaged in the process ([Moeller et al., 2012](#)). A strong mentoring program will be one in which the mentor teaches the student a goal setting technique such as the SMART goal process, helps them to create their own goals, and supports them as they work towards those goals ([Rhodes, Spencer, Keller, Liang & Nolan, 2006](#)).

There are two types of goals that are commonly used. The first is the *performance goal* that has an extrinsic focus on external rewards such as getting a good grade on an assignment. This type of goal leads to a pattern of motivation that is associated with failure avoidance, a fear of judgment and students making an internal link between a negative result and their lack of ability ([Dweck and Leggett, 1988](#)). The second type of goal is the *mastery goal* which has an internal focus on learning, self-improvement and effort and "fosters a motivational pattern associated with a deeper level of engagement that secures and maintains achievement behavior" ([Moeller et al., 2012, p.154](#)). Using mastery goals has been associated with higher preference for challenging work ([Dweck and Leggett, 1988](#)), increased desire to gain new skills, and a positive attitude toward learning ([Ames and Archer, 1988](#)).

- **Building Character**

Character is a set of abilities, skills or strengths that can be taught, practiced and learned ([Tough, 2012](#)). Once learned and ingrained, they become traits, or behaviors that a person engages in automatically. Some examples of these character traits are self-control, willpower, motivation, conscientiousness, self-discipline, grit, perseverance, determination, and optimism ([Duckworth, Peterson, Mathews & Kelly, 2007](#); [Ivcevic & Braccett, 2014](#); [Tough, 2012](#)).

Strong mentoring programs work with students to identify positive character traits that are needed for success and then help students work toward developing those traits ([Goldner & Maysless, 2008](#)). Mentors can impact students' lives by simply showing them that someone believes in them and believes

that they are capable of more, of having strong character and of being successful ([Goldner & Maysless, 2008](#); [Rhodes et al., 2006](#)).

- **Developing Pathways to Achievement (decision making and critical thinking skills)**

Adolescents are faced with making many important life decisions on a daily basis. The choices they make about school, career plans, drug use, peer pressure, truancy, sexuality, pregnancy and other risky behaviors can strongly affect their ability to have a successful future ([Nota & Soresi, 2004](#); [Tough, 2012](#)). These choices can be confounded by typical life issues that take place in adolescence such as common conflicts with family, emotional and hormonal fluctuations, and a lack of problem-solving and decision making skills. Being able to think critically, solve problems, and make good decisions are essential skills for success throughout the life span. Research has shown that these skills lead to higher quality decisions, greater innovation, goal achievement, opportunity recognition, mistake avoidance, and higher productivity ([Tough, 2012](#)).

Students need someone to help them develop their critical thinking, problem-solving and decision-making skills. Strong mentoring programs include this component. The mentor teaches students different models or processes for problem solving and decision making, helps them identify a model they like, and serves as a guide as the student applies that model to different areas of their life ([Marin & Halpern, 2011](#)).

- **Building a sense of Resiliency**

Resiliency refers to the ability to bounce back and to not be defined by negative circumstances. Resiliency helps individuals cope with the highs and lows of life and respond to stress in a healthy manner. It is achieved through gradually developing social, emotional, cognitive, and other competencies and is important in the early development of key behavioral health processes such as self-regulation and self-efficacy. These processes greatly influence youth learning and achievement in life ([Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007](#)). Increased youth resiliency is directly correlated to an increased sense of self-mastery, self-esteem, and a sense of belonging as well as the capacity to cope with adversity ([Institute of Medicine, 2009](#)).

Resiliency develops over time and is impacted by the interaction of risk and protective factors, other contextual conditions and an individual's traits and abilities ([Hawkins, Catalano, & Arthur, 2002](#)). The Search Institute's Framework of Developmental Assets identifies factors that communities and schools can influence that contribute to healthy development, such as: support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, constructive use of time, commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity ([Search Institute, 2013](#)).

While many children and adults living in poverty exhibit remarkable resiliency ([Seccombe, 2002](#)), nurturing resiliency is especially important among our most vulnerable populations. The social and emotional stressors of poverty not only increase the risk for substance abuse in our young people, but also affect behavioral health outcomes ([Institute of Medicine, 2009](#)). In addition, poverty has been correlated with

several other negative effects including increased risks for mental health issues, violent behaviors, crime, and suicide ([Evans & Adams, 2009](#)).

Students need support in developing the social, emotional and cognitive skills that lead to having a strong belief in self, the ability to bounce back and not being defined by negative circumstances. Strong mentoring programs include these important components that result in increased levels of resilience for students.

- **Believing in a Positive Future**

Students need to believe that there is a positive future awaiting them. Students need to feel valued and that they have something of importance to offer. For a student to believe in a positive future they need knowledge about opportunities and belief in themselves. If students do not have these important pieces of the puzzle, it is very difficult for them move forward to a successful future ([Tough, 2012](#)).

Goldner & Maysless, (2008) reported the significance that one person can have in changing a child's path and putting them on the road to success simply by making that child feel valued. A mentor can be that person that listens, shares personal experiences, and gives positive reinforcement for small things ([Schwartz, Lowe & Rhodes, 2012](#)). Strong mentoring programs include time for the mentor to get to know the student and methods for the mentor to open the students' world to opportunities that can lead to a positive future ([Schwartz, Lowe & Rhodes, 2012](#))

We encourage your most innovative ideas. Successful programs will demonstrate measurable outcomes that reflect each of the five Community Connectors core principles.

How to Apply

Application Guidelines

- The requested response to the application must be submitted in the [format provided here](#).
(Please save the template to your computer's desktop before entering your answers)
Applications must be submitted electronically by 5:00 PM on Friday, February 20, 2015.
- Applications must be in 11-point Arial-type font, single-spaced and no more than 12 pages of text, not including attachments. (See **Checklists** below for attachments **not** considered in 12 page allotment.)
 - **Checklist of required attachments**
 - IRS determination letter as proof of nonprofit(s) status
 - [Signed Nature of Partnership agreement](#) between Lead nonprofit(s) or faith-based organization and partners (business and school)
 - [Roles and Responsibilities worksheet](#)
 - [Program model template](#)
 - [Budget form and Justification](#)
 - [Signed Community Connectors GRANT ASSURANCES](#)

- **Checklist of other potential attachments (not required)**
 - Letters of support
 - Copies of consent or assent forms
 - Previous evaluation or research studies
- Submit all questions to info@communityconnectors.ohio.gov. Responses will be posted at <http://www.communityconnectors.ohio.gov/>.
- Frequently Asked Questions are available here: www.communityconnectors.ohio.gov .

Applicant Eligibility & Qualifications

Community Connectors programs will reflect broad collaboration and cross-sector relationships that serve young people in Ohio’s communities. Lead applicants will be responsible for building those collaborations among faith based organizations, community nonprofits, the business community, and school districts.

In order to be eligible:

- **Lead applicants must:**
 - 1) Be a nonprofit entity. Faith-based organizations, houses of worship, community nonprofit(s), and nonprofit(s) 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 or house of worship must be included as a partner.
 - 2) Partner with any 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 may choose to target one school within an economically disadvantaged or low-performing school district. Nonprofit(s) organizations may partner with multiple school districts provided that at least one of the districts meets the 40% or higher economically disadvantaged student population or less than 92% graduation rate threshold.
 - 3) Collaborate with at least one business or industry partner. (Lead nonprofit(s) organizations affiliated with for-profit companies may partner with those companies).

Examples of Collaborations:

If your organization is a community nonprofit(s), 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.

* Lead applicants must meet all criteria in order to be eligible.

Anticipated Application Process Time Line

- Deadline for application submission is Friday, February 20, 2015.
- Reimbursement grants are expected to be awarded March 2015.
- Assessment, planning, and training must be complete by September 7, 2015.
- All awardees must be ready to implement selected programs by September 7, 2015.

* The state reserves the right to make changes to the time Line. Changes will be posted on the website, www.communityconnectors.ohio.gov. Applicants are encouraged to check this site before submitting an application. The application submission deadline will not be any sooner than the date listed above.

Completing Your Application

Your application should include the following sections: 1) Community Connectors Program Description, 2) Program Management, 3) Program Evaluation, 4) Sustainability, 5) Program Budget .

Please make sure you respond to each question individually and that your responses correspond with the correct number of the question on the fillable word document template. [See attachment.](#)

Application Section I: Community Connectors Program Description

1. The target population is students grades 5-12. Identify the grade level or levels at each school that your program will be targeting. Programs may serve students in one or more grade levels.
2. Provide the number of youth in each grade level and at each school your program proposes to serve.
3. Which of the following best describes the proposed project? Select one.
 - A. Totally new program developed by this organization
 - B. Replication of an existing model in use by others
 - Please provide the name of this model.
 - C. Expansion of an existing program within the applicant organization
 - D. Extension of an existing program to a new setting
4. Please describe your project. How will it address each of the five Community Connectors core principles and what outcomes will you use to measure success?
5. Please describe the specific activities your program will conduct.
6. Discuss how the program will utilize [best practices](#) to ensure program success. Are there successful mentor programs after which you will model your program? Please name the program and describe what makes it successful.
7. Describe your organization's previous experience with this type of program OR a program of a similar scale, including previous evaluations, size and duration of previously implemented programs, goals, and outcomes.
8. What will make this collaboration successful? What will the indicator(s) of success be for this collaboration?

Application Section II: Program Management

9. Leadership Team: The leadership team should be comprised of no less than one member of each partnering organization. Please provide a brief bio of each leadership team member, including a brief description of the team member's passion for the program and interest in working with young people. Bios should also include:
- Name and title
 - Responsibilities for this grant project (Percent of time should be included in the budget document).
 - Qualifications
 - Prior relevant experience
10. A timeline of all major activities must be provided. Assessment, planning and initial training must be completed by September 7, 2015. Services must begin by September 7, 2015.
11. Describe the implementation process for reaching the following milestones:
- a. Screening, orientation, supporting, and monitoring process for mentors and other personnel working directly with youth;
 - b. Identification and intake process for mentees;
 - c. The means by which you will involve families of youth in your program; ongoing training of mentors throughout the life of the program, including topics and frequency;
 - d. Assessing fiscal accountability and faithful implementation of project plans; and
 - e. Any other critical information you would want the Community Connectors team to know.
12. Describe how each applicant partner plans to contribute to the overall program plan including, but not limited to, time contribution, personnel contribution, monetary contribution, shared responsibilities, use of facilities, etc. [The Roles and Responsibilities worksheet can be accessed here:](#)

Application Section III: Program Evaluation

13. The evaluation plan is intended to provide lead organizations with a framework that will ensure the program is on track to positively impact the lives of students and identify needs for additional support when challenges arise. Each evaluation plan must list the scope of work and describe the following:
- a. Plans for keeping records of mentor contact hours, unduplicated count of students served each month, mentor training hours, etc. for ongoing reporting;
 - b. Gathering of data to measure progress of program towards meeting the selected goals;
 - c. Projected indicators of success; and
 - d. Anticipated barriers to successful evaluation including data collection and measurement of progress toward outcomes.
14. Applicants are to complete the attached program model. [The program model template is attached here.](#)

Application Section IV: Sustainability

15. Describe how you plan to maintain the program after the grant funding period. Include a discussion about financial sustainability and sustainability of the partnership commitment. Applicants are not required to include cash as part of their local contributions; however, funding sustainability is critical to the Community Connectors program. Applicants that show the potential for funding sustainability will be given preference in application scoring.

Application Section V: Program Budget

16. Complete the attached budget form. [See Attachment](#)

Additional information about Local Contribution requirements and in-kind restrictions

Local contributions may take the form of in-kind contributions or cash. In-kind contributions are limited to personnel time. This means, any allowable salary or wages paid to a current employee whose time will be redirected or dedicated to the community connectors programs can be used to draw down state matching funds.

If the personnel is 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. Supplanting is defined as using existing funds to reduce the amount of state, local or other funds previously spent on the same or similar purpose. For example, you cannot pledge the salary or wages of an employee whose work is already based on or dedicated to the job or mission of a separate grant program.

Cash contributions may include donated funds from applicant partners including businesses, community nonprofits, other faith-based organizations, houses of worship, and school districts (excluding state funds). Although not required to list cash as part of in-kind contributions, applicants are strongly encouraged to do so, as evidence of potential sustainability.

Application Section VI: Conditions and Assurances for Use of Funds

Any state funds awarded to an applicant may only be used in accordance with applicable federal and state laws and regulations. Specific conditions and assurances related to Community Connectors grant funds are outlined in the attached Community Connectors Grant Agreement. Lead applicants must review and sign the attached [Community Connectors GRANT ASSURANCES](#) as part of their application.

Note: The lead applicant is responsible for assuring that all requirements are met and that the funds for reimbursement are expended in accordance with the approved and funded application.

Application Review

- All reimbursement grant applications that are submitted by the deadline and meet mandatory requirements will be panel-reviewed and scored based on guideline compliance.
- Multiple applications may be funded. The State of Ohio reserves the right to make no award, make an award for a lesser amount, make an alternative award for the specified project or make an award for a shorter duration. The State reserves the right to ask clarifying questions, issue conditional awards, negotiate an alternative project plan or scope and negotiate a best and final application with one or more applicant(s) and conduct interviews prior to awarding the funds. The State reserves the right to waive errors and omissions that do not materially affect the outcome of said application. Errors and omissions may result in lower evaluation scores or rejection of the application.

Application Scoring Criteria

Application requirements will be scored using the following criteria. Not provided=0, Information provided meets limited/minimum expectations =1, Some evidence provided =2, Information provided adequately meets expectations =3, Evidence of well-developed concepts and examples = 4, Exemplary proposal = 5.

In addition to the stated scoring criteria, the State Superintendent, in accordance with 263.320 of Am. Sub. House Bill 483 of the 130th General Assembly , reserves the right to add additional points at his discretion for items such as, but not limited to, geographical consideration, the numbers of students served, exceptional collaborations, and innovative practices.

Meets	Mandatory Requirement	Scale	Weight
	The district's population has an economically disadvantaged rate of 40% or greater OR the graduation rate in the partnering district is less than 92%.		
	Signed conditions & assurances are included.		
	IRS determination letter as proof of nonprofit status.		
	Signed Nature of Partnership between the lead nonprofit organization, the school district, the faith-based, and business partners affirming the roles and responsibilities of each partner		
Check List	Requirement	0 – 5	
	Section I: Program Description		
	1. Identify the targeted population		
	2. Provide the number of youth served at each grade level		
	3. Program Type: New/replication/extension		
	4. Address each of the five Community Connector Core Principles		X 3
	5. Specific Activities the program will conduct		X 3
	6. Best Practices/Successful Programs		
	7. Organization's Previous Experience		

	8. Successful Collaboration		X 3
	Section II: Program Management		
	9. Leadership Team		X 3
	10. Timeline of major activities		
	11. Implementation Process for reaching milestones		
	12. Roles and Responsibilities description of each applicant partner		
	Section III: Evaluation Plan		
	13. Evaluation Plan		X 3
	14. Program Model Chart		
	Section IV: Sustainability		
	15. Sustainability Plan		X 3
	Section V: Program Budget		
	16. Detailed Budget Form (including narrative)		X 3
	Total		

Sources

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