



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Federal Budget and Grant Update – October 2009

Federal Budget:

Continuing Resolution: On September 30, 2009 the Senate passed a continuing resolution on the budget to keep programs running at FY09 funding levels through October 31. Congress is expected to complete a majority of the 12 appropriation bills this month. Any appropriation bills that fail to pass by the October 31 deadline will be included in a second continuing resolution.

FTF Grant Activities:

Race to the Top (ARRA Funds): RTTT is a competitive grant program to encourage and reward states that are creating the conditions for education innovation and reform, achieving significant improvement in student outcomes, including making substantial gains in student achievement, closing achievement gaps, improving high school graduation rates, and ensuring students preparations for success in college and careers; and implementing ambitious plans in four core areas:

- Adopting internationally benchmarked standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace,
- Recruiting, developing, retaining, and rewarding effective teachers and principals,
- Building data system that measure student success and inform teachers and principals how they can improve their practices; and
- Turing around our lowest performing schools.

Among the proposed priorities that will garner additional points for the application is P-20 coordination and vertical alignment. There is particular interest in applications in which the State plans to address how early childhood programs, K-12 schools, postsecondary institutions, and workforce organizations will coordinate to improve all parts of the education system and create a more seamless P-20 route for students. Vertical alignment across P-20 is particularly critical at each point where a transition occurs (e.g., between early childhood and K-12, or between K-12 and post secondary) to ensure that students exiting one level are prepared for success, without remediation, in the next.

Arizona's Race to the Top Application is being led by the Governor's P-20 Council, to which Director Hibbs was appointed by the Governor. The P-20 Council established four task forces to address the four core areas of the grant, and Karen Woodhouse was appointed to the Standards and Assessment Taskforce. Boston Consulting Group (BCG) has been hired to work with the P-20 Council to provide consultation and development of Arizona's proposal. On October 15, Jody Foldesy from BCG met with FTF staff to gain better understanding of how early childhood is represented in the RTTT core areas. The grant timeline requires a proposal submittal in early December to meet the Phase 1 application requirements.

Early Learning Challenge Fund [Title IV, Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act (SAFRA)]: H.R. 3221, was passed out of the House on September 24, 2009. By streamlining the federal student loan program, this bill provides an \$8 billion funding stream over 10 years for competitive grants to states to build comprehensive, high-quality early learning systems. This funding will substantially complement and expand many of the First Things First initiatives such as Quality First, professional development strategies and statewide coordination. Priority will be given to states that use the federal Child Care Development Block Grant Challenge Grant quality funds for system improvements, as well as demonstrate efforts to build public-private partnerships.

Currently, the bill is being considered by the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee and is expected to be on their agenda later this month. FTF staff is completing an in-depth analysis of the bill language, including any matching funds and maintenance of efforts requirements, and will begin to convene private and public partners to determine the strategy and application approach to best position Arizona for a grant award.

State Early Childhood Advisory Council Grants (ARRA Funds): The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) (P.L. 111-5) made funding available to improve coordination and collaboration among early childhood education and care programs and services. Arizona is eligible for a \$2.3 million allocation, but must submit a successful application and meet a 70% state match requirement. The award is a one-time grant (can be used over three years) to support start-up and for developing and implementing the state plan from the State Advisory Council. FTF was designated as the State Advisory Council in November 2008.

Funds may be used to facilitate the development or enhancement of high-quality systems of early childhood education and care designed to improve school readiness through one or more of the following activities: enhance promote school readiness of children birth to five, supporting professional development, recruitment and retention initiatives for early childhood educators, enhancing existing early childhood and development programs and services in existence on the date of the grant award and carrying out other activities consistent with the State's plan.

Applications may be submitted through August 30, 2010. As "one time only" funding, FTF staff are working with the Governor's Head Start Collaboration Office to research and evaluate options focused on quality child care, identify potential partners, and determining a time-line for developing and completing an application. The application must be submitted with the signature of the Governor.

Tracking Other Grant Opportunities and Federal Legislation:

Investing in Innovation (i3) Fund (ARRA Funds): The purpose of the i3 is to provide competitive grants that expand the implementation of, and investment in, innovation and evidence-based practices, programs and strategies that significantly improve K12 achievement and close achievement gaps; decrease dropout rates; increase high school graduation rates; and improve teacher and school leader effectiveness. Individual school districts or groups of districts can apply for the i3 grants, and entrepreneurial nonprofits can join with school districts to submit applications. Colleges and universities, companies and other stakeholders can be supporters of the projects. Grant recipients will be required to match federal funds with public or private dollars. Successful applicants will need to demonstrate how their programs will be sustainable after their federal grants are completed.

To be eligible to apply, applicants must:

- Significantly closed the achievement gaps between groups of students,
- Demonstrate success in significantly increasing student academic achievement for all groups of students,
- Make significant improvement in other areas (graduation rates, high –quality teachers and school leaders),
- Demonstrate that they have partnerships with the private sector that will provide matching funds.

FTF will continue to track this grant to determine how to support applicants. Public comment on the Notice of Grant Availability is due by November 9th 2009. Guidance will be available late winter or early spring 2010 with proposals due summer of 2010. First awards will be made in late summer or early fall 2010.

Education Begins at Home Act of 2009, S.244 & H.R. 2205: S244 was introduced in January 2009 with provisions for: grants to states for programs of early childhood home visitation; and competitive grants to local educational agencies and other eligible applicants for early home visitation for families with English language learners. Through the Department of Defense, grants will also be awarded for early home visitation for military families.

The Department Health and Human Services (DHHS) is also directed to provide public information and educational campaigns to inform the public and new parents about the importance of proper care for infants and children under five years of age. This legislation has been referred to the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. No action has been taken.

H.R. 2205 is similar to S244 in that it establishes or expands quality early childhood home visitation programs for families that are expecting a child or have pre-kindergarten children. Funding available will depend on the state’s share of children from birth through age five from impoverished families. Competitive grants will be awarded to local educational agencies (LEAs) and experienced public or private community-based entities to support and expand quality, local early childhood home visitation programs for families that have English language learners and are expecting a child or have pre-kindergarten children. Competitive grants will also be made to LEAs, schools, and community-based organizations that serve military dependents to support and expand high quality early childhood home visitation programs for military families that are expecting a child or have pre-kindergarten children.

Grants are for the purpose of providing: (1) voluntary early childhood home visitation at least once a month to as many eligible families as is practicable; (2) training and technical assistance to program staff; and (3) program participants with access to other early childhood and family services. This bill also directs DHHS to also develop and implement a public information and educational campaign to inform the public and new parents about the importance of proper care for infants and children under five years of age. In June 2009, this legislation was referred to the House Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education. There has been not recent activity.

Balancing Act of 2009, H.R.3047: Provides for paid family leave and grants that provide home visiting, medical need assistance, child care assistance (including teacher quality improvement), in-school and afterschool assistance, family care assistance, and encouraging the establishment of family-friendly workplaces. Introduced on June 25, 2009, and referred to several committees including the House Education and Labor Committee, and House Armed Services Committee. No action has been taken.