



Preparing to Take Advantage of New Programs in the Economic Stimulus Package

The **FINANCE** PROJECT

Considerations for Out-of-School Time Providers and Stakeholders

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Many states report plans to cut millions of dollars from current budgets and delay investments in social service and education programs into 2010 due to downturns in the national economy. As a result, afterschool programs are bracing themselves for level funding or funding cuts. In a time when mounting research points to the academic and social benefits of afterschool programs, and demand for afterschool care is building as parents work longer hours to make ends meet, the need to protect existing programs and provide additional funding to meet demand for more programs is clear. Fortunately, there are some opportunities in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 that both school-based and community-based afterschool programs can look to for additional funds.

The proposed stimulus package could help to strengthen existing programs with track records of proven performance and strong accountability and administrative systems. This is good news for afterschool programs leaders who can leverage existing relationships and sustainability plans to access new funding opportunities. In these times, a strategic approach to financing is critical to both increase direct services to children and youth, and to sustain and build infrastructure to support quality.

Some of the largest investments in the bill are in education-related programs. While details are still emerging, proposed investments of interest to the afterschool community include:

- At least \$12 Billion in additional resources for Title I, including additional investments in targeted funds to local education agencies and in school improvement grants.
- Additional funds to support the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to address the anticipated increase in the number of homeless students due to the housing crisis.
- Billions for state fiscal relief to avoid further cuts in essential services, with a significant amount of these resources targeted towards education.

Child care programs would also benefit from investments proposed in both the House stimulus plan and the Senate markup. The Child Care Development Block Grant would receive \$2 billion in additional funds that would provide care for up to 300,000 more children.

Both versions of the bill allocate additional funds to Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). The Senate markup offers additional flexibility to states by removing the current spending restrictions on carryover funds.

Both the Senate and House versions of the bill appropriate additional funds for the Social Services Block Grant. The bill also calls for an increase of \$200 million to the AmeriCorps program, which would expand the initiative by approximately 16,000 members.

Getting Ready to Take Advantage of These Funds

1. **Think Strategically.** Meet with key policy makers and stakeholders, including your program's advisory board or board of directors, to review program goals and finances. Identify priorities in your program's mission and goals in consideration of the anticipated funding opportunities included in the economic stimulus plans. While it may be tempting to chase all relevant funding opportunities, a careful matching of your program goals and focus with new funding announcements will increase your program's chances of accessing competitive discretionary funds or strengthening partnerships with state agencies that administer formula grant funds.
2. **Build on Success.** Review past successful grant applications and proposals and ensure evaluation and outcome data is up-to-date. Based on the structure of the economic stimulus plans announced thus far, the ability of programs to demonstrate a track record of success will likely be a key component of successful applications. Gather data from your program and begin to create short, compelling narratives describing its positive outcomes for both program participants and your community.¹
3. **Secure Help.** Consider contracting with a grant writer. A grant writer will be able to help you quickly write a compelling application to respond to requests for proposals. By meeting with a grant writer prior to the announcement of funding opportunities you will be able to provide background information on your program, provide existing documents and data that will likely be needed to complete applications, and provide time for the writer to visit your program to establish personal knowledge of its participants and activities. You may also want to ensure that your grant writer – whether s/he is a contracted or in-house staff member – is thoroughly familiar with federal government (as opposed to other public or private) grant proposal processes. For examples of successfully funded proposals to the U.S. Department of Education, visit: <http://ed.gov/about/inits/list/fbci/grants2.html>.
4. **Prepare Ahead.** Create an electronic grants application account. For federal funding through the U.S. Department of Education, the portal for electronic grants is found at: <https://e-grants.ed.gov/>. For federal grants through other departments, such as the Department of Agriculture (Afterschool Suppers) or the Department of Health and Human Services, the portal is found at Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov/>). Applications for federal discretionary grants must be made through the electronic grants system. Applicants must have an active account on the system to apply. Allow time for the processing of your application: the Grants.gov site indicates that “the registration process for an Organization or an Individual can take between three to five business days, or as long as two weeks.” Also note that the system occasionally experiences difficulty during times of increased demand.
5. **Collaborate.** Reinvigorate relationships with local school system, community-based and faith-based partners. Schedule strategic meetings to discuss potential funding opportunities. Prepare key partners for the possibility that you may be well-positioned to apply for grant funding as a partner, collaborator or sub-

¹ For additional grantwriting tips, please see: “Getting the Grant: A Guide to Securing Additional Funds for Afterschool Education and Safety Programs,” Michelle Ganow Jones, August 2007, The Finance Project.

grantee and consider reserving time on key staff people's calendars to develop proposal components, including letters of support.

6. **Get Information.** Consult newsletters and websites of intermediary and advocacy organizations. Many intermediary and advocacy organizations have grant announcement pages and monitor federal register notices for funding opportunities.

While the economic downturn has increased concerns about the ability of afterschool programs to sustain themselves through difficult times, there are opportunities in the current economic stimulus package to support programs that are poised to act quickly to provide support to families who are hardest hit by the crisis. Programs that think about their services strategically and are poised to leverage existing relationships may benefit from the stimulus package after it is enacted by Congress and signed into law by President Obama.

For More Information:

www.whitehouse.gov/briefing_room/: Recent updates, press releases, and information regarding White House initiatives are posted at this site. Visitors can also sign up for update alerts.

<http://appropriations.house.gov/>: Website for the House Appropriations Committee. Visitors can link to the full text of H.R. 1, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

<http://appropriations.senate.gov/>: Website for the Senate Appropriations Committee. Visitors can link to the full text of S.336, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

www.house.gov and www.senate.gov: Official websites of the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate.

www.recovery.gov: This website will feature spending reports from the oversight board called for in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

www.stimuluswatch.org: A database of initiatives funded through stimulus funds searchable by state or city and federal program. Information includes the number of jobs created and cost of the initiative.

<http://www.usbudgetwatch.org/stimulus>: Provides a list of all actions taken by the federal government to address the economic downturn.

Visit The Finance Project's Out-of-School Time Information Resources Center at:

<http://www.financeproject.org/indexcfm?page=25> for further information on financing and sustaining out-of-school time programs and initiatives.



Helping leaders finance and sustain initiatives that lead to better futures for children, families, and communities.

The Finance Project is an independent nonprofit research, consulting, technical assistance, and training firm for public- and private-sector leaders nationwide. It specializes in helping leaders plan and implement financing and sustainability strategies for initiatives that benefit children, families, and communities. Through a broad array of tools, products, and services, The Finance Project helps leaders make smart investment decisions, develop sound financing strategies, and build solid partnerships. To learn more, visit www.financeproject.org.

The Out-of-School Time Technical Assistance Project

This tool is part of a series of technical assistance resources on financing and sustaining out-of-school time and community school initiatives developed by The Finance Project with support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. These tools and resources are intended to assist policy makers, program developers and community leaders in developing financing and sustainability strategies to support effective initiatives. To learn more, visit <http://www.financeproject.org/index.cfm?page=25>.

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