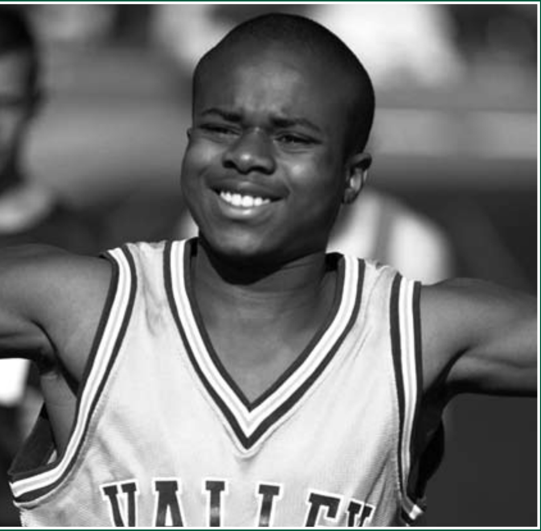
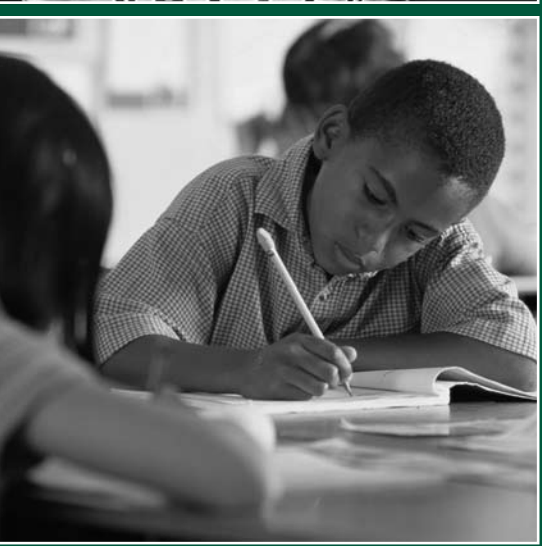




Sustaining 21st Century Community Learning Centers

What Works for Programs and How Policymakers Can Help

Report

September 2006

The FINANCE PROJECT

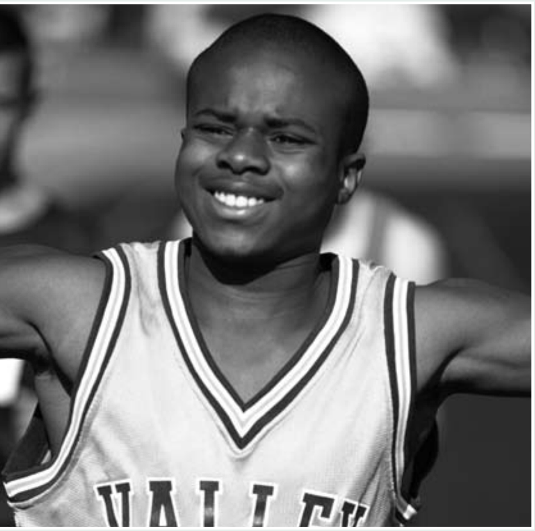
The Finance Project

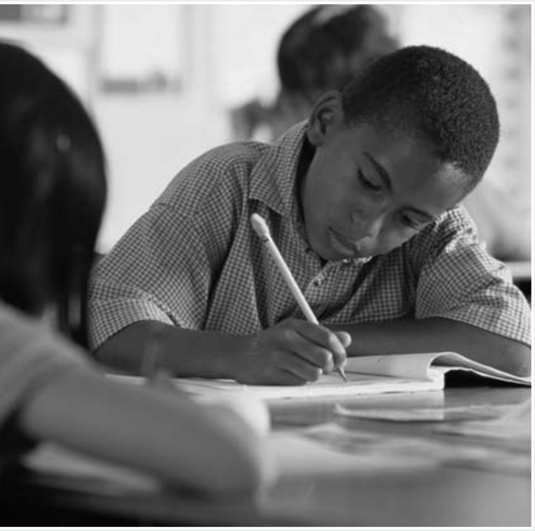
Helping leaders finance and sustain initiatives that lead to better futures for children, families and communities

The Finance Project is an independent non-profit research, consulting, technical assistance and training firm for public and private sector leaders nationwide. We specialize in helping leaders plan and implement financing and sustainability strategies for initiatives that benefit children, families and communities. Through a broad array of products, tools and services, we help 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 both public and private foundations, including the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Wallace Foundation, and the federal Child Care Bureau. 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 access these resources and for additional information on this project, visit: www.financeproject.org/osthome.htm.

The Out-of-School Time
Technical Assistance Project





Sustaining 21st Century Community Learning Centers

What Works for Programs and How Policymakers Can Help

By Amanda Szekely and Heather Clapp Padgette

Strategy Brief

September 2006

The FINANCE PROJECT

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An executive summary of this report is available at:
http://www.financeproject.org/publications/sustaining_21st_cclc.pdf

Introduction

For nearly a decade, schools and communities across the country have implemented comprehensive out-of-school time programming with grants from the U.S. Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21CCLC) program. The only federal funding source dedicated exclusively to out-of-school time programs, 21CCLC supports tutoring, enrichment, and other services for low-income children and their families. From the program's inception, 21CCLC grants have been largely used as seed grants for new programs; they were not intended to provide programs with long-term funding. As the first rounds of state-administered grants expire, many schools and community partners are struggling to ensure the long-term sustainability of their out-of-school time programs.

Through interviews with former and current 21CCLC grantees and state 21CCLC administrators, The Finance Project has learned about the challenges to sustainability and the keys to success. It became clear through these conversations that various factors both at the program level and in the administration of grants can help or hinder success with sustainability. This publication lays out the findings of the study and describes how both grantees and policymakers can promote the sustainability of 21CCLC programs.

Background

21CCLC was initially funded in 1997 with a budget of $1 million and has since grown to a nearly $1 billion program with more than 8,000 centers funded nationwide.[1] During the program's first five years, the U.S. Department of Education awarded grants averaging more than $500,000 directly to public school districts and their community partners to implement a community learning center model, where all members of the community benefit from access to school resources during nonschool hours.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) reauthorized 21CCLC in 2001 and increased the program's emphasis on promoting academic enrichment through out-of-school time programming in high-poverty,

Funding for the development of this report was provided by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. The findings and information presented herein represent a compilation of the views and perspectives of those interviewed for this project, and the analysis and interpretation of The Finance Project. They do not reflect an official position of the U.S. Department of Education, any particular state education agency, or the Mott Foundation.

[1] Afterschool Alliance. "21st Century Community Learning Centers: A Foundation for Progress." Washington, DC: Afterschool Alliance, 2006. Available at http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/21stcclc.cfm.

low-performing schools. NCLB also transferred administration of grants from the U.S. Department of Education to state education agencies (SEAs). SEAs now receive funds on a formula basis and make grants directly to communities. States follow a range of federal guidelines, but have some flexibility in how to implement the program, including the length and size of grants.[2]

The program was originally designed as a "seed grant" program, providing short-term funding to local communities to develop innovative and high-quality community school programs. While federal law does not necessarily preclude states from refunding programs when grants expire, many states continue to view the program as a way to provide investments to build local capacity, as opposed to a long-term funding source. In some states former federal 21CCLC grantees received additional, albeit often smaller, state 21CCLC grants; however, many states have policies and/or priorities that tend to favor funding new programs. As the program approaches its ten year anniversary, the innovation has been tested and refined. State and community leaders now want to ensure that programs are of high quality and that they are sustainable. The legislation authorizing NCLB expires in 2007, offering an opportunity for policymakers to adapt the program to better support long-term sustainability and provide additional options and guidance for states.

Methodology

The goal of the research was to better understand what has contributed to or hindered the sustainability of 21CCLC programs through conversations with grantees and state program administrators, and review of program and state-level data. Between July 2005 and March 2006, The Finance Project held small focus groups and conducted interviews with representatives of 22 current and former 21CCLC grantees that have had some success with sustainability as measured by their continued operation. These programs were former federal grantees that either no longer receive 21CCLC funds or that currently receive a much smaller 21CCLC grant from their states. All continue to offer some degree of out-of-school time programming. The programs operate in rural and urban communities nationwide and have varying degrees of local support. Representatives of three of these programs were interviewed in greater depth; full profiles of their sustainability strategies are included in appendix I.

The Finance Project also held focus groups with state 21CCLC administrators from nine states, who gave their input on the ways state and federal policy choices affect program sustainability. Additional state-by-state data on 21CCLC policies were provided by Learning Point Associates gathered through the PPICS data collection system[3] and by the U.S. Department of Education.

2 *Ibid.*

3 PPICS stands for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Performance and Profile Information Collection System.

Has Programming Been Sustained?

No national or state data exist to determine exactly how many previously funded 21CCLC programs are still in operation. Our research and conversations, however, indicate that many former 21CCLC grantees have not been able to sustain out-of-school time programs at the same level as with their initial grants. Some grantees report that, while they have lost 21CCLC funding, they have been able to leverage additional support from local partners or other public or private funding streams, though this still typically means a reduction in their program budget.

Operating with a smaller budget, many communities have shut down some program sites, limited program enrollment, or taken other steps to cut costs.

Operating with a smaller budget, many communities have shut down some program sites, limited program enrollment, or taken other steps to cut costs. According to several state administrators interviewed, a number of the original federally funded grantees closed program sites after their 21CCLC grants expired. Some of the reasons cited were that these grants were very large and difficult to replace with local funds, lasted for only a short time, and simply ended rather than gradually tapering off.

Many programs, however, reported that they have found ways to serve a similar number of students with more limited funds. Programs cited a number of reasons they have been able to do so, including:

Many grantees regret making sacrifices... but lack the resources to offer programming of the same richness and quality as they did with 21CCLC funding.

- Communities used 21CCLC funds to make investments in capacity and technology that have outlived the grant cycle.
- Programs no longer conduct the rigorous and often costly program evaluation that is required under the 21CCLC grant.
- Programs now operate with a part-time administrator, rather than the full-time administrator they were encouraged to employ as part of their federal grant.
- Programming for parents and community members, encouraged under the original federal grant program, has been significantly reduced.
- Summer programming is reduced or eliminated.
- Programs rely more heavily on volunteers or paraprofessionals rather than more highly qualified and paid program staff (e.g. certified teachers.)

Many grantees regret making sacrifices, such as hiring lower skilled staff or not conducting an evaluation, in order to continue serving students, but lack the resources to offer programming of the same richness and quality as they did with 21CCLC funding. Others, however, found the 21CCLC program overly restrictive and enjoy the freedom of operating without its rules and regulations.

Keys to Sustainability at the Program Level

Some partner organizations simply act as vendors to the program, while others truly collaborate in program development and lend the program credibility with funders.

All the grantees interviewed by The Finance Project have sustained some, if not all, of their out-of-school time programming beyond their initial 21CCLC grant.[4] Staff from The Finance Project asked representatives of these programs to share the key factors that have helped them to be successful. Grantees identified the following factors as keys to their sustainability: (1) collaborative partnerships; (2) diverse portfolio of funding sources; (3) high- quality programs and proven results; (4) support from school administration; (5) key champions; (6) community engagement; and (7) experience with afterschool programs before the 21CCLC grant. This section provides additional insight into how these factors have helped grantees to sustain programming.

Collaborative partnerships. Grantees reported overwhelmingly that partnerships are essential to long-term sustainability. Grantees highlighted partnerships with YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, 4-H extension services, libraries, parks and recreation, and a range of community organizations. Many stressed, however, that it is important to distinguish between two types of partners. Some partner organizations simply act as vendors to the program, while others truly collaborate in program development and lend the program credibility with funders. Grantees indicated that the latter type of partner is far more valuable in helping to promote sustainability. Program leaders interviewed also explained that a key factor to success in sustaining partner relationships was negotiating early on how they could mutually benefit from the partnership. For example, a 21CCLC grantee might support a partner organization while it is receiving the grant, with the expectation that the partner organization will fund a set of program activities when the 21CCLC grant expires Or a partner may seek a specialized grant or access other outside resources to support the specific work that it had conducted under a 21CCLC grant.

[G]rantees explained that it is helpful to determine which components of a program are most valuable and then seek funding for these components

Diverse portfolio of funding sources. Many grantees pointed to the fact that they had developed a diversity of funding sources before or while receiving a 21CCLC grant as key to their success in sustaining programming beyond the grant. Funding sources included the school district budget, Title I, federal child care subsidies, parent fees, Americorps, United Way, and local foundations. While the 21CCLC grant funds a comprehensive set of services, interviewees noted that other funding sources typically support individual program components (e.g., art, music, or tutoring). Looking forward, grantees explained that it is helpful to determine which components of a program are most valuable and then seek funding for these components individually. Grantees also stressed the importance of

[4] The Finance Project attempted to contact grantees that had not sustained programming, but found it difficult to reach these programs, as program staff were often no longer employed at the site.

being entrepreneurial and creative in seeking out a wide range of funding sources beyond the 21CCLC program.

High-quality programs and proven results. Grantees noted that their ability to prove and document the quality of their programs is an asset when seeking support beyond a 21CCLC grant. While receiving a federal 21CCLC grant, programs were required to invest in rigorous program evaluation. Although programs are potentially freed of this expense when the grant expires, several former grantees noted that program evaluation is still worthwhile, as proven results are helpful when marketing a program to funders. Given the current focus on academic standards, grantees noted the importance of demonstrating a program's impact on academic outcomes.

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Support from school administration. Several grantees cited the importance of a supportive school administration, school board members, and central office with regard to sustainability. Supportive superintendents, principals, and other administrators can provide an entry point for programs to access funds from the district budget and can serve as champions for the program as it seeks other funds. While several grantees said their school administrators have consistently supported the program from the beginning, others noted the importance of actively cultivating the administration's support on an ongoing basis through regular communication, invitations to visit and participate in the program, or special program activities.

Key champions. Grantees explained that in addition to school administrators, other community leaders have served as champions for their program, helping to raise public awareness and leverage new sources of funding. One model cited by focus group participants is the mayor of Providence, Rhode Island, who has strongly advocated for afterschool programs and successfully leveraged more than $1 million from private funders. On a smaller scale, grantees reported that law enforcement officials and local business leaders have helped their programs to raise additional funds and increase the visibility of the program in the community.

Community engagement. Grantees pointed out the importance of meaningful community engagement, stressing that local support was essential to program sustainability. One focus group participant explained that it is important for programs to make themselves a visible and essential part of the community, so that people can't imagine the program not being there. In order to do so, many grantees hold regular events to encourage parent involvement in the program. Another strategy is to develop afterschool program activities that raise the public visibility of the program while providing enriching experiences for students. For example, in one community, students plan a community charity walk and write a column in a local newspaper. Grantees also explained that community fund-raising events, such as raffles, pancake breakfasts, or bake sales, raise public awareness and also help to develop a small pot of flexible funds to support the program. Others stressed the importance of charging program fees (typically on a sliding scale)

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as both a financing strategy and a way to help families feel a sense of ownership in the program's long-term success.

Capacity before the 21CCLC grant. Grantees had varying levels of preexisting capacity or experience providing out-of-school time programming. In many cases, communities offered afterschool tutoring or activities, but did not have a comprehensive afterschool program before 21CCLC. Some grantees believed that, since they already had an out-of-school time program in place before they received a grant, their existing commitment instilled a positive mindset toward the need to plan for sustainability, as well as the capacity to do it. Others, however, did not regard existing capacity as a key contributor to their ability to continue their programs beyond their initial grant.

Looking Forward

In addition to sharing their successful strategies for sustainability, grantees discussed a number of innovative and creative ideas that they hope to implement in the future. For example, grantees indicated that they are considering the following sustainability strategies:

- Providing training to build staff capacity to assist the program director with sustainability planning
- Promoting and supporting local efforts to develop dedicated sources of revenue to support youth programming (e.g., a local youth services tax)
- Developing an annual drive for individual donors
- Developing an afterschool program component during which children create and run a self-supporting business
- Developing a fee-based program in a higher income school that can offset program costs in a lower income school
- Establishing a 501(c)3 organization with a board of directors that can apply for grants for which a school district is not eligible or does not wish to administer

Ongoing Challenges

One focus group participant likened planning for sustainability to "doing laundry" — an unending process that must be done regularly to maintain the viability of the program.

Despite the potential of these strategies, it is important to note that many grantees expressed doubts about their ability to sustain programming over the long-term, citing budget cuts in federal, state, and local programs and the ongoing challenge of finding sufficient funds. They stressed the importance of planning for sustainability, but explained that they often lack the staff time to devote to planning. Finally, they expressed frustration with the fact that sustainability planning is never complete. One focus group participant, for example, likened planning for sustainability to "doing laundry" — an unending process that must be done regularly to maintain the viability of the program.

How Policymakers Can Encourage Sustainability

In addition to program-level strategies that can support sustainability, policy and program implementation can affect the sustainability of the 21CCLC programs in a number of ways. Through discussions with state 21CCLC administrators and program leaders, The Finance Project identified six key areas in which policymakers have the potential to affect program sustainability: (1) length of grant periods; (2) size of grants; (3) declining grant awards; (4) re-funding grantees; (5) training/technical assistance (TA) on sustainability planning; and (6) allowing/encouraging program fees. Decisions in these six areas are largely made by SEAs, but are also influenced by federal law and policy guidance. It is important to note that sustainability is not the only goal pursued by policymakers in their grantmaking. In many cases, other goals—such as promoting increased access to programs in areas of greatest need—may, in fact, be at odds with policies that promote sustainability.

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Longer Grant Periods

All the initial federal grants were three years long, but since 2002, SEAs have had the option to award grants ranging from three to five years. In 2004, 27 states awarded five-year grants, 4 states awarded four-year grants, and 11 states and the District of Columbia awarded three-year grants.[5] The remaining eight states awarded three years of regular funding, allowing programs to apply for two additional years of more limited funding. (For detailed state-by-state information on grant periods, see appendix II.)

Many of the programs that participated in focus groups stressed that three-year grants did not provide enough time for communities to develop and manage a new program and plan for long-term sustainability. They reported that a grant period of five years or more would be a more realistic timeframe to get programming under way and to learn how to sustain programs beyond the initial funding period (e.g., develop internal capacity, cultivate funding sources, and demonstrate the program's results). Several grantees suggested they would prefer to receive the same amount of funding stretched over a longer period. State 21CCLC administrators held varying opinions on the length of grant periods; some felt that shorter grant periods were sufficient, while others preferred that federal law allow for grant periods that exceed five years.

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Take into Account Grant Size

The average size of grants awarded under federal administration of the 21CCLC program was nearly $550,000, while the average size of grants since transfer to state administration in 2002 has been approximately

[5] Data from the 21CCLC Performance and Profile Information Collection System (PPICS). Provided to The Finance Project by Learning Point Associates, August 2005.

Given the size of the original federal 21CCLC grants, many former grantees report that it was difficult to sustain the scope and scale of service when funds expired.

$330,000.[6] (See appendix II for state-by-state information on average grant size.) It is not clear from the available data whether current state grants support the same scale of programming (e.g., number of program sites, number of children served) as the federal grants did. However, several grantees confirmed that SEA grants tend to provide less funding to serve similar numbers of children.

Despite the apparent reduction in grant size, current federal guidance still encourages SEAs to award relatively large grants as a means of meeting the program's stated goals. The U.S. Department of Education's guidance states that SEAs should award fewer but "more substantial awards" that are large enough to "fully implement comprehensive plans described in successful grant applications—rather than a larger number of small awards unlikely to have any measurable impact on student achievement."[7]

Given the size of the original federal 21CCLC grants, many former grantees report that it was difficult to sustain the scope and scale of service when funds expired. Moreover, many communities with limited local resources, particularly in rural areas, found it impossible to fully replace grants administered by SEAs with other funds.

State 21CCLC administrators report that, in making decisions about grant size, they ensure that grants are of sufficient size to support a reasonable per-child and per-hour rate. New Hampshire, for example, requires sites to report their per-hour and per-child expenses, while Iowa's grantmaking is guided by a formula for what an afterschool program should cost on a per-child and per-hour basis. Some states, such as Oregon, have made efforts to award grants that can support quality programs that are not so expensive as to be impossible to sustain. Other states report that they make concerted efforts to ensure that dollars are distributed throughout the state and are not consumed by one large city.

Consider Declining Grant Awards

According to federal law, states are not allowed to consider an eligible entity's "ability to match funds" when determining if it will receive an award.[8] Given the time-limited nature of 21CCLC grants, however, many states have implemented an alternative means of encouraging programs to seek matching funds. In at least 30 states, the size of grants declines after the second or third year of funding, encouraging programs to gradually leverage funding from other sources.[9] Of course, this method of encouraging the cultivation of matching funds works only if programs are required to maintain the same level of services and number of children served once the grant declines. As an alternative,

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[6] *Ibid.*

[7] U.S. Department of Education. *21st Century Community Learning Center Non-Regulatory Guidance.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Academic Improvement and Teacher Quality Programs, February 2003. Current legislation mandates that grants be no smaller than $50,000.

[8] Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended, Title IV, Part B.

[9] Data collected for The Finance Project by staff at the U.S. Department of Education in February 2006.

eight states require that funded programs reapply for their final years of more limited funding.[10] (For detailed state-by-state information, see appendix II.) Since declining grant amounts have only just begun to take effect as of this writing, state administrators and programs could not yet describe their effectiveness. Administrators and many grantees, however, viewed declining grant awards as a promising strategy to promote sustainability.

Explore Options for Re-Funding Grantees

The 21CCLC program was originally established as a federal discretionary grant program to provide "seed" funding to promote the development of programs across the country. This basic philosophy was carried over when the states began administering the program, and while it is not necessarily codified in existing law or guidance, many states have aligned their policies and approach with the notion that the program is not meant to provide long-term funding. However, federal policy currently allows grantees to be refunded when their grant expires, as long as a competitive process takes place. While some of the programs interviewed by The Finance Project received a federal 21CCLC grant and then another, typically smaller, state 21CCLC grant, programs generally do not expect to continue to receive 21CCLC funding indefinitely.

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States have varying policies and attitudes regarding the re-funding of existing 21CCLC grantees, but several state administrators interviewed expressed interest in continuing to make new grants while also offering some smaller continuation grants for programs, stating that it may be unreasonable to expect some programs to fully replace 21CCLC dollars. According to these administrators, "continuation" grants could be targeted toward programs that continue to perform well and/or programs that face particular challenges (such as programs serving underresourced rural or urban areas) or serve particular community needs. Some administrators expressed an interest in offering continuation grants that are even smaller than the current federal minimum of $50,000. Others, however, argue that 21CCLC grants are meant to be start-up grants and there is value to keeping the competition open to new grantees to further the goal of expanding access to programs across the states.

Some state administrators hypothesized new ways of continuing to serve existing grantees. For example, a state might run two different grant competitions or run a single competition but have two separate application rating systems—one for existing grantees and one for new applicants—so that these groups would not be directly competing against each other. A more far-reaching suggestion is for states to reconceive the program as a way to provide ongoing funding to a set of model or "lighthouse" programs to test and disseminate best practices in afterschool programming. It is unclear as to whether these changes in program administration are fully allowable under current

[10] 21CCLC Performance and Profile Information Collection System (PPICS), op. cit.

law. However, the approaching reauthorization of NCLB may offer an opportunity to further clarify or change the law to support program sustainability.

Provide Training/Technical Assistance on Sustainability

Many state administrators have offered trainings and workshops on sustainability, including how to write grants, diversify resources, and build partnerships.

Many state administrators have offered trainings and workshops on sustainability, including how to write grants, diversify resources, and build partnerships. According to data collected from states via the PPICS system, 83 percent of states offered some kind of training or technical assistance (TA) on promoting program sustainability in 2003.[11] Washington, for example, has worked with an advisory board of former grantees to inform its TA offerings. The state is now helping grantees to develop logic models as part of planning for long-term sustainability. In a recent New England training session, grantees shared successful sustainability strategies and learned from each other. Massachusetts has provided grantees with data analysis software and extensive training on data analysis, allowing programs to better demonstrate to other funders the academic gains that their students are making. Iowa is planning to offer a series of workshops for grantee teams to help them plan for sustainability.

Grantees reported varying degrees of satisfaction with the sustainability training or TA they had received from their states. Some felt that trainings provided them with helpful ideas, while others suggested that they needed more exposure to best practices or a "model" for long-term sustainability.

Allow/Encourage Program Fees

The U.S. Department of Education allows 21CCLC grantees to charge program fees, so long as no families are turned away because they cannot afford the program. While many states leave this decision entirely to the program's discretion, others either encourage or discourage program fees. Oregon and New Hampshire, for example, encourage programs to charge fees early on if they are to charge fees at all, because they believe families will be more resistant to paying fees if they are implemented after the program is up and running. Other states discourage programs from charging fees while they receive a 21CCLC grant. In Texas, grantees are not allowed to charge parents fees because administrators feel that programs should be able to leverage other community funds rather than rely on parents.

Many grantees report that charging program fees is critical to support program activities after a 21CCLC grant ends. Others report that nominal fees help families to feel invested in the program and increase participation and program support. Several echoed the sentiment of Oregon and New Hampshire and believe that there is value to charging fees when the program is first implemented.

[11] It is instructive to note that sustainability was one of five types of training that states could indicate via the PPICS data collection system. It was selected less often than any of the other choices, and no information is provided on the type, quality, or intensity of this assistance.

Effects of NCLB on Sustainability

It appears that the substantive changes made to the 21CCLC program under NCLB have consequences that directly affect sustainability. Under NCLB 21CCLC programs have focused more directly on promoting academic success in low-income communities. Federal law requires that SEAs give priority to schools deemed in need of improvement under NCLB.[12] SEAs may also have even stricter state priorities for serving low-income and at-risk students. Some grantees feel that restricting program dollars to the most at-risk schools or students can create a stigma around the program, making it less universally appealing to the community and a broad range of potential funders. In addition, grantees mentioned that it can be difficult to work collaboratively with partners when they are limited to serving a distinct group of at-risk students.

Grantees' opinion of the new academic focus of 21CCLC varied. Some found that the emphasis on academics was too limiting and excluded other types of youth development activities that take place in afterschool programs. Others noted that, when the program serves children for only a few hours a day, it is difficult to demonstrate an impact on classroom grades and test scores. Still others, however, explained that the focus on academics has helped them to sell the program to their school district leaders.

Reauthorization will provide an opportunity for Congress to consider what has been learned in the first decade of 21CCLC and to put into place new or revised policies to enhance the success and sustainability of this program.

21CCLC Policy: Looking Forward

The legislation authorizing NCLB will expire in 2007. This provides an opportunity for Congress to consider what has been learned in the first decade of 21CCLC and to put into place new or revised policies to enhance the success and sustainability of this program. On the basis of the conversations and data reviewed for this report, some options may include refining policy and providing further guidance on optimal grant size and the length of grant periods; providing clear but flexible options for states considering re-funding grantees; and providing more focused assistance to states to help them develop local capacity to sustain programs. Moreover, Congress, the U.S. Department of Education, and SEAs should consider ways to encourage development of the other program-level factors that support sustainability, including true collaborative partnerships, engagement of school leadership, and broad-based community support. We hope the information and perspectives in this report can help inform those conversations.

[12] *21st Century Community Learning Center Non-Regulatory Guidance,* op. cit.

Appendix I: Profiles of Successful Sustainability Strategies

- Columbine Elementary School
- Claremont School District
- North Carolina Northwest Three Afterschool Consortium

Columbine Elementary School

Partnerships and Persistence Give Program Life After 21CCLC

DESCRIPTION

- Serves 130 students in Denver, Colorado
- 86% of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch
- Focus on reading ability and comprehension
- Diverse local partners have helped access numerous federal funding sources

Elements of Sustainable Programs

- **Vision**
- Results Orientation
- **Strategic Financing Orientation**
- Broad-Based Community Support
- **Key Champions**
- **Adaptability to Changing Conditions**
- Strong Internal Systems
- Sustainability Plan

Overview

Columbine Elementary School in Denver, Colorado, has provided before and afterschool services since 1998. The urban magnet school with 86% of its students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch now serves 130 students in an extended school day program that operates from 7:15 to 5:30 every day. By using creative financing and sustainability strategies, the school has been able to expand its afterschool offerings from reading tutoring to a comprehensive array of recreation, enrichment, and academic programming and has sustained its program after the end of a federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant.

☑ Developing a Vision of an Extended School Day

Columbine began its afterschool program after receiving a Reading Excellence Act grant from the state of Colorado. To achieve the grant's goals of improving reading achievement in primary grades, the school began a pull-out program, tutoring struggling readers during the school day. While this strategy had some positive effect on reading scores, it also had an unintended negative effect on achievement in other subject areas due to time missed during the pull-out sessions. Recognizing that students needed all of their classroom time, the school decided to develop a new and more comprehensive strategy for improving student achievement.

Columbine implemented a number of changes. The school adopted a new reading curriculum and moved its tutoring program to the afterschool hours. It was no coincidence that these changes were made in tandem; the school's revamped improvement plan centered on integrating the new curriculum into a comprehensive extended day program. With this vision of improving student achievement through integrating learning opportunities into the afterschool hours firmly in place, Columbine began laying the groundwork for making its vision reality.

☑ Strategic Financing Orientation

Making Better Use of Existing Resources

First, school leaders needed to make sure the vision was shared by all school staff. Primary responsibility for this charge was given to a new administrator who was hired to direct the afterschool program and oversee the implementation of the new curriculum. The program director worked with the school's teachers, convincing them to voluntarily stagger their schedules. Staffing the extended day program with full-time certified teachers showed the school's commitment to fully integrating the school day with its afterschool program. Staggering schedules enabled the program to use a valuable resource—its staff—as efficiently as possible, saving the large investment that would have been required to hire additional qualified staff and train them in the school's curriculum.

For its first year, Columbine's tutoring program operated alongside—but completely separate from—a recreation program sponsored by the City of Denver Department of Parks and Recreation. Both programs were operating within the school, but neither offered afterschool programming every day of the school week. Columbine's program coordinator began to build a partnership with Parks Department staff and program leaders. The two programs worked together to expand to a daily program, with the city committing its staff members' time to cover the additional afterschool hours. By eliminating the duplication of services, Columbine was again able to use staffing resources to their utmost efficiency.

Maximizing Federal Funding

In 1999, Columbine was awarded a 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21CCLC) grant from the U.S. Department of Education that was used to expand the extended day program to include before-school programming, a variety of enrichment activities, and tutoring in more academic subjects. Encouraged by success, Columbine's program director immediately began to pursue other federal funding opportunities. A number of youth development organizations active in the Denver area were providing character-building and healthy behavior programming in Columbine and a number of other schools. With the urging of Columbine's program director, these community-based organizations partnered with Columbine to apply for a federal Safe and Drug Free Schools grant. These funds not only supported the character-building and healthy behavior programming, but also provided additional staff support for the entire program.

Building Partnerships

In addition to partnerships with the city and with other youth-serving organizations, Columbine has developed an additional partnership that has helped it sustain its afterschool program. The First Tee of Denver is a non-profit junior golf program dedicated to providing affordable access to the sport for low-income Denver youth. When the organization was looking for a pilot site interested in incorporating golf into an existing afterschool program, the school welcomed this unlikely partner. Columbine's program director was won over by the opportunity to provide students with a new experience—a "hook" to keep them interested in the program—and by First Tee's commitment to incorporating literacy into its programming. In 2003, First Tee staff and volunteers held a one-day work-a-thon to revamp Columbine's playground, adding a driving range, putting green, and sand trap. First Tee and Columbine piloted a "Read and Swing" program, in which students who met reading goals earned free visits to the driving range and rounds of golf. Columbine's site leader credits its partnership with First Tee with providing an attractive program component that the afterschool program could not have offered on its own and with introducing the program to community leaders that otherwise would not be familiar with Columbine's afterschool work.

☑ Drawing on Support of Key Champions

Columbine's principal views the afterschool program as integral to improving student achievement, and has proven her willingness to champion the program to ensure its sustainability. As one of the initial and

Columbine Elementary School invested significant time in outlining its extended school day vision and building an infrastructure of diverse funding both before and during its 21st Century grant period.

staunch supporters of the extended day strategy, the principal committed school Title I funds for the initial funding of the afterschool program director position. Since the 21CCLC grant ended in 2003, the principal has committed additional Title I and school general funds to fill remaining funding gaps and maintain the before and afterschool program at the same frequency and intensity.

☑ Adapting to Changing Conditions

For the first year after the end of the 21CCLC grant, Columbine students were eligible to receive supplementary educational services (SES), a provision of the No Child Left Behind Act that provides free tutoring for students in low-performing schools and districts. State-approved providers of SES tutoring are reimbursed for their services. The afterschool program engaged in a lengthy application process to become an eligible SES provider and engaged in an outreach campaign to get parents to enroll their children in the program. The next year, with improved student achievement, Columbine was no longer eligible to provide free SES services. Despite investing significant time to become a state-approved provider only to lose eligibility the next year, Columbine's program director credits the SES funding with easing the program through its first year without 21st Century dollars and with helping the program adapt to a generally more volatile post-21CCLC funding situation.

Lessons Learned, Next Steps, and Key Challenges

Columbine Elementary School invested significant time in outlining its extended school day vision and building an infrastructure of diverse funding both before and during its 21st Century grant period. This clear commitment and funding diversity were instrumental to the program's sustainability after the end of its 21CCLC grant. Though the state and district priority for 21CCLC funding is now middle school programs, making Columbine ineligible to apply for state funds on its own, the school is again deploying its strategy of creative partnerships and looking for ways to build a consortium of schools interested in providing afterschool services for a continuum of ages that will be eligible for another 21st Century grant.

Claremont School District

Strong Programmatic Vision Sustains Community School Initiative

DESCRIPTION

- Serves over 600 students in grades k-12
- Total budget over $800,000
- Part of Yale University's "Schools of the 21st Century Initiative
- Former 21CCLC Grantee

Elements of Sustainable Programs

- **Vision**
- Results Orientation
- **Strategic Financing Orientation**
- **Broad-Based Community Support**
- Key Champions
- Adaptability to Changing Conditions
- Strong Internal Systems
- Sustainability Plan

Overview

The Claremont School District in Claremont, New Hampshire, provides extensive before and after school programming to students in grades K-12 in the district's schools. These programs are part of the district's Schools of the 21st Century (21C) initiative that provides comprehensive school-based services to children and families in the community. In a typical month, the district serves over 600 of their 2000 children in out-of-school time activities and runs a range of related community programs, including dental services, a youth employment program, and parent education programs. While a federal 21st Century Community Learning Center (21CCLC) grantee in 2001, the foundation for the program was Schools of the 21st Century, a Yale University initiative. The district has continued to operate programming at full capacity after the federal grant period ended.

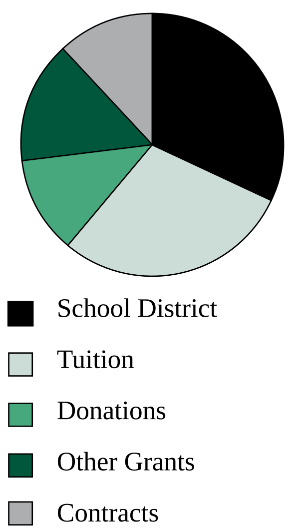
Claremont has sustained out-of-school time programming by employing a number of strategies, including: (1) developing a clear vision before seeking funds; (2) making strategic financing choices; and (3) developing broad-based community support. For the Claremont school district, these three strategies have been deeply linked to one another. A strong programmatic vision allowed leaders to access several diverse funding sources and to win the support of the community. Diverse funding from federal, state, and private sources, accessed while the district was still receiving 21CCLC funds, partially sustained the program when 21CCLC funds ran out. Finally, due to strong community support for the program, in 2005 Claremont town meeting attendees supported a district budget that included the balance of funds needed to sustain programming.

☑ Getting Started: Developing a Vision

Before receiving 21CCLC funds, the Claremont school district spent a year laying the groundwork for its community school initiative, a process that the program coordinator cites as essential to their long-term success. Out of concern with high poverty and low rates of school readiness in their district, officials wanted to implement a comprehensive model of school-based services for children from birth through the schools years. In 2000, the school board voted to join Yale University's School of the 21st Century initiative, which became the blueprint for their community school initiative. Sometimes referred to as family resource centers, the Yale model brings childcare (including afterschool programs) and family support services to public schools.

In the first year, the district hired a program coordinator, who assessed existing services and developed a plan for implementing and financing the Yale University model in Claremont schools. Joining Schools of the 21st Century required a financial commitment from the district, but in return allowed them to receive ongoing training and technical assistance from Yale University.

FUNDING SOURCES FOR CLAREMONT SCHOOL DISTRICT



☑ Strategic Financing Orientation

With the implementation of the community school initiative, the Claremont district has systemically developed a variety of financing strategies to support their initial vision and develop a stable base of resources over time.

Making Better Use of Existing Resources

The community schools model links schools to community services in an effort to reach more families who can benefit from the range of services healthy families need, including healthcare, child care, parent education, and other services. At the same time, the model allows for significant cost savings in service delivery, as programs take place in existing school buildings and are managed jointly by one district coordinator.

Maximizing Federal, State, and Local Revenue

Claremont's community school initiative has worked to maximize a range of diverse federal, state, and private funding sources, rather than relying exclusively on one time-limited federal grant. In 2000 the district provided afterschool services in one school with funding from the University of New Hampshire's Cooperative Extension. In early 2001, the district received funding from the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for a parent education program.

Claremont Budget

School District	$271,000
Tuition	$245,000
Donations	$100,000
Other Grants	$127,000
Contracts	$100,000
Total	**$843,500**

Finally, in June of 2001, Claremont was a recipient of a federal 21CCLC grant of $1.5 million dollars, allowing the district to provide before and after school homework help and enrichment services to four elementary schools, four middle schools, and four high schools. 21CCLC funds also supported school breakfasts, the salary of a parent educator, and vacation camps that are accredited by the National Camping Association.

While utilizing 21CCLC funds, the district continued to seek additional funds to support its comprehensive community school model. For example:

- **Dental Care:** New Hampshire's DHHS and a local hospital support the salary of an in-school dental hygienist to provide much needed dental services.

- **Child Care Resource and Referral:** Through a contract with DHHS, the district provides child care resource and referral services in Claremont and its surrounding region. Services include recruitment and training of child care providers.

- **Workforce Development:** Funds from the New Hampshire Workforce Opportunity Council, as well as private grants, support a teen center, in which high school students run and operate a small business (a coffeehouse).

Claremont also receives private grants and donations that support parent education and other general programming. While the district no longer has a 21CCLC grant, it has sustained the afterschool programming through a range of other funding sources.

Generating New Dedicated Revenue

Claremont's afterschool program consistently receives a portion of its revenue from student fees. By charging tuition for the program since its inception (as opposed to adding fees only when federal funds diminished), participants were well accustomed to a fee-for-service model. The district also aims to enroll families in federal child care subsidies when eligible. To encourage participation from low income Claremont families, they also offer a sliding fee scale and free tuition for children who are homeless or who receive free lunches.

✔ Broad-Based Community Support

The Claremont School Board has supported a community schools approach since voting to adopt the 21C model in 2000. The Board's enthusiasm for out-of-school time programs has grown in recent years, due to regular updates from the program coordinator, reports of high attendance at programs, and demonstrated improvements in students' grades for three years.

By partnering with other local providers serving the community, including Cooperative Extension and organizations supporting violence prevention, home visitation, and mental health services, the 21C has broadened the range of services offered in schools and gained support from the larger community.

Finally, the 21C coordinator has made extensive efforts to raise the visibility of the program by appearing at school board meetings shown on public access television and becoming involved with community activities. For example, 21C has taken part in a community service initiative coordinated by local businesses and organized a creative writing contest. In addition, the program puts its logo or "seal of approval" on flyers from the district and partner organizations that go out to families. As a result of these efforts and the popularity of programs, 21C before-and- after school programs routinely have waiting lists.

As a culmination of growing community support, the FY2005 district budget — which included over $270,000 to fill in gaps left by the end of the 21CCLC grant — passed by 88 votes in a Claremont town meeting. Voters have defeated Claremont school district budgets in the past. The school superintendent credits the result of this vote, as well as the high turnout in the midst of a major snow storm, to the extent to which parents value 21C services.

Next Steps and Key Challenges

The 21C program is constantly reevaluating and adapting its services to promote better outcomes for children and families. For example, the district recently replaced its more traditional afterschool activities for high school students with a teen coffeehouse program, due to youths interest in employment. The district continues to coordinate with community partners to apply for additional sources of funding, including a federal Safe Schools/ Healthy Students grant and additional state funding to support afterschool and home visiting programs.

DESCRIPTION

- A consortium of three Appalachian school systems in rural North Carolina
- Serves mainly low-income, rurally isolated youth in grades 3 through 8
- Involves local community and takes advantage of Appalachian surroundings in afterschool programming

Elements of Sustainable Programs

- **Vision**
- Results Orientation
- **Strategic Financing Orientation**
- **Broad-Based Community Support**
- Key Champions
- Adaptability to Changing Conditions
- Strong Internal Systems
- Sustainability Plan

North Carolina Northwest Three Afterschool Consortium

A Collaborative Approach for Making Afterschool Work in Rural Areas

Overview

The North Carolina Northwest Three Afterschool Consortium (NC NW 3) provides a range of comprehensive afterschool programs for low-income and rurally isolated youth in North Carolina. The Consortium, composed of three Appalachian school systems in North Carolina: Alexander County, Alleghany County, and Caldwell County and other local partners, serves third through eighth graders throughout this 950 square mile rural area. NC NW 3 programs integrate academic enrichment, cultural arts opportunities, fitness-focused resiliency building, diversity appreciation and family involvement services.

The Consortium was initially established as a way for seven rural Appalachian counties to pool their resources and successfully apply for a federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21CCLC) grant in 1999. With the change in 21CCLC administration from federal to state, the Consortium received a smaller state 21CCLC grant in November 2002 for only three of the original seven counties. Within the remaining three counties, however, NC NW 3 has leveraged a range of resources and now serves more students than under the federal grant.

The Consortium has sustained out-of-school time programming by employing a number of strategies, including; (1) developing a clear and shared vision; (2) making strategic financing choices; (3) and developing broad-based community support.

☑ Developing a Vision

The NC NW 3 Consortium has developed a clear vision for their afterschool programs, aiming to build academic and personal success for at-risk rural students through a range of activities that involve the local community and take advantage of their Appalachian surroundings. As one example, through the Bird and Butterfly Habitat Project, fifth through eighth grade youth reclaimed an overgrown field adjacent to their school and transformed it into a bird and butterfly habitat that is now an item of school and community pride. The program integrated math and literacy skills and earned the support of community members, who both donated to the project and worked alongside the youth. This and other innovative program activities are rooted in the NC NW 3 program vision and help the programs to gain public support and funding.

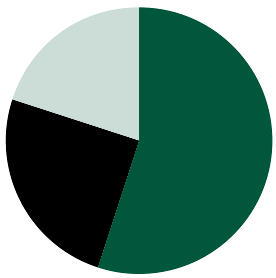
☑ Strategic Financing

In order to sustain afterschool programming, the Consortium uses a variety of financing strategies, including maximizing federal and state revenue, making better use of existing resources, and creating new sources of revenue.

Maximizing Federal & State Revenue

Although each of the consortium's school systems are in rurally isolated areas, by working together across a large geographic region, they are able to maximize their revenue, pooling large amounts of funding from a variety of sources. Through this collaboration, the NC NW 3 program has been able to

North Carolina Northwest Three Afterschool Consortium



NCNW3 Budget	
Federal Sources	55 %
State Sources	25 %
Local Sources	20 %

leverage a broad array of federal, state, and local funding sources including 21CCLC, Title I, TANF, Juvenile Justice and United Way funds. The program's director has noted that their federal 21CCLC grant, which started the NC NW 3 programs, allowed them to run an effective program while giving them enough time to get other funding sources in place for the future.

Making Better Use of Existing Resources

By consolidating management of afterschool programming with the consortium approach, all three counties are able to make more efficient use of limited resources. The Consortium, for example, helps the counties to prioritize program areas for which they will seek funding and to prepare grant applications. For each grant application, Consortium staff determines which partner is most appropriate to act as a fiscal agent. The Consortium also pools local resources and talents, and arranges for the counties to share management, administration, staff development and evaluation tasks required by each grant.

The Consortium also strategically makes use of existing resources in the school districts to support afterschool programs. For example, portions of the school's Title I dollars have been passed down to support tutoring components of afterschool programs. Programs make use of school facilities and share in staff development opportunities, allowing NC NW Three programs to increase staff skills at a low cost. School staff and faculty also contribute to NC NW 3 programs, providing tutoring, curriculum development, and special services such as counseling and social work.

Creating New Sources of Revenue

In addition to federal and state funding sources, NC NW 3 obtains revenue from fundraisers and sliding-scale fees that vary by county. The program's director emphasizes the importance of having low-income parents feel that they can contribute to the program and thus charges appropriate fees with flexible scholarships. Although fundraisers are only a small portion of the program's overall revenue, they have been effective in involving the students, reaching out to local communities, raising awareness of the program and creating a pot of flexible funds to support the program.

✔ Broad-Based Community Support

While having a strong vision and financial support are key elements of running a successful afterschool program, the Consortium also recognizes the importance of broad-based community support. The Consortium has a strong willingness to collaborate, which has allowed them to form a large network of community support. They have formed partnerships with a wide range of organizations including community colleges, cooperative extension services, wellness centers, health departments, and chambers of commerce. Each of these partnerships provide in different ways for the program. Having the full support of the school systems has enabled a partnership that promotes community involvement and programmatic coordination, creating a connection between school and afterschool for the students. Furthermore, several afterschool staff members have gone on to full-time work in the regular school day programs, adding to the close relationship and connection between NC NW 3 programs and the school systems.

In addition, trained and dedicated staff regularly call and visit families, greatly increasing the level of support from parents. Parents are also involved through programming such as family nights, field trips, advisory board meetings, and fundraisers. A range of community-oriented projects sponsored by the NC NW 3 programs raise the afterschool programs' visibility in their communities. For example, as part of their focus on youth fitness, one NC NW 3 afterschool program has organized a Community 5K Run open to all community members. Finally, the Consortium built a relationship with the local media, where students write articles about their program and local journalists are invited to program events.

Next Steps and Future Challenges

While the Consortium has developed a comprehensive system of afterschool programming, they do have concerns for their future. Located in a rural area, transportation to and from the program sites is becoming a major issue with rising gas prices. The Consortium plans to seek more private foundation resources at both the regional and national level for substantial funding.

Appendix II: State-by-State Information on 21CCLC

State	Total Amount Awarded in 2004 Competition[1]	Average Grant Size[1]	Grant Lengths[1,2]	Declining Grants as of August 2005 (Y/N)[3]
Alabama	$5,025,149	$128,850	3	Y
Alaska	$2,027,328	$337,888	5	N
Arizona	$5,666,430	$283,321	5	Y
Arkansas	$3,785,618	$140,208	5	Y
California	$3,550,000[4]	$208,824[4]	5[4]	N
Colorado	$4,217,460	$263,591	5	Y
Connecticut	$2,292,598	$229,260	5	Y
Delaware	$1,907,000	$190,700	5	Y
District of Columbia	$962,034	$137,433	3	N
Florida	$24,393,418	$696,955	5	Y
Georgia	$8,282,372	$591,598	3+2	Y
Hawaii	$2,044,158	$511,040	3+2	Y
Idaho	$1,465,671	$133,243	5	Y
Illinois	$16,800,000	$373,333	5	Y
Indiana	$11,932,306[5]	$441,937[5]	2[5]	Y
Iowa	$1,533,038	$306,608	5	N/A
Kansas	$2,522,349	$280,261	5	N/A
Kentucky	$5,329,768	$144,048	5	Y
Louisiana	$8,265,892	$459,216	3	Y
Maine	$2,718,416	$143,075	3	Y
Maryland	$3,880,217	$352,747	3+2	N/A
Massachusetts	$8,000,000	$285,714	5	N
Michigan	$30,159,081	$2,010,605	5	N/A
Minnesota	$5,129,836	$269,991	3	Y
Mississippi	$5,520,314	$162,362	3+2	N
Missouri	$5,175,476[4]	$323,467[4]	5[4]	Y
Montana	$1,855,000	$115,938	5	N
Nebraska	$1,198,417	$239,683	5	Y
Nevada	$1,798,359	$105,786	5	Y
New Hampshire	$1,858,716	$371,743	3+2	Y
New Jersey	$5,016,716	$418,060	4	N/A
New Mexico	$2,929,498	$292,950	5	N
New York	$40,444,918	$454,437	5	N
North Carolina	$10,840,091	$328,488	4	Y
North Dakota	$3,790,000	$270,714	3	N
Ohio	$14,019,775	$269,611	5	N/A
Oklahoma	$3,573,099	$238,207	3+2	Y
Oregon	$1,567,660	$261,277	3+2	Y
Pennsylvania	$18,290,248	$315,349	3	Y
Rhode Island	$2,623,442[4]	$262,344[4]	3[4]	Y
South Carolina	$1,354,700[4]	$96,764[4]	4[4]	Y
South Dakota	$1,489,314[4]	$93,082[4]	5[4]	N
Tennessee	$7,615,000	$149,314	3	N
Texas	$36,548,821[4]	$702,862[4]	3[4]	Y
Utah	$2,007,213	$334,536	3	Y
Vermont	$1,603,483	$133,624	3	Y
Virginia	$2,723,000	$151,228	3	N
Washington	$4,927,004	$492,700	5	N/A
West Virginia	$2,916,347	$208,311	5	Y
Wisconsin	$2,400,000	$171,429	5	N
Wyoming	$1,171,500	$61,658	5	N

[1] Fom the 21CCLC Performance and Profile Information Collection System (PPICS), provided by Learning Point Associates, August 2005.
[2] "3+2" indicates that grantees received a three-year grant and then were eligible to apply for two additional years of more limited funding.
[3] Data collected for The Finance Project by the U.S. Department of Education in February 2006. Note that the PPICS system, the data source for the other columns in this table, does not collect specific information on declining grants. The data on declining grants reported here were collected informally and due to the timing of the request, may apply to a more recent competition than the other data included in this table.
[4] State held multiple grant competitions held in 2004; data are from the latest competition in 2004.
[5] State held no grant competition in 2004; data is from 2003.

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The Finance Project
1401 New York Avenue, NW • Suite 800
Washington, DC 20005
202.628.4200 • fax: 202.628.1293
www.financeproject.org