

A Guide to Federal Education Programs That Can Fund K-12 Universal Prevention and Social and Emotional Learning Activities

WEBINAR QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

On June 18, 2014 the Center for Health and Health Care in Schools (CHHCS), in partnership with the Center on Education Policy (CEP), both at the George Washington University, conducted a webinar to unveil a new resource, “A Guide to Federal Education Programs That Can Fund K-12 Universal Prevention and Social and Emotional Learning Activities”. The intent of this guide is to help districts take advantage of federal education funding by identifying K-12 grant programs in the U.S. Department of Education (ED) that can be used to implement prevention efforts in local elementary and secondary schools.

Participants representing 43 states and the District of Columbia, British Columbia and Puerto Rico were actively engaged in the webinar and asked a number of questions that are answered below. This information represents our collective opinions and experience- final decisions concerning individual inquiries will be made by the specific federal ED program office of interest. If you have additional questions or need further clarification, please contact chhcs@gwu.edu or contact the federal ED program office directly by using the link provided in the guide. All materials related to the Federal Funding Guide can be found at: <http://www.healthinschools.org/en/School-Based-Mental-Health/Funding-Guide-for-SEL.aspx>.

Finance-related Questions:

- 1. What if social emotional learning (SEL) is new to our school district - is it better to go to the funding source first to inform our plan or to make a plan first and then pursue funding?**

Our Answer: In general—especially when many applications now call for collaborative approaches to address a stated problem—it is often more effective to identify your partners in the community, jointly develop a plan that builds on the activities and strengths of the partners, and then submit your application together. What this often means is that those with established partnerships and collaborative endeavors already underway are usually a step ahead of other applicants who are just forging these relationships for the first time in order to pursue funding.

- 2. How much money is required to run a successful SEL program at a school?**

Our Answer: In the coming months, in partnership with the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), CHHCS will make available a number of tools and resources that were developed to help districts calculate the costs associated with implementing SEL programs or approaches. Please stay tuned, or sign up for our alerts and we will make sure to inform you when those tools are available. Descriptions of the CHHCS listservs and options for subscribing can be found here: <http://www.healthinschools.org/profile.aspx>

- 3. Does the guide discuss how SEL staff (i.e., social workers and counselors) can be funded through federal programs, as well as curricula, programs, etc.?**

Our Answer: The guide discusses which ESEA-funded programs might be used to support SEL programs and interventions, which may include the purchase of curricula, program support and sometimes staffing (for general information on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) go to: <http://www.ed.gov/esea>). However, each specific ESEA program has its own requirements and allowable expenses so it is best to check each program to determine what might be financed using those funds.

4. **Can these funds be used for disease prevention interventions such as health/wellness and obesity prevention programs and resources?**

Our Answer: Sometimes funds may be used for general “prevention” efforts, but each program announcement will specify the allowable usage of funds. For example, 21st Century Learning Center funds might be used for health and wellness activities but funds in the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program may not. If you are interested in pursuing a set of activities or interventions, you should always be able to articulate the theoretical basis for how and why these interventions help achieve the absolute priority of the program, as well as cite any literature that supports your theoretical framework. It is always best to consult with the specific ED program staff to guide your application efforts if you have any questions about the allowable use of funds.

5. **For grants/funding to local education authorities (LEAs), does the LEA identify a SEL intervention/program in the application itself, or after funding is awarded?**

Our Answer: Your application should be as specific as possible about your proposed intervention, as you will likely need to describe why you have chosen this intervention, why and how it is appropriate for the population you’ve identified to work with, and how you will implement your intervention. As peer reviewers will use your descriptions to assess the strength and appropriateness of your proposed intervention and, accordingly, to rate and score your application, it is always best to be as clear and specific as possible about what you plan to do. Additionally, your proposed budget will depend on the way in which you have planned to implement your intervention(s)/program(s). If funded, your project officer will expect that you are going to be working towards implementation as described in your proposal through the period of your grant. In some cases, a project officer may be allowed the flexibility to work with you if you need to adjust the original proposed intervention for some unforeseen reason, with the condition that the alternative intervention will meet the same goals and objectives, with the original population, as your original proposal delineated. You should **always** consult your project officer before making any changes to your proposed intervention.

6. **Are churches, masjids, temples, etc. able to use this for in-house program as they conduct feeding programs, DV Interventions, HIV/AIDS testing, breast cancer, etc.?**

Our Answer: Community-based organizations, which include faith-based organizations, may apply to some grant programs. Interested applicants should

always consult the specific ED program office to determine whether or not your entity is an eligible applicant for the specific grant program. Each grant program is designed to fund a set of activities, which are described on each program's website and help the applicant achieve the goal, or "absolute priority" of a program. Although most ED programs could be coordinated with other community support programs, such as feeding programs or other health interventions, funds typically cannot be used solely for these types of programs.

7. Would you recommend applying to multiple programs for funding?

Our Answer: Eligible applicants should apply for whichever programs are appropriate to fund its proposed interventions. If the applicant is interested in several types of programming, there is no prohibition against applying for several grant programs simultaneously. With that said, however, the applicant should be thoughtful about what activities might be funded by which programs and how those proposed activities might be complementary, not duplicative. Please note, however, that writing grants to be responsive to application requirements can be time-consuming and challenging. Applicants should consider how their time is best spent and which programs might be the best fit for their efforts.

8. Does the type of activities we are pursuing inform the type of funding we should apply for?

Our Answer: Yes, you should apply for funds based on your proposed activities and how closely those proposed activities meet the established priorities and are consistent with the current strategic direction of the school, LEA or organization.

9. Which of these federal programs do you think is the most amenable to spending money on SEL activities? (What would be the easiest for getting money?)

Our Answer: Grant programs with SEL as the stated purpose of the program, such as the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program, are the closest fit for SEL activities. However, all of the programs listed in the guide in some way would potentially allow SEL activities to be implemented, depending on how well you are able to justify the way these activities support the established priorities and strategic directions of the school, LEA or organization. Always consult the specific ED program office if you have any questions about the appropriateness of your proposed activities in relation to the purpose and direction of the grant opportunity.

10. My district is all about Common Core right now. How would you pose the argument for investment in SEL activities when that seems to be the most important investment?

Our Answer: It is incumbent upon the applicant to determine the most pressing needs and priorities for its schools and students. Many districts pursuing Common Core implementation also recognize the need to educate the whole child, which necessarily combines the pursuit of academic benchmarks and standards with work to support the social and emotional development of students. It is possible to pose arguments for funding Common Core implementation and SEL and craft

interventions that support both of these aims, and there is substantial research to support the necessity of doing so. More background on the research supporting the intersection of academic achievement and social emotional learning can be found at the [Center for Health and Health Care in Schools](#).

General Questions:

11. Where do we find annotated bibliography?

Our Answer: The link to the funding guide, the annotated bibliography, the archived webinar, and the PPT slides can be found on this webpage:

<http://www.healthinschools.org/en/School-Based-Mental-Health/Funding-Guide-for-SEL.aspx>.

12. How does one become a peer reviewer for grants?

Our Answer: Each ED program office manages the peer review process for their grant programs. It is best to check with the specific office to ascertain the timing of grant reviews, as well as their need for peer reviewers. Sometimes, once you are in the database for an office's peer reviewer pool, you need not apply each year to be a reviewer but this is dependent on the ED program office and its unique procedures. In most cases, you will be asked about your experience and perspective, as well as your specific areas of interest. These questions are asked to ensure that peer review panels are as balanced as possible.

13. I am looking for some good resources to educate my leadership/staff on SEL. Can you recommend any helpful articles or websites?

Our Answer: We would recommend you explore the following websites: casel.org, edutopia.org, www.devstu.org, www.cfchildren.org, schoolclimate.org, csefel.vanderbilt.edu, and cdc.gov/healthyyouth/wsc/index.htm.

14. What have you found to be the most successful approach toward making the case for SEL at the school board level?

Our Answer: Making the case among school board members may include information about a) the link between SEL and academic performance (<http://www.healthinschools.org/School-Based-Mental-Health/Revised-Annotated-Bibliography.aspx>), b) ways that investing in SEL may be part of the solution to reducing the achievement gap, c) examples of how SEL offers an alternative to punitive disciplinary actions, and d) how preventive activities could be a good "return on investment" when using public dollars. These are among some of the arguments that might influence board members to consider supporting SEL or universal behavioral health approaches.

15. When is it NOT worth it to provide social and emotional development supports at a school?

Our Answer: SEL support is intended to support the healthy development of all students and can be an integral part of maximizing academic success for everyone, but if there is little-to-no buy-in from leadership (particularly from the principal or

school district leaders) then the time may not necessarily be right to advocate for the implementation of SEL programs or strategies. Some SEL advocates have used methods to raise awareness and build grass roots support of SEL and mobilized support among key decision-makers as preliminary steps before approaching school leadership about the implementation of specific programs in schools.

16. What is the percentage of minority youth (specifically African-American children) that make up the US classroom?

Our Answer: Statistics indicate that for the 2011-2012 school year, the percentage for African American (AA) children in US public schools (in total) was 16%. Among charter schools (which are typically public schools), AA children made up 29% of total public charter school enrollees in the 2011-2012 school year (Sources: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), "*Public School Enrollment by Race and Ethnicity*" & "*Charter School Enrollment by Race and Ethnicity*").

17. You presented information on "immigrants", does that include all immigrants or only those coming from Mexico or South America?

Our Answer: The statistics on immigrants we presented include all children of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, including those originating from Africa, Central and South America, Europe, and Asia.

Questions for our Education Partners:

18. Noting the fairly strong staffing in support of Kentucky Title I SEL (i.e., counselor, behavior specialist, etc.), it seems dedicated staffing is critical to school wide sustainable success. How were those positions funded?

Our Answer: Most of these positions were funded through Title I or through discretionary staffing positions at the school district level. A Guidance Counselor is a full-time position allotted to every elementary school in this district. They were able to fund 3.0 positions through Title I for the current year.

19. Is Kari currently using the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (Second Step Edition) to monitor effectiveness of the Curriculum?

Our Answer: They are not currently using this assessment tool in their school in Kentucky. They use student behavior data (such as, office referrals, data from teachers regarding daily behavior through our school wide system of colors [green, yellow, orange, red]). (Note: for those interested in information about the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA – Second Step Edition), visit <http://www.centerforresilientchildren.org/school-age/assessments-resources>).

20. Was there anything else your school did that could contribute to your rise in academic rankings and drop in referrals?

Our Answer: Yes, the incredibly hard work by staff to help the whole child contributed to their success. Their affective (Family Resource Center, Social Worker, Guidance Counselor and Behavior Specialist) and academic staff (teachers

and administration) work well as a team to monitor student progress in all areas. They also have a clinic with a part-time Licensed Clinical Social Worker and a Psychiatrist who is there 1 day every other week to see students and provide prescriptions for medication if needed.

21. Who are the staff members adopting these students? This type of daily check-in and check-out is provided by support staff in our schools, not by teachers.

Our Answer: Their mantra is that “our students are all OURS”. Teachers, assistants, paraprofessionals, support staff, office staff, custodians, administration—ALL step up to “check and connect” because there are so many students who need it.

22. Directed to the principal: How did she make the argument in her grant to use the Title 1 funds for SEL? Is this a use of Title I monies that is usual and recognized?

Our Answer: Several of those at the school had previously used Second Step (an SEL curriculum) in the classroom with success. They were able to use their own behavior data at the time of the proposal to demonstrate the need. This is a usual and recognized use of funds in their district. The need to teach students social skills and replacement behaviors in order to help them work together productively was very important. They all recognized these skills as critical 21st Century skills that students will need to be successful in the workplace and in life.

23. Teachers and administrators are often concerned about being overloaded with responsibilities. How does SEL take work off of one’s plate instead of add to it?

Our Answer: Focusing on building relationships and improving SEL skills leads to immediate and noticeable reductions in disciplinary referrals, time off of task, and interpersonal conflicts—all of which can demand significant time from teachers and administrators. Using our Kentucky example, they have the Behavior Specialist, Social Worker, and Guidance Counselor modeling and teaching the program to their students 30 minutes/week. They scaffold back over this first semester and then the teachers go to three to four 10-minute lessons during their day (where it best fits in their schedules) beginning in January of the school year. The modeling and then co-teaching helps it seem less like “one more thing.” They are learning through their positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) that this kind of ongoing proactive approach to behavior is helping our students to learn these skills and is helping behavior improve so that instructional time is maximized.

24. When is the next 21st Century RFP scheduled to be released? What's the best way to identify any 21st Century grantees in NYC to whom we can reach out, in order to determine if collaboration might be a good fit for future 21st Century grants?

Our Answer: Currently, all 21st CCLC funds in New York are encumbered until June 30, 2016, so they do not anticipate another funding competition for a few years. The list of past and current grantees can be found at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/sss/21stCCLC/#AwardRecipients>. States conduct their

own competition to award 21st CCLC grants and have varying timelines. For a list of state contacts and websites with this information, visit <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/21stcclc/contacts.html#state>.

25. What types of SEL programs does the RWJF fund?

Our Answer: Earlier this year, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation shared a new vision to build a Culture of Health. The Foundation is currently on a learning journey to explore how it can shape its investments to ensure the country holds a shared value for health and all communities have equal opportunity to be healthy. We are exploring how we can address the pervasive violence and trauma that a significant number of children in this country experience and promote all children's social and emotional well being. With that aim in mind, RWJF has previously supported the growth of social emotional learning within schools and is examining different mechanisms that provide supportive educational experiences for children and their families through systems change. To stay connected as RWJF builds out this new vision, please go to the following webpage:

<http://www.rwjf.org/en/our-work.html>. For a listing of current grant opportunities, please go

to: <http://www.rwjf.org/en/grants.html#q/maptype/grants/ll/37.91,-96.38/z/4>.

26. Do you have any stories that capture the impact of this project? If so, please share one or two. Examples of what we are interested in include stories of people/communities the project has helped; lives that have changed; work that led to policy change, such as legislation or regulation; and research breakthroughs. You may include the stories as an appendix.

Our Answer: Given the complexity of the systems involved in sustaining child education and health-related programs, the impact of this exploratory work is still emerging. Policy change, implementation of legislation or regulations, and the development of standards are actions that often take years to accomplish; therefore, expecting significant outcomes as a direct result of this Guide is unrealistic. Yet, early signals and preliminary communication with various communities indicate the current work on SEL sustainability is proving valuable to their efforts. Our hope is that those of you who have used the funding guide will tell us what kind of impact it has had or is beginning to have.

Please complete this brief survey to let us know what impact, if any, the Guide has had and we will share results with participants in the coming months (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/B9ZLJ8C>).