

STATE BUDGET CASE STUDY: NEW MEXICO

ACCOMPLISHMENT

On April 1 of this year, New Mexico Senate Bill 614 (House Bill 892) was signed into law creating the Next Generation Fund and Council. The law supports positive youth development and after-school programming through \$2 million in funds, seeded through the Children's Trust Fund. These monies are from the state's tobacco settlement and will be used to leverage private and philanthropic investments in positive youth development, including afterschool programs. Entities eligible to receive funds are schools, local government, nonprofit organizations, tribal entities, post-secondary educational institutions and other community groups serving youth.

BACKGROUND

This bill was first proposed several years ago, although at that time the initiative had less unified support among stakeholders. Despite a prior introduction, the current campaigners found themselves working against legislators' basic lack of knowledge on out-of-school time issues. However, the initiative had broad support. Lieutenant Governor Diane Denish made out-of-school time one of her personal initiatives during the 2005 session. Former First Lady Alice King also lent strong support, which proved influential with many legislators. Champions within the legislature included Senator Jerry Ortiz y Pino, who was a member of the forerunner to the NM Out-of-School Time Network, and the bills' sponsors in both chambers, Senator Cynthia Nava and Representative Rhonda King (who is related to the former First Lady).

From the perspective of the Out-of-School Time Network, there was a clear call from the field for more resources and, thus, the passage of this bill was one of three legislative goals for the network. It should be noted that the pursuit of this initiative had originally been championed by others involved in youth development and the original NM Out-of-School Time Network, spearheaded by Dr. Michael Malahy Morris.

NETWORK INVOLVEMENT AND ACTIVITIES

Renee Paisano-Trujillo, the Afterschool Project Director of the New Mexico Forum for Youth in Community, testified on behalf of the 2002 initiative (before the formation of the network). However, the NM Out-of-School Time Network's active involvement in the current campaign gained force when Lieutenant Governor Diane Denish, Chair of The New Mexico Children's Cabinet, asked the group to conduct the initial out-of-school time indicators work that led to the development of a children's report card.

The Network focused on the development of a public awareness campaign and the dissemination of relevant research. Information was disseminated in a number of ways including individual briefings with legislators, briefing materials delivered to legislators' offices, and follow-up calls to 17 sponsors who supported afterschool legislation during the 2005 Legislative Session. The network also organized trainings on legislative process and policy for network members. The Network worked collaboratively within its partnership base to spread the need for afterschool programming through key events and discussions.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The Next Generation Council will develop a competitive grant process to be administered by the Children, Youth and Families Department for money disbursement from the Next Generation Fund. A priority will be placed on programs that include, among other objectives, community planning and collaboration, and scientific based research and evaluation.

A broader implication is that this year's legislative success galvanized a larger network of advocates who will continue to work together. It is considered one of the major successes of the session that so many groups who had not joined forces before worked successfully on this initiative. Future partnership is expected to generate even more resources for youth development. For example, the Youth Alliance, 112 youth from across the state who provide input to legislators, recently completed their 2006 policy platform and identified out-of-school time programming as one of their top issues.

LESSONS LEARNED

Renee Paisano-Trujillo, coordinator for the New Mexico Out-of-School Time Network had this to say about lessons learned:

1. *Stay focused.* The Network believes that they started the effort too late (October) and with too many proposed bills (seven). Narrowing the focus of the effort would have allowed for more energy toward the major legislative goal. And, according to Ms. Paisano-Trujillo, "It was painful..." to start just prior to session as there was so much to accomplish in a very short timeframe.
2. *Be prepared.* The lack of start-up time (which, in this case, was somewhat inevitable due to the hire date of the executive director) had an impact on several fronts. First, the legislators required a great deal of education; many of them had very little to no concept of out-of-school time. Second, the network would have welcomed more time to dedicate to the actual collaboration process (i.e. educating new partners). Finally, more time and energy was needed to generate statewide buy-in and broader geographic support. Although the groups in Albuquerque were firmly behind the initiative, rural providers were less invested. As a result, these groups were lacking presence during testimony (although driving distances will always make this a challenge).
3. *Partnership is critica, and Youth are powerful partners.* True partnership requires constant education and communication but, when in place, the payoffs can be enormous. Perhaps an often overlooked resource, the youth who participated through New Mexico's Youth Alliance proved to be an invaluable voice. Ms. Paisano-Trujillo said, "When youth speak at the round house, legislators listen."
4. *Provide tools for partners to be heard effectively.* It is important to give youth and other partners the tools they need to make their voices successfully and effectively heard. These tools include training on the legislative process, how to deliver a message and how to converse with policy makers. The NM Out-of-School Time Network will continue to develop their relationship with the Youth Alliance and other partners. They have found the collaboration the Youth Alliance especially to be both rewarding and extremely effective.

NETWORK DETAILS

State Network: New Mexico Out-Of-School Time Network

Lead group or fiscal agent: The New Mexico Forum for Youth in Community

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Partner groups involved in effort: The New Mexico Forum for Youth in Community, The Children's Trust, The Committee for Community Volunteerism, New Mexico Forum for Youth in Community, NM Community Foundation, the Youth Alliance, The New Mexico Children's Cabinet, The Mott Foundation.