

# CITY BUDGET CASE STUDY: SEATTLE

---

## ACCOMPLISHMENT

In fall 2004, Seattle voters passed the third Families and Education Levy (FEL), a \$116,788,000 million property tax levy over seven years to support a wide variety of activities in eight major investment areas: Preschool/Early Childhood Education, Family Support, Family Involvement, Middle School Support, Out-of-School Time, High-Risk, Middle/High School Age Youth, Student Health and School Crossing Guards. Those that impact afterschool are: quality supports to programs through training and technical assistance, child care subsidies for low income families using contracted City of Seattle Child Care programs, and direct program dollars to middle school programs. The levy offers funding to other types of family/education supports as well.

The City Council approved \$3,100,000 annually for Out-of-School Time programs specifically and an additional \$1,000,000 for Middle School Support and \$1,250,000 for High-Risk, Middle/High School Age Youth.

## BACKGROUND

The Family and Education Levy originally was created in 1990 by a very popular mayor. It passed without much opposition at the time, and has continued to pass in subsequent years with a seven-year term each time. Because the FEL levy has been in place for the past 14 years, the budget was already developed. This was the third election cycle that the Seattle public voted to pass it again, and though the total funding amount did not increase, funding streams within the levy were adjusted.

Changes incorporated into the 2004 levy will have a significant impact on programs. All FEL funded programs will be evaluated using an outcome funding framework developed by the Rensselaerville Institute. The three outcomes are school readiness, academic achievement, or dropout reduction. Clear performance results are required for each program and each will have indicators to measure progress. The levy also requires the identification of a primary population to be served, which is a more specific requirement than in previous years. Afterschool programs' success will be measured by students' state standardized tests scores. Confidentiality agreements between the school district and the afterschool programs are still being developed to ensure that programs have access to necessary data. Funding directed at the current Community Learning Centers (funded in part by the state 21<sup>st</sup> Century dollars) will be required to have matching dollars.

## NETWORK INVOLVEMENT AND ACTIVITIES

School's Out Washington (SOWA), based in Seattle, WA, assisted in several ways on the effort to pass the levy. Prior to the levy vote, a planning committee was established by the Mayor to provide community input on the programs to be funded. As soon as the community planning process was announced by the Mayor's office, SOWA worked to ensure that afterschool advocates and individuals from diverse communities were represented in the community group and provided them with research and information.

Many meetings were held prior to the levy vote and SOWA encouraged parents and afterschool providers to attend and voice their concerns and support. Very clear guidelines from this community group were given to the Mayor which included accountability language that was specifically *not* strongly tied to high stakes testing. In addition, clear support for ethnic programs was listed as a high priority from the community group. Professional development of staff was also listed as a necessary support to programs. In the end, much of the requests and input from the community group and community meetings were not implemented in final levy language.

Some internal champions on the City Council and key staff positions within the City Human Services Office, Seattle Public Schools, School Board members and influential citizens were champions for afterschool. SOWA provided all of them with key information to support the process, as well as attended community meetings and gave speakers needed research and data for support. Individual meetings were also scheduled with Council members and School Board members.

SOWA created email alerts and meeting fliers for distribution. They relied on multiple partners for information, access to other groups and speakers at key events. The Network also did a phone bank the week prior to the vote and distributed yard signs and fliers to programs. SOWA felt that placing key voices on committees and providing them with information was the most successful strategy to influence the language for the levy.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

Levy funds became available in July of 2005. SOWA helped to spread the word about the grant process for programs serving the specific target populations and attended community meetings. As they head into 2006, new contracts with existing programs will be developed that will include the stronger outcome language. SOWA will hold provider meetings on the topic of outcomes and will again offer both on site and phone technical assistance.

There is a concern that community-based afterschool providers are going to be held accountable for student test scores. Also, the non-school entities will need access to school data, therefore issues of confidentiality arise. SOWA will act as a liaison with Seattle Public schools and advocate for the information flow needed to ensure that programs get the data they need to prove targets are being met.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

Janet Frieling, the Director of the Washington Afterschool Network, shared the following lessons:

1. *Do not forget policy makers.* No matter how much work you do to influence a levy or a community planning process, sometimes a local elected official will implement his/her own agenda and not really listen to the community. SOWA spent more time on community input and providing information to others than on the Mayor. They feel they would have been better served in trying to influence him.
2. *Long term partnerships are vital.* SOWA is an 18-year-old organization that works very hard to create and maintain positive relationships, both within and outside of government agencies. Because they are an intermediary, they can mobilize groups on behalf of government agencies or in opposition of government decisions.

3. *Remaining neutral is key to their success.* Because of their position, SOWA are fed information from inside sources, never reveal these sources and make sure that the information is accurate.
4. *Develop advocates and methods to mobilize them.* They use both email and other methods to mobilize groups quickly. SOWA has key advocates who are able and willing to testify when community voices are better than an organizational voice.
5. *Research is important.* Provide good data and research and coaching on key points.
6. *Develop a strong provider network and use it efficiently and effectively.* SOWA tries to spread out their requests so that one person or organization is not overburdened. They try to encourage provider voices to be heard rather than their organization.

## **NETWORK DETAILS**

State Network: Washington Afterschool Network

Lead group or Fiscal Agent: School's Out Washington (Umbrella agency is YWCA and is very supportive of all activities)

Key contact: Janet Frieling; 206-323-2396 ext. 26; frieling@schoolsoutwashington.org

Partner groups involved in effort: City of Seattle Human Services Department, Seattle Public Schools (variety of divisions), YMCA, YWCA, Campfire, Boys and Girls Clubs and other small afterschool program providers, WAN Panel of 50 members, Children's Alliance (an established statewide advocacy organization) and Seattle Parks Department.