CITY BUILD INITIATIVE GRANT

Questions and Answers Associated with the Second Year Request for Applications

1. Is the application deadline September 1, 2006 or August 25, 2006?
    a. **The application deadline is August 25, 2006.**

2. Do growth gains demonstrated by a cohort fulfill the growth gain requirement?
    a. The academic progress demonstrated by a cohort through the use of alternative assessments is one of several methods which could be used to measure a school's academic gains. The more traditional method of reviewing standardized test scores is an example of another method by which a school can demonstrate academic gains.

3. How can new schools demonstrate academic achievement?
    a. The RFA is not specific as to the method for reporting academic achievement. It is important that the school demonstrate progress and that the school supports its method for demonstrating said progress with data. The longer a school has been in existence, the more options it will have for demonstrating academic achievement. Charter schools scheduled to open in the fall of 2006, will not have an academic record, thus they may encounter challenges in demonstrating academic achievement.

4. What is the relationship between a community school and neighborhood revitalization? What does revitalization mean? How might a school contribute to revitalization?
    a. A community school will help facilitate revitalization, but it is not the sole responsibility of the school to revitalize the neighborhood. Establishing partnerships with existing community organizations to help improve the community is one way that schools can assist in revitalizing the community. All residents and families of the District are seeking quality schools, and having quality schools will help to attract and retain residents.

5. Will the review panel be progressive in defining academic research? Will the review panel not just look at traditional research, but also how sound the curriculum is?
    a. The review panel will be instructed to review the curriculum based on the information provided by the applicant. Looking at the school's curriculum holistically will afford schools the opportunity to have their curriculum reviewed fairly. A school innovating through the creation of a new curriculum (or otherwise) can demonstrate their own evaluation of student progress and/or the school's own evaluation of the curriculum.

6. At least three of the four priorities found in the bonus of Criterion D, if added to existing school programs, would require authorizer approval. Can the applicant state that the school intends to implement one of these priorities pending authorizer approval?
    a. This is best answered by each school's chartering authority. Family literacy and college access programs, for example, could in many cases likely be added without additional authorization by the school's chartering authority. In regards to the special education and the career/technical education aspects, schools would either already have those as part of the school design or not. It is permissible to include in the application that the school intends to implement any of the four priorities pending approval by the appropriate charter authorizer. This, however, may mean that such a school may not score as well as a school that is currently implementing or able to immediately implement at least one of the four priorities.

7. Are Criteria E and D designed to skew the points because they appear to be weighted more toward community services and program growth rather than facility acquisition?
    a. Criteria E and D are designed to have the applicant demonstrate how the facility (whether new or existing) will best be used to educate its students while providing valuable services to the community.

8. What is the total amount of funds available to be awarded and how many grants are planned to be awarded?
    a. Approximately two million dollars will be awarded during round two of the City Build Grant Initiative. The number of grants to be awarded is dependent upon the number of qualifying applicants.

9. When will the next round for the City Build Initiative Grant be held?
    a. The next round of City Build Initiative Grants will tentatively be held in the spring of 2007.

10. How should the electronic submission be stored?
    a. The electronic application copy should be submitted either on a compact disc or a 3.5 diskette.

11. Should the charts be double-spaced?
    a. The charts most likely do not need to be double-spaced. They will need to be double-spaced if they are denser than a typical chart.

12. Will the demonstration of solid academic progress be acceptable in lieu of DC CAS scores and would an accompanying external review be helpful?
    a. The State Education Office understands and appreciates the fact that public charter schools may implement a variety of assessment methods in addition to standardized tests to measure student performance. An external review of a school's assessment method could provide reviewers with valuable additional information.

13. Is the budget narrative part of the 35 pages?
    a. The RFA states that the program budget and budget narrative are not counted in the page total.

14. Are external articles and any other external support documents acceptable to demonstrate the schools performance and community involvement?
    a. References to external articles and other external support are acceptable for demonstrating school performance and community involvement. These letters of support will not be counted against the page limit as specified in Section V of the RFA.

15. How long after the submission deadline will the awardees be announced?
    a. The awardees should be announced by the end of September.

16. Is expanding facility space so that fewer students are on the waiting list considered a community benefit?
    a. Serving more students could potentially be beneficial to the community; however, applicants should review the RFA and goals of the program carefully and respond accordingly.

17. Since many students attend public charter schools in communities where they don't live, how can that public charter school serve the surrounding community?
    a. Although public charter schools are often comprised of students who live in different communities within the District rather than only the community where the school is located, public charter schools can still provide community services and establish partnerships/collaborations with nearby community organizations and with families in the community.

18. Is there any benefit if the applicant can show matching funds?
    a. Please refer to Section II and Criterion F of the RFA.

19. Is there a deadline for asking questions that may significantly affect the policy for the program? Does a deadline exist for questions?
    a. All questions following the pre-application conference should be submitted via e-mail to Matthew Dunkle (matthew.dunkle@dc.gov). Questions will be responded to up until the application due date.

20. What is the most effective way for schools to demonstrate proof of service to the community?
    a. Examples of effective methods for demonstrating proof of service to the community are letters of support, evidence of existing partnerships, and completing Attachment E in the RFA.

21. Is the second round of City Build aimed primarily at secondary schools?
    a. This round of City Build is not geared toward any age specific group.

22. How is this round of City Build different from the 21st Century School Fund grant?
    a. It is our understanding that the 21st Century School Fund grant is not focused on facilities. While this round of City Build is not solely focused on facilities, it is designed to assist schools in either securing a new facility, renovating a facility, or expanding its programmatic offerings with an emphasis on the use of the facility for the community.

23. First round awardees are not eligible for this round; will this practice be continued in the third round?
    a. It is currently the intention of the SEO to continue to provide grant awards to new awardees.

24. Do the funds need to be used to sustain the program/partnership beyond the years of the grant agreement, or can the dollars be used solely for the facility?
    a. It is allowable for the grant dollars to be used solely for a facility; however, the proposal should be clear about how the facility will directly support the goals described. Successful applicants will have a grant agreement committing the school to accomplishing those goals.

25. Must the public charter school have a certain number of students in order to apply?
    a. The applicant should provide evidence to show that its school is established and has a student body formally enrolled for courses in the 2006-2007 school year.

26. Is it possible to receive a partial award?
    a. It is possible, but grantees should apply for the amount needed to meet the stated objectives, and the budget line item and narrative should clearly support those objectives.

27. Are the required attachments available in a non-PDF format (i.e., applicant profile, certifications, assurances, budget, and collaboration commitment form)?
    a. The required attachments are not available in a non-PDF format such as Microsoft Word. In order to maintain uniformity of the applications and to prevent any unnecessary confusion regarding applicant requirements, the attachments are only available in PDF format.

28. Who were the First Round City Build Grant recipients and what was the amount of each grant?
    a. The five awardees of the first City Build Initiative Grant were Capital City Public Charter School, Thurgood Marshall Academy Public Charter School, Tree of Life Public Charter School, Two Rivers Public Charter School, and Washington Math Science and Technology Public Charter School. Four of the five schools were awarded $1,000,000.00, and the fifth school was awarded approximately $970,000.00.

29. Should the Facility Assessment be attached as an appendix (as listed on page 14 of the RFA) or be a part of the Project Description which references the "scoring criteria" section?
    a. The Facility Assessment should be attached as an appendix as listed on page 14 of the RFA, but it should also be included as part of the Project Description in order to maintain the continuity of the application.

30. Are financial partnerships and community partnerships weighted differently?
    a. All partnerships will be scored in accordance with the criteria of the City Build Initiative Grant. Applicants should review the RFA and goals of the program carefully and respond accordingly.