



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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February 15, 2012

TO: Members
Joint Committee on Finance

FROM: Bob Lang, Director

SUBJECT: Administration: Section 13.10 Request for Approval of Community Partnerships
Plans -- Agenda Item I

REQUEST

The Department of Administration (DOA) requests approval of two example plans for community partnerships from the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and a plan from the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

BACKGROUND

Under 2011 Act 32, DPI and DCF were required to create and submit plans for community partnerships to the Department of Administration. Section 9101 (3i) of Act 32 required DOA to submit those plans by January 10, 2012, to the Committee for its approval.

For DPI, Act 32 required that a plan be prepared for providing funding to community-based nongovernmental organizations for the establishment of partnerships with local school districts that center on those organizations providing advocacy for students and serving as liaison between families and staff of those school districts with the goal of improving educational outcomes and promoting and teaching greater self-sufficiency. DPI submitted two example plans that might be used to address community partnerships.

For DCF, Act 32 required that a plan be prepared to provide funding to community-based nongovernmental organizations to establish partnerships with agencies that license foster homes. These partnerships must center on those organizations providing advocacy for children and serving as liaison between families and staff of those agencies with the goal of improving educational outcomes and promoting and teaching greater self-sufficiency. DCF submitted a

plan for community partnerships that is part of a larger initiative to assist youth leaving the independent living program transition to adult life.

ANALYSIS

DPI has submitted two plans for the Committee's consideration, one that would attempt to use existing resources, and a second plan that would use \$100,000 GPR for this purpose.

DPI Plan A -- Existing Resources. Under the first plan from DPI, school districts applying for program revenue or federal dollars from discretionary grant programs administered by DPI would, to the extent allowable by state and federal regulation, be required to include a description of how they would ensure that student-centered community/family partnerships would be made or enhanced over the grant period. DPI indicates that this approach would allow a means to ensure partnerships while requiring no additional funding, as it would be related to money already being awarded. As an example, DPI could request that schools identify how they would: (a) coordinate with federal, state, or local groups; (b) form partnerships between schools, community-based organizations, and other public or private entities; and (c) consult with parents and community members.

Where allowable, school districts would be encouraged to subcontract some services with community-based, non-governmental organizations to form partnerships with schools and families. Services would be those that increase student academic achievement, attendance, or graduation rates. Specific examples would include: (a) assign existing community organization staff to serve as liaisons between school and families; (b) train school district staff to work with families to promote student achievement; (c) offer materials and workshops for families to learn how to support their child's performance in school; and (d) improve the ability of schools and community agencies to collaborate and coordinate services to help families support student achievement.

DPI Plan B -- \$100,000 GPR in Funding. Under the second example, DPI proposes that the Committee provide \$100,000 GPR from its appropriation to the Department. Under this option, mini-grants could be awarded to school districts working with community-based, non-governmental organizations to provide partnerships with the families of at-risk youth. Criteria would need to be developed in order make such awards. Specifically, DPI would expect grant recipients to: (a) attend statewide technical assistance training for family, school, and community teams to work with families to support student achievement; (b) assign a community-based liaison and establish family, school, and community teams at the local level to increase and coordinate existing local services and programs that assist families in supporting students; (c) conduct training of local school staff, community staff, and families to learn how to collaborate on helping students be successful; and (d) submit plans describing how each school district family, school, and community team would collaborate with families and community groups to offer activities and other learning-based initiatives to help families support children's learning. No funding was set aside for this purpose under Act 32. The net unreserved balance remaining in the Committee's appropriation at the present time is \$267,200 GPR.

DCF Plan. Under DCF's plan for community partnerships, an action plan would be implemented to develop a pilot program structure for youth leaving the independent living program to: (a) identify and develop training for a mentor program; (b) identify potential nongovernmental agency partners; and (c) develop a timeline and schedule for full implementation of the program. This pilot program structure is intended to be in place by June of 2013.

Prior to June, 2013, DCF would take several steps to get ready for the pilot program structure, including: (a) identifying potential private and public funding sources; (b) researching and incorporating best practices regarding foster and juvenile youth mentoring and independent living programs, such as training, program structure, and outcomes; (c) assessing current and past mentor independent living educational programs in other states and localities in Wisconsin for key program lessons and success factors; and (d) developing mechanisms to incorporate trauma-informed care training and awareness into the mentor and educational programs, such as identifying potential mental health partners.

In an effort to reduce placements into out-of-home care and increase permanency for adolescents in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, Wisconsin was one of five states invited to participate in a National Governors Association (NGA) Three Branches Institute project. One barrier for these adolescents noted by the NGA project is the lack of stability for youth leaving the independent living program with no permanent relationships or supports to achieve a smooth and successful transition to adult life. DCF, along with the legislative and court representatives of the NGA project, identified this barrier as an area to incorporate a community partnerships plan pursuant to Act 32 requirements.

Under the independent living program, states are required to provide independent living services to youth aging out of out-of-home care, as well as youths between the ages of 18 and 21 who were formerly in out-of-home care. States can use funds in any way that allows them to achieve the general purpose of the program, which is to help eligible children make the transition to self sufficiency through services such as assistance in obtaining a high school diploma, career exploration, vocational training, job placement and retention, training in daily living skills, training in budgeting and financial management skills, obtaining safe and stable living environments, and preventive health activities.

DCF's plan for community partnerships is part of a larger initiative that addresses permanency for adolescents in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Under the plan, funding sources and potential nongovernmental partners would be identified. The purpose of the plan is to provide community-based mentors, through community-based organizations, for youth transitioning to adult life from the independent living program. The goals of the mentoring program would be to improve outcomes and greater self-sufficiency for youth who had been placed in out-of-home care.

ALTERNATIVES

A. Department of Public Instruction

1. Approve DPI Plan A, which would require school districts applying for current law discretionary grant programs administered by DPI to provide a description of how community/family partnerships would be incorporated as part of the grant activities.

2. Approve DPI Plan B, which would transfer \$100,000 GPR in 2011-12 from the Committee's appropriation [s. 20.865(4)(a)] and provide that funding to DPI as one-time funding in 2012-13 [s. 20.255(1)(a)] to award mini-grants to school districts to enhance community/family partnerships.

3. Disapprove both DPI Plans A and B.

B. Department of Children and Families

1. Approve the DCF plan to develop a pilot program for youth leaving the independent living program.

2. Disapprove the DCF plan.

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