

21st CCLC Informational BRIEF



Preparing to Write a 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grant

21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) federal grants are competitive and take a significant amount of thought and planning before an application is submitted. This informational brief will help you to prepare before the Request for Application (RFA) is released.

STRATEGY 1

Create an application grant writing team. Create a timeline that lists contributors and their responsibilities as soon as the 21st CCLC application is released by the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). Applicants will have approximately six weeks to write before the submission deadline.

Tip:

Consider creating two grant writing teams where team one writes the application, and another team serves as a feedback or advisory group. For example, the second team could read, score and give feedback to drafts of the proposal before submission.

STRATEGY 2

Elaborate on Oregon 21st CCLC Goals. Don't leave any questions unanswered in the reviewer's mind on how your application will meet these goals.

Tip:

Create a logic model or program plan to help guide the writing project and make sure every part of the proposal matches that plan.

21st CCLC programs:

1. Provide opportunities for **academic enrichment**, including providing tutorial services to help students, particularly students who attend low-performing schools, to meet the challenging State academic standards in core academic subject such as reading, writing, and mathematics;
2. Offer students a **broad array of additional services**, programs, and activities, such as youth development activities, service learning, nutrition and health education, drug and violence prevention programs, counseling programs, arts, music, physical fitness and wellness programs, technology education programs, financial literacy programs, environmental literacy programs, mathematics, science, career and technical programs, internship or apprenticeship programs, and other ties to an in-demand industry sector or occupation for high school students that are

designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program of participating students; and

3. Offer **families** of students served by community learning centers opportunities for active and meaningful engagement in their children’s education, including opportunities for literacy and related educational development.

STRATEGY 3

Anchor the application in these four pillars for high-quality expanded learning programs. 21st CCLC programs provide a unique opportunity to build relationships, spark joy, and deepen natural curiosity that promotes learning, growth, and success for every student. The following components are crucial for an application built on quality.



1. **Connection as the Foundation for Learning.** Relationships are the foundation of learning. 21st CCLC programs should ensure students are able to access content through centering relationships, communities, and a sense of belonging.
2. **Strength-Based Student Voice & Choice.** Learning happens best when educators actively uplift and center a student’s prior knowledge and view it as an asset for learning rather than a problem to overcome. Student voice and choice should be included at every level of programming.
3. **Co-Creation and Innovation.** Co-creation and continued co-learning with students, families, and partners ensures the specific context of the community; its history and culture(s), assets and challenges, needs, and dreams are integrated within the program.
4. **Purposeful Outreach and Engagement.** 21st CCLC programs are voluntary and require purposeful outreach. These programs work to bridge gaps across many interwoven and systemic inequities that exist in our society, especially impacting students at the margins. Equity-driven strategies are key to effective student and family recruitment and retention in 21st CCLC programs.

STRATEGY 4

Become familiar with 21st CCLC federal statute and read the previous 2018 RFA. This will ground your team in the goals, purpose, key requirements, and basic structure of the grant.

1. The Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) grant is authorized under Title IV, Part B of the [Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 \(ESEA\)](#), as amended by Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 (see §§4201 to 4206).
2. [21st CCLC ODE Webpage](#) where you will find the 2018 Request for Application.

Important Note: ESSA statute has not changed since the 2018 RFA was released. However, the new 2023 RFA will have changes based on feedback from engagement sessions and alignment to state initiatives and goals. Make sure when the new 2023 RFA is released the application team anchors to the updated version.

STRATEGY 5

Gather data to make an impactful need statement. Under ESSA, all 21st CCLC applicants are required to conduct a needs assessment. It's recommended to not only assess the need for a 21st CCLC program, but also to build upon the assets of students, families and the community for which the program will serve.

Tips:

1. Gather both local quantitative (e.g., test scores, absentee rates, etc.) and qualitative (e.g., interviews, focus groups, etc.) data to determine both strengths and needs.
2. Use multiple data sources (teachers, students, parents, school, census, economic, etc.).
3. Tap into any school or district strategic plans, needs assessments or current community engagement data.
4. Gather national or state data to establish perspective outside of the local area and confirm the likelihood that in similar situations, programming beyond the school day has helped to improve the situation.


STRATEGY 6

Begin building partnerships and co-creating a shared vision of the program. Under ESSA, 21st CCLC programs must consist of “a partnership between a local educational agency, a community-based organization, and another public entity or private entity, if appropriate.” [§4204(b)(H)]

Tips:

1. Identify and reach out to potential partners, including educators from the proposed school(s), who have:
 - a. missions aligned with the goals and purpose of the 21st CCLC grant;
 - b. expertise working with the proposed school populations;
 - c. resources needed by the proposed populations and/or grant applicants;
 - d. assets in the community that can deepen and enrich the program.
2. Invite potential partners to a grant overview informational session where: 1) the purpose and requirements of the 21st CCLC grant are shared; 2) conduct a Q & A session about the grant and surface additional questions for when the new RFA is released; 3) and as appropriate, begin to formulate strategic partnerships.

"Partnership" means a group of organizations, Tribes, districts or individuals who agree to work together with a common interest and shared vision. In a partnership, there is a high level of trust and two-way communication, and differences in power and privilege are addressed. Roles and



responsibilities on all sides are well-defined and developed with shared authority in decision making. There might be shared space and staff, with expectations and agreements in writing.

STRATEGY 7

Create an effective outreach and engagement strategy. Think about what will make students want to attend the program. Applicants should start thinking about a clear, specific plan of how program staff and focal schools will recruit and retain students, adult caregivers/families, teachers and staff into the 21st CCLC program. Some questions to consider include:

- How will you share and explain your innovative plans to students, families, community members and school staff?
- What public forums will you hold about the program? When and where will they be held?
- How will the program promote a 21st CCLC climate and culture that provides additional nourishment, relational connection, creative expression, learning opportunities for all students, and especially students at the margins?

Tip:

Read ODE’s [Summer Learning Best Practice Guide](#) and [Companion Toolkit](#). These resources are not solely for summer learning and apply to afterschool programming as well.

STRATEGY 8

Start thinking about transportation and meal plans. Two critical areas that take a lot of planning and consideration are meals and transportation. Applicants should have a plan for providing meals and transportation for students attending the 21st CCLC program.

Transportation: Federal guidance advises that there can be no barriers preventing students’ participation in 21st CCLC. Programs must offer students a means of transport if they qualify for afterschool and summer programming, and are unable to walk to community centers.

Meals: 21st CCLC programs are expected to provide snacks/meals through USDA Child Nutrition Programs. The 21st CCLC grant is not designed to fund all anticipated program costs. All programs should pursue opportunities to access other funding sources to cover food costs/after school snacks such as:

- National School Lunch Program-After School Snacks
- Summer Food Service Program
- Child and Adult Care Food Program
- Local Food Banks