

# 21st Century Community Learning Centers

## Program Highlights

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The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 made several significant changes to the program. These changes ensure that the program focuses on helping children in high-needs schools succeed academically through the use of scientifically based practice and extended learning time. The new statute also provides additional State and local flexibility in how funds can be used to support higher academic achievement, and dramatically expands eligibility for 21st CCLC funding to public and private educational and youth-serving organizations.

The specific changes to the program's authorizing statute include:

- Implementing activities based on rigorous scientific research. For the first time, the new authorizing statute provides principles of effectiveness to guide local grantees to identify and implement programs and activities that can directly enhance student learning. These activities must address the needs of the schools and communities, be continuously evaluated using performance measures, and – if appropriate – be based on scientific research.
- Focusing services on academic enrichment opportunities. Under the new legislation, grantees must provide academic enrichment activities to students in low-performing schools to help the students meet State and local standards in the core content areas, such as reading, math, and science. In addition, applicants may provide services to the families of children who are served in the program. Under the previous statute, grantees provide a broad array of services to children and community members. The new legislation allows community learning centers to serve adult family members of students but not community members at large.
- Transferring program administration from the Federal to the State level. The new legislation turns over responsibility for managing the 21st CCLC program to the State educational agency (SEA) in each State. The U.S. Department of Education (the Department) will allocate funds to the SEAs by formula. The SEA will manage grant competitions and award grants to eligible organizations for local programs. States now will be accountable to the Department for ensuring that all statutory requirements are met. Under the previous legislation, the Department administered the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, managed a nationwide competition, and directly awarded over 1,600 grants to public schools and school districts that worked in collaboration with other public and nonprofit organizations, agencies, and educational entities.
- Expanding eligibility to additional organizations. The new legislation allows, in addition to local educational agencies (LEAs), community-based organizations (CBOs), including faith-based organizations and other public or private organizations, to directly receive funds from the State under this program. Under the previous authority, only public schools or local educational agencies could directly receive grants, although schools and

districts applying for the grants were encouraged to collaborate with other public and nonprofit agencies.

- Targeting services to poor and low-performing schools. The new legislation requires States to make awards only to applicants that will primarily serve students that attend schools with a high concentration of poor students, giving priority to applicants serving children in low-performing schools. Funds granted under the previous authority were targeted more broadly to inner-city and rural public elementary, middle, or secondary schools or consortia of public schools.
- Requiring States to set funding priorities. As noted above, States must give priority to applications for projects that will serve children in schools designated as in need of improvement under Title I and that are submitted jointly by school districts receiving Title I funds and community-based organizations. This priority is new. The previous legislation did not mandate priorities but strongly encouraged schools to collaborate with community-based organizations.
- Extending the duration of grant awards. States now have the discretion to award grants to local organizations for a period of three to five years. The previous law limited the duration of the grants to three years.
- Increasing accountability at the State and local levels. The new legislation requires States to develop performance indicators and performance measures that it can use to evaluate programs and activities. States must require local grantees to implement programs that meet specific principles of effectiveness. In addition, grantees must periodically evaluate their programs to assess progress toward achieving the goal of providing high-quality opportunities for academic enrichment.
- Expanding the range of locations in which local programs may take place. The new legislation provides support for services for children and their families in elementary or secondary schools or in any other location that it is at least as available and accessible as the school. The previous legislation allowed for community learning centers to be located only in public elementary or secondary schools.
- Requiring funds to supplement and not supplant. Grantees must use program funds to supplement and not supplant other Federal, State, and local funds. This “supplement not supplant” provision was not included in the previous statute.
- Allowing States to require a local match. States may now require local grantees to match funds. Under the previous law no match was required.
- Requiring consultation and coordination. States must, in their State application, provide an assurance that the State application was developed in consultation and coordination with appropriate State officials, including the chief State school officer, other State agencies administering before- and after-school (or summer school) programs, the heads of the State health and mental health agencies or their designees, and representatives of teachers, parents, students, the business community, and community-based organizations, including faith-based organizations.