

Organization Description

Essex North Supervisory Union supports the communities and families of the Canaan School District in Canaan, Vermont with 200 students in Pre-K to grade 12. The Supervisory Union also supports the communities and families of the Northeast Kingdom (NEK) Choice School District serving 344 students in Pre-K to grade 12 in the towns of Bloomfield, Brunswick, East Haven, Granby, Guildhall, Kirby, Lemington, Maidstone, Norton and Victory. The students in NEK Choice School District are provided tuition to attend approved schools based on accordance with state law and currently attend 26 different schools in New Hampshire, Vermont and other states across the country.

Organization Mission Statement

Essex North Supervisory Union supports the schools of the Canaan School District and the families and students of the NEK Choice School District. The Canaan Schools mission promotes citizenship, curiosity, creativity and the pursuit of college and career readiness while providing a safe and supportive learning environment where student voice and choice is valued. The mission of the NEK Choice School District is to acknowledge each student's individuality and provide school choice to help ensure the most rewarding and successful educational experience and environment.

Number of Full Time Employees: 51

Number of Part Time Employees: 1

Number of Volunteers: 15

Population Served:

Please select up to three individual populations, otherwise select General

Children, Families, Poor/Low Income

Operating Budget for Current Year: \$3,822,929.00

Application Status: Approved

Submitted By: Karen Conroy

GE Key: PR19-120939

Approved Date: 06/21/2019

Project Purpose: to continue exploring and researching new models for providing high quality public education and extracurricular activities for Pre-K - 12 students living in northern Coos and bordering communities in Vermont

Project Start Date: 07/01/2019

Project End Date: 06/30/2020

Grant Priority: Planning Efforts

Proposal

Executive Summary

Please describe in detail the proposed project or program, its importance and the results you expect.

This project will take a deeper look into a new regional educational model that will positively and substantially impact the future of education for our students in the Northern regions of New Hampshire and Vermont. This request will establish the educational groundwork to unite communities as they work together towards the same goal of improving the educational opportunities for all students at a reasonable cost to the taxpayers. Through this project, the committee plans to further examine infrastructure, transportation, governance, opportunities and the financial impact of an educational model for voters to approve.

Community Need or Opportunity

Provide a more detailed description of community opportunity for the proposed work. If other organizations address a similar need, describe your organization's differences and plans for partnership

Our proposal is focused on student opportunities for all of the children in the Northern region. While several communities are very interested in tax savings, the focus of this group lies in its ability to unite communities, consolidate resources, and narrow the educational opportunity gap that exists for learners. This region has been hit with hard times due to the closing of factories and the loss of jobs. As educational and community leaders, we feel it is time to look beyond our individual schools and focus on the potential to provide as one greater community. An education structure that puts aside local politics, sacred traditions, and state boundaries, motivates us to take on the challenges that lie ahead. Educating 200 high school aged students in three local high schools cannot be seen as the best we can do for our learners. With the support of the North Country Charitable Foundation we can develop an educational model that increases classroom and co-curricular opportunities as well as provide much needed relief to the local taxpayers.

This community effort will emphasize the need for a single high school and a single middle school program. The potential for a single central office that promotes a shared curriculum will ensure that all students have an equal opportunity for success in whichever path they chose beyond high school.

Approach

Please describe why the proposed approach or project has been selected to address the need or opportunity. Why is now a strategic time for the Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund to invest in this work?

Now is the time for the Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund to invest in this work because of the substantial support the communities have exhibited and the momentum to make improvements to the educational structure of the North Country. For the past two years, our schools have opened their doors to our area high school students. This collaborative effort allows students to take courses needed for graduation, to address scheduling conflicts and to access personal interests that are not offered in their local high schools. We have been sharing staff successfully to provide more opportunities at no additional cost to any of the schools. We hope through this process we will continue to pool resources and unite a once thriving area. It is the goal of this project and the committee to take our successful collaboration efforts to another level where we increase the educational opportunities for all of our children.

Our committee members are extremely passionate about making a significant change to the current model of education. Keep in mind that this change goes well beyond the reshaping of what currently exists. This second order change will promote a new approach to learning that will unite students at a younger level and offer a revamped, robust structure that provides resources to target an age appropriate education as well as social, emotional and developmental needs.

We are committed to establishing new opportunities, as well as exploring new programs that will help our students be successful in whatever path they choose beyond high school. A stronger Career Technical Education (CTE) program, extensive dual enrollment college courses, increased foreign language offerings, and a larger variety of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) related options are all seen as necessary and important.

While the primary focus of our vision is on the education of students, there is also the underlying belief that a unification of the educational system will be a strong partner in the revitalization of this beautiful region. As an example, we believe that a stronger CTE center will train, support and promote quality workers for local career opportunities.

Work Plan

Describe the specific workplan including major activities, key people involved and the timetable for the work.

With funding support, our plan going forward will continue our partnership with Carole Martin as our Project Manager and Meeting Facilitator. The leadership that she has provided to our committee, to this point, has been tremendous. Therefore, committee members are unanimous in their desire to renew and continue her contract in this capacity. With her guidance we will continue to develop our scope of work around the educational opportunities of a single regional middle school and a single regional high school.

Our plan is to address governance-related matters, transportation needs, curriculum and opportunities analysis, architectural and building assessment of needs and a full financial analysis. The 21 member committee will create subgroups to collect information and report all findings back to our facilitator, Carole Martin, and the committee members.

May 2019 – June 2019 Examine All Governance-Related Matters

July 2019 – Student Opportunities, Teachers & Curriculum and Transportation Analysis

August 2019 – Architectural Needs and Additional Building Costs for Consolidation

September 2019 – Financial Analysis and Preliminary Budgets

Our goal will be to examine infrastructure, transportation, governance, opportunities and financial impact as we develop an educational model that will be presented to voters for approval with a target date of March 2020.

Do you have an endowment?

No

Do you have an operating reserve?

No

Do you have a line of credit?

No

Sustainability

Describe the plan for future sustainability of the project or program, including other revenue streams and grants committed or applied for beyond the proposed funding period.

We understand that the current funding request will only allow us to continue our exploratory discussions in the development of an educational model that provides equal and additional opportunities for all the students in the Northern region. Future plans will be to seek additional funding from local communities, state educational agencies and non-profit organizations to assist with implementing the proposed configuration for a rural regional educational model in the North Country.

After submitting our original proposal the committee identified architecture and financial consultations as additional areas that will require financial support. As superintendents, we will explore funding streams and grants prior to asking NHCF for additional support. Resources could come from our state educational agencies, other philanthropic organizations and local school budgets.

Other Information

Please share any relevant information about this project not captured in the other questions.

Concept Paper

Executive Summary

Please briefly describe the proposed project or organization's overall work, its importance and the results you expect from this work.

The School Board Directors, Superintendents and representatives from the communities of NEK Choice&Canaan, Vermont and NH communities of Clarksville, Colebrook, Columbia, Pittsburg and Stewartstown have meeting regularly to research and develop a concept model to provide more educational offerings for our students at a reasonable cost to the taxpayers. This funding request is for the continued support of our regional efforts to improve the future of education in the region. The funds being requested will provide necessary resources to closer examine both the educational impact and financial impact our identified plan will have on education in the North Country.

Goals and Strategies

Describe the goals, objectives and activities you will implement to address the community need or opportunity identified above and a timeline for your proposed work.

Our 21-person exploratory committee through research and data collection relating to facilities, transportation, and curriculum has narrowed down over 20 school configurations to one model, Model 11. We believe that by increasing class size, combining students at the upper elementary grades, and offering a single high school/CTE center we will offer a more comprehensive education while at the same time be fiscally responsible to the taxpayers. The goals, objectives and activities for our next steps include the continued contracting with facilitator/project manager, Carole Martin. Carole has been instrumental in keeping the committee focused to the essential tasks and on schedule in terms of our timeline. After hosting our first community forum it is clear that the committees' next steps include assistance from legal counsel. Questions relating to organizational governance, union negotiations, interstate compacts, and financial responsibilities between New Hampshire and Vermont continue to surface. If approved, these funds will help provide answers to local voters so they can make an informed decision in the near future regarding Model 11.

A brief explanation of Model 11 is as follows:

Colebrook, Pittsburg, and Stewartstown will all become PK-4 schools.

Stewartstown will become the PK-4 school for all Canaan students.

At grade 5, Stewartstown and Canaan students will be added to either the Colebrook or Pittsburg's middle programs for grades 5-8.

All high school students will attend the Canaan High School/Career and Technical Education (CTE) Center.

Describe Your Qualifications

Briefly describe your organization qualifications to carry out the grant purpose. Provide a brief description of your current programmatic priorities and organizational goals.

As leaders of education we feel it is our responsibility to provide a quality education to every child that we serve. It is our belief that for too long this area has competed for resources in an effort to simply survive. As a result of current collaborative efforts between the local high schools and the dedication of our committed community committee, a clear vision for an improved education model is starting to gain support. Sample feedback from our first community forum includes statements such as, "Bravo to a realistic plan that will bring us together in the best interest of our students" and "Something has to be done because our schools are too small which puts a limit on learning." The thought that a single parent feels their child's learning is limited in the current structure, fuels our fire to take on this second order change.

Model 11 reduces our elementary schools from 4 to 3, our junior high schools from 4 to 2, and our high schools from 3 to 1. Compressing grade levels into existing buildings will offer larger class sizes from PK-8. Placing our high school students in a single high school/career technical center will increase class enrollments and offer CTE opportunities to the entire high school population of the region.

Community Need or Opportunity

Describe the need or opportunity for your work in the community, including qualitative and quantitative data as appropriate. How does the proposed work build from or capitalize on the community's or region's existing strengths?

This area recognizes the need to make educational adjustments that will assure our graduates are career ready. A strong Career and Technical Education (CTE) program, an extensive running start college credit menu, sharing of students between schools and established collaborative sports teams are evidence that residents recognize the need to work together.

The following article will go before voters in their upcoming town meeting.

“Shall the voters of _____ School District vote to support the continued study and development of a regional education plan known as Model 11 and the formation of any necessary committees to continue the study and development of a regional education plan; and further authorize the School Board to take the actions necessary to bring a plan forward for discussion and possible approval at a future School District meeting?”

If supported, this article further demonstrates the willingness of local residents to work together instead of apart. A major breakthrough for an area that once took pride in its educational independence.

Tillotson Fund Goals

Describe how your work builds from the region's strengths and advances one or more of the Tillotson Fund goals? How will you evaluate this impact?

We believe the next steps to providing a better educational opportunity for our PK-12 students directly relates to the vision of strong and inclusive communities in better preparing students for their future. With the region facing demographic challenges, declines in enrollments and increased per pupil cost without an end in sight the time is now to advocate for change. By capitalizing on our available resources, such as small rural learning environments, we can influence change. 70% of the school district costs are tied directly to personnel while staff-to-student ratios are extremely low. Taking a different approach to utilizing available resources will be more cost effective, increase class sizes, and expand learning opportunities. Students per grade level in Pittsburg would increase from 6 to 8, Colebrook from 24 to 32, Stewartstown from 7 to 13 and Canaan from 13 to 52 students per grade.

Evaluation Plan

Describe the intended outcomes from your proposed work in the community or region. Please describe how the outcomes will be measured.

Building a proud school climate and culture can have significant impact on the efforts to revitalize these communities. The potential of bringing three high schools into a single learning environment, the development of an aligned curriculum among sister middle schools, and a coordinated approach to learning in all elementary schools excites us! Sports teams that are made up of similar age athletes, increased participation in band/chorus, drama productions that build confidence, and a combined Key Club that develops student leaders are just a few of the program improvements possible if this model continues on its path to implementation.

Our outcomes will be measured by submitting a detailed plan to community members for discussion and approval at a future district meeting. Successful answers to the questions that surround governance and interstate articulations, curriculum, staffing adjustments, and budget development will be indicators of success. The current committee structure will require similar leadership, legal advisory, and additional staff input to assure that we meet the commitments we have made to students and community members.

Sustainability

If this work is ongoing, how will you sustain the work beyond this grant? If it's not ongoing, how does it advance organizational goals and/or create lasting community benefit? If a multi-year request, discuss your financial plan for each year covered by your proposal. Describe how activities will continue beyond the proposed funding period.

Community approval of the warrant article in March means that we will begin the next leg of our transformational journey. As this partnership moves forward, we will continue to offer students the opportunity take courses at neighboring schools free of charge, we will continue to combine athletes from Pittsburg and Canaan, and we will continue to look for ways to offer shared professional development opportunities. Once a final determination is made on Model 11 committee members will establish an implementation plan. Once the components of that plan are clear, local voters and supporting agencies will work together to assure a seamless transition.

| Organization | Contact Name | Contact Role | Phone | Email |
|-------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|
| Vermont Agency of Education | Daniel French | Commissioner of Education | 8024791030 | daniel.french@vermont.gov |
| Essex North Supervisory Union | Karen Conroy | Superintendent | 8022663330 | kconroy@ensuvt.org |
| School Administrative Unit 7 | Bruce Beasley | Superintendent | 6032375571 | bbeasley@sau7.org |
| NEK Choice School District | Miles Etter | School Board Director Chair | 8026958834 | metter@ensuvt.org |

Additional Information

Please share any relevant information about this project not captured in the other questions.

The model that we have proposed to the communities to investigate more thoroughly will reduce the number of area elementary schools from 4 to 3, the number of middle schools from 4 to 2 and the number of high schools from 3 to 1 with every community maintaining a school. In model 11, 95% of elementary students will be within 10 miles of their school, 90% of middle school students are within 10 miles of school and 99% would be within within 20. At the high school level 77% of students will be within 10 miles and 99% will be within 20.

Financials / Budget

Number of Years Requested: 1 Year

Request Amount Year 1: \$60,000

Total Request Amount: \$60,000

Total Project Budget: \$60,000

| REVENUE SOURCE | FUNDING YEAR 1 (NHCF) | FUNDING YEAR 1 (OTHER) | FUNDING TOTAL YEAR 1 | TOTAL ANTICIPATED PROJECT FUNDING | BUDGET NOTES | FUNDS COMMITTED? |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|------------------|
| NH Charitable Foundation | \$60,000 | | \$60,000 | \$60,000 | | NO |
| TOTAL FUNDING | \$60,000 | \$0 | \$60,000 | \$60,000 | | |

| EXPENSE TYPE | EXPENSE YEAR 1 (NHCF) | EXPENSE YEAR 1 (OTHER) | EXPENSE TOTAL YEAR 1 | TOTAL PROJECT EXPENSE | BUDGET NOTES |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Salary | \$30,000 | \$0 | \$30,000 | \$30,000 | Cost of Project Manager/Facilitator Carole Martin |
| Salary | \$25,000 | \$0 | \$25,000 | \$25,000 | Contracted Legal and Architectural Services |
| Other | \$5,000 | \$0 | \$5,000 | \$5,000 | Funds to be used to support stipends, travel and supplies in support of curriculum development |
| TOTAL EXPENSES | \$60,000 | \$0 | \$60,000 | \$60,000 | |

Financial Plan

Describe what part of the work you plan to support with these grant funds. Have you pursued other sources of funding to support the work? Please indicate if these additional funds are already committed and/or in-kind.

In order to continue the excellent leadership that Carole Martin has been providing as our facilitator, we are asking you to support her salary for another year at \$30,000.

We anticipate legal expenses associated with identifying a governance structure, funding formula, federal grants, negotiated agreements, policies/procedures, and other interstate needs. Therefore we are asking the foundation for an additional \$25,000 to cover these fees.

In order to identify essential curriculum and staffing ratios we believe it will be beneficial to involve staff. Our plan is to offer a teaching/learning retreat for staff interested in having a voice in the design of rigorous and vibrant offerings. In order to accomplish this work we are asking the North Country Charitable Foundation for \$5000.

Our total funding request is \$60,000.

Expected Outcomes

Measures of Outcomes Success

Provide specific measures or indicators of outcome success with baseline data. How will the qualitative and/or quantitative data be collected and aggregated?

| Expected Outcome | How will you measure? |
|--|---|
| Hold organized and efficient planning meetings with clear objectives and tasks. | Measured through committee member reflection, constructive criticism from Carole Martin, responding to previously collected data and feedback from future forums. |
| Gain clarity on issues that were identified by community members during our forums held earlier this year. | Measured through additional community forums/surveys with updates on governance structure, scholarships, funding formula, federal grants, negotiated agreements, policies/procedures, and other interstate needs. |
| Establish a developmentally appropriate curriculum that promotes the whole-child including learning outcomes and social emotional needs. | Measured through an updated program of studies, a clearly articulated progression of offerings, and the establishment of additional courses based on feedback from our stakeholders. |

Connecticut River Collaborative Committee

Community Forum - January 9th - Cambridge

Committee Mission Statement

*"To increase educational offerings
for students at a reasonable cost to the community"*