

Hidalgo County Head Start Program

Policy Council Regular Agenda

DATE: April 17, 2019

SUBJECT: Discussion/Approval to Submit a Supplemental Funding Application

RATIONALE/NEED: The Regional Office for the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has informed us that they are accepting supplemental funding applications to address program improvement needs. The Hidalgo County Head Start Program has prepared a supplemental application outlining our need to improve the transportation services of our Head Start children.

RECOMMENDATION: Administration recommends approval.

COST:

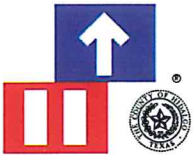
Federal Funds	\$922,420
In-Kind Matching Funds	\$230,605

RELATED INFORMATION INCLUDES: Memorandum to Policy Council and Commissioners' Court, Application Narrative and Budget

INITIATED BY: Edmundo Garcia, Assistant Program Director for Operations

REVIEWED BY: Teresa Flores, Executive Director

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S APPROVAL:



Hidalgo County Head Start Program Memorandum

Date: April 17, 2019

To: Head Start Policy Council

Hidalgo County Commissioners' Court

From: Teresa Flores, Head Start Executive Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Teresa Flores'.

Re: Supplemental Application

The Regional office for the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has informed us that they are accepting supplemental funding applications to address program improvement needs. The Hidalgo County Head Start Program (HCHSP) has prepared a supplemental application for your approval outlining our need to improve the transportation services of our Head Start children.

In our application narrative, which is attached for your review, we outline our need for funding to improve our transportation services, strengthen our partnerships with local school districts, reinforce our recruitment efforts, and help us sustain desirable attendance levels. We also explain how our recruitment and enrollment efforts continue to be tested as charter schools enrollment continues to rise. Our current transportation resources are insufficient to combat these challenges and provide the much needed transportation services to our Head Start families.

HCHSP is in need of additional funding to purchase 10 school buses to replace older buses, most of which have been in service since 1995 and 2005, ease the burden of double routes and create new bus routes. Moreover, by replacing the older buses HCHSP will be able to reduce expenses for bus repairs which are to \$370,388 for the past 3 years, and utilize these savings to increase salaries for bus drivers, thereby making it more attractive to recruit and retain them.

The Buses are estimated to cost \$922,420 including the appropriate restraining and camera systems. The matching in-kind contribution of \$230,605 will be derived from our partnerships with school districts.



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Narrative

Supplemental Funding Application for Program Improvement as per ACF-PI-HS-18-06

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program (HCHSP) is submitting a Supplemental Application for Program improvement needs as per ACF-PI-HS-18-06 for fiscal year 2019 (January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019). This funding will strengthen our partnerships with local school districts, reinforce our recruitment efforts, help us sustain desirable attendance levels and allow us to focus on innovative ways to address the competitiveness within our service area. More specifically, it will allow HCHSP to focus resources on the transportation of children, a key issue for Head Start families, by funding the replacement of existing outdated transportation equipment, buses, creating additional transportation routes and recruiting and retaining bus drivers.

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program (HCHSP) service area encompasses all 1,569 square miles in the County of Hidalgo. In 1982, 91% of the land was farms and ranches, with 52% of farmland under cultivation and 85 % irrigated; 51 to 60% of the county was considered prime farmland (Texas Almanac 2011). Today, agriculture is still vibrant in the area and other industries have evolved bringing with them the need for highway and transportation improvements. The 2017 Lower Rio Grande Valley Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan describes the area in need of public transportation with a large number of "Auto less Homes", that is to say households without at least one vehicle "which are more likely to depend on the mobility offered by public transit since many land uses in the region are at distances too far for non-motorized travel". The plan goes on to note that "the urbanized and rural area in Hidalgo and Cameron Counties have "high" and "very high" transit needs.

The need for transportation for enrolled children is further validated by the results of our 2017 Head Start Community Assessment Family survey, completed by 2,222 Head Start families. While parents expressed a 98% satisfaction rate with our Program, they also alerted us to their need for the transportation of their children to and from school. Likewise, the survey also indicated that 66 % of respondent households owned only one vehicle which is mainly used for work, and 20.4% of respondents indicated that they did not own a vehicle at all. Additionally, the survey documented that the average Head Start household size is 4.9 persons, which is higher when compared to the County's of 3.6 persons.

In addition to the area's transportation challenges, household size and the number of autoless homes, we also have to operate in an environment where more public charter schools are opening their doors and providing pre-kindergarten programs for 3 and 4 year olds in our service area. For example according to the Texas Education Agency since 2012 enrollment of 3 and 4 year olds in public charter schools has increased by 18.5%, to 14,000 children. In 2017 there were 3,282 registered 3 and 4 year olds in public charter schools according to the Texas Education Agency. IDEA Academy Charter schools aggressively recruited 51% of all 3 and 4 year old children attending charter school Pre-Kinder and also provide transportation to all children. Parents with older children attending public charter schools often choose to send their 3 and 4 year olds to the charter public schools also because they are incentivized to do so with the promise of transportation and future enrollment in grades beyond pre-kinder.

HCHSP has been able to minimize most of the demands of this competitive environment, thanks to our great partnerships with local non-chartered school districts. Our Program is now in ten public school campuses and our children are dual enrolled with our local public school partners. Currently a total of 104.5 Early Childhood Certified District public school teachers deliver services to an AM and PM Head



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Start classroom. Similarly, HCHSP and the Pharr-San Juan-Alamo School District have established an Integrated School Readiness Partnership Model (ISRPM) in which the district provides a total of 21 district teachers to deliver full day services to Head Start children housed in 4 elementary schools. This makes it possible for our partnering schools to increase their enrollment and at the same time generate In-Kind towards our Non-feral match. Transportation, however, remains a challenge as public schools have their own limitation on funding.

Recent data obtained through direct communications with the 15 public school districts in Hidalgo County shows that 13 districts now offer full day early childhood programs to four and 5 olds and five districts offer half day early childhood programs for three year olds. Although our classrooms are served through our School Readiness Partnerships with public schools and children are dual enrolled, such program offerings through the districts have already shown an adverse impact on our enrollment for last year.

More to the point, interviews with parents of currently enrollees or potential enrollees are making the choice to transfer or enroll in the public school programs reveal that:

1. If parents have older children in the public school, they will keep all children in the same campus if there is a full day or a half day early childhood program as a matter of convenience.
2. Working parents that have to transport children to two sites find it very time-consuming and expensive.
3. The district may already be transporting the older children so parents trust that the younger ones are safe riding the bus with their siblings.
4. They do not have a vehicle and depend on the district to transport their children to and from school.
5. Parents will enroll in Head Start if we provide transportation.

It seems that such reasoning, as indicated above, overshadows the overwhelming advantages offered to children enrolled in Head Start including the following:

1. Child care services in addition to a comprehensive research based early childhood program offering quality individualized instruction
2. Smaller adult/child ratios which do not exceed 20 in 165 classrooms and 22 in 21 classrooms.
 - a. Classrooms with 20 or less children are served by a full day Head Start teacher, a full day Assistant Teacher and a half day public school teacher.
 - b. Classrooms with 22 or less children are served by a full day Head Start teacher, a full day Assistant Teacher and a full day public school teacher.
3. Parent engagement is a requirement fully implemented with a multitude of activities that extend the classroom to the home and focuses in school readiness.
4. Utilization of research based tools including a research based curriculum, assessment tools to measure child growth, and a teacher tool (CLASS) to measure child/adult interactions and the development of the best learning environment.

Our current transportation service consists of a fleet of buses of which close to 80% were purchased between 1995 and 2005 and constantly require costly repairs. Over the past 3 years the Program has spent \$370,388 in repair costs for buses and over \$21,500 for the first quarter of 2019 thus far. HCHSP is only transporting 430 children or 11.6% of our current enrollment. As a result of not being able to provide transportation to the families that are in need, we are experiencing a higher degree of difficulty in our recruitment efforts. Our records indicate that during 2018-2019, 167 additional families were identified as needing transportation services but were placed on transportation wait-lists because we



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were unable to provide services. In addition, 194 children were taken out of the Program by their parents, because we were not able to provide transportation for them. Furthermore, the lack of drivers, and the need for newer buses, forces us to schedule double routes, that is to say two routes in the morning and two routes in the afternoon, causing the over-use of buses and adding to our repair costs. The Program is now conducting 30 routes of which 26 are double routes and in most cases a third route for children that need disability services.

In summary our need for this funding can be classified as high, as we can expect to continue to face transportation challenges which directly impacts enrollment and daily attendance. We also expect our recruitment and enrollment efforts to continue to be tested as charter schools' enrollment continues to rise. Our current resources are insufficient to combat these challenges and provide the much needed transportation services to our Head Start families. HCHSP is in need of additional funding to purchase 10 school buses to replace older buses, ease the burden of double routes and create new bus routes. Moreover, by replacing the older buses HCHSP will be able to reduce expenses for bus repairs which have amounted to \$370,388, as mentioned above, and utilize these savings to increase salaries for bus drivers, thereby making it more attractive to recruit and retain bus drivers.



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Budget Federal Share

All costs are reasonable and allowable under **45CFR Part §75.439 Equipment and Other Capital Expenditure** and **§75.320 Equipment**. All procurement procedures and standards comply local state and federal regulations; **45CFR parts §75.327 General Procurement Standards**, **§75.328 Competition** and **§75.329 Procurement Procedures**.

Equipment (Object class category 6.e)
 10 47-passenger school buses @ \$92,242 with child restraints and camera system. **\$922,420**

Budget Non-Federal Share

The following is the proposed Non-Federal Resource to be provided by the Hidalgo County Head Start Program. The listed resource meets the requirements for In-Kind contributions as per 45 CFR Part 75.306 **Cost Sharing or Matching**, sections (e) and (f). Our School Readiness Partnerships with local school districts continues to yield great benefits to our families, and highly individualized instruction to our children. Similarly, they also generate Non-Federal-in-kind matching contributions to the Program. We currently have 104.5 public school early childhood state certified teachers in our Head Start classrooms, funded by local school districts co-teaching with our Head Start teachers in all of our classrooms.

1. Personnel (Object Class Category 6.a)

Volunteer	Service Provided	Rate	Match Required
School Teachers under the School Readiness Program	Classroom instruction to our children	5 teacher(s) x \$334.21/day x 138 days	\$230,605

Total **\$1,153,025**