



DESCRIPTION

- A consortium of three Appalachian school systems in rural North Carolina
- Serves mainly low-income, rurally isolated youth in grades 3 through 8
- Involves local community and takes advantage of Appalachian surroundings in afterschool programming

Elements of Sustainable Programs

- **Vision**
- Results Orientation
- **Strategic Financing Orientation**
- **Broad-Based Community Support**
- Key Champions
- Adaptability to Changing Conditions
- Strong Internal Systems
- Sustainability Plan

North Carolina Northwest Three Afterschool Consortium

A Collaborative Approach for Making Afterschool Work in Rural Areas

Overview

The North Carolina Northwest Three Afterschool Consortium (NC NW 3) provides a range of comprehensive afterschool programs for low-income and rurally isolated youth in North Carolina. The Consortium, composed of three Appalachian school systems in North Carolina: Alexander County, Alleghany County, and Caldwell County and other local partners, serves third through eighth graders throughout this 950 square mile rural area. NC NW 3 programs integrate academic enrichment, cultural arts opportunities, fitness-focused resiliency building, diversity appreciation and family involvement services.

The Consortium was initially established as a way for seven rural Appalachian counties to pool their resources and successfully apply for a federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21CCLC) grant in 1999. With the change in 21CCLC administration from federal to state, the Consortium received a smaller state 21CCLC grant in November 2002 for only three of the original seven counties. Within the remaining three counties, however, NC NW 3 has leveraged a range of resources and now serves more students than under the federal grant.

The Consortium has sustained out-of-school time programming by employing a number of strategies, including; (1) developing a clear and shared vision; (2) making strategic financing choices; (3) and developing broad-based community support.

✓ **Developing a Vision**

The NC NW 3 Consortium has developed a clear vision for their afterschool programs, aiming to build academic and personal success for at-risk rural students through a range of activities that involve the local community and take advantage of their Appalachian surroundings. As one example, through the Bird and Butterfly Habitat Project, fifth through eighth grade youth reclaimed an overgrown field adjacent to their school and transformed it into a bird and butterfly habitat that is now an item of school and community pride. The program integrated math and literacy skills and earned the support of community members, who both donated to the project and worked alongside the youth. This and other innovative program activities are rooted in the NC NW 3 program vision and help the programs to gain public support and funding.

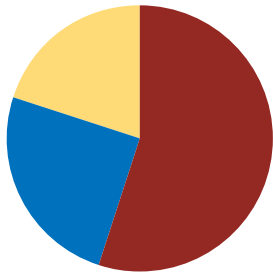
✓ **Strategic Financing**

In order to sustain afterschool programming, the Consortium uses a variety of financing strategies, including maximizing federal and state revenue, making better use of existing resources, and creating new sources of revenue.

Maximizing Federal & State Revenue

Although each of the consortium's school systems are in rurally isolated areas, by working together across a large geographic region, they are able to maximize their revenue, pooling large amounts of funding from a variety of sources. Through this collaboration, the NC NW 3 program has been able to

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- Federal
- State
- Local

NCNW3 Budget	
Federal Sources	55 %
State Sources	25 %
Local Sources	20 %

leverage a broad array of federal, state, and local funding sources including 21CCLC, Title I, TANF, Juvenile Justice and United Way funds. The program’s director has noted that their federal 21CCLC grant, which started the NC NW 3 programs, allowed them to run an effective program while giving them enough time to get other funding sources in place for the future.

Making Better Use of Existing Resources

By consolidating management of afterschool programming with the consortium approach, all three counties are able to make more efficient use of limited resources. The Consortium, for example, helps the counties to prioritize program areas for which they will seek funding and to prepare grant applications. For each grant application, Consortium staff determines which partner is most appropriate to act as a fiscal agent. The Consortium also pools local resources and talents, and arranges for the counties to share management, administration, staff development and evaluation tasks required by each grant.

The Consortium also strategically makes use of existing resources in the school districts to support afterschool programs. For example, portions of the school’s Title I dollars have been passed down to support tutoring components of afterschool programs. Programs make use of school facilities and share in staff development opportunities, allowing NC NW Three programs to increase staff skills at a low cost. School staff and faculty also contribute to NC NW 3 programs, providing tutoring, curriculum development, and special services such as counseling and social work.

Creating New Sources of Revenue

In addition to federal and state funding sources, NC NW 3 obtains revenue

from fundraisers and sliding-scale fees that vary by county. The program’s director emphasizes the importance of having low-income parents feel that they can contribute to the program and thus charges appropriate fees with flexible scholarships. Although fundraisers are only a small portion of the program’s overall revenue, they have been effective in involving the students, reaching out to local communities, raising awareness of the program and creating a pot of flexible funds to support the program.

✔ Broad-Based Community Support

While having a strong vision and financial support are key elements of running a successful afterschool program, the Consortium also recognizes the importance of broad-based community support. The Consortium has a strong willingness to collaborate, which has allowed them to form a large network of community support. They have formed partnerships with a wide range of organizations including community colleges, cooperative extension services, wellness centers, health departments, and chambers of commerce. Each of these partnerships provide in different ways for the program. Having the full support of the school systems has enabled a partnership that promotes community involvement and programmatic coordination, creating a connection between school and afterschool for the students. Furthermore, several afterschool staff members have gone on to full-time work in the regular school day programs, adding to the close relationship and connection between NC NW 3 programs and the school systems.

In addition, trained and dedicated staff regularly call and visit families, greatly increasing the level of support from

parents. Parents are also involved through programming such as family nights, field trips, advisory board meetings, and fundraisers. A range of community-oriented projects sponsored by the NC NW 3 programs raise the afterschool programs' visibility in their communities. For example, as part of their focus on youth fitness, one NC NW 3 afterschool program has organized a Community 5K Run open to all community members. Finally, the Consortium built a relationship with the local media, where students write articles about their program and local journalists are invited to program events.

Next Steps and Future Challenges

While the Consortium has developed a comprehensive system of afterschool programming, they do have concerns for their future. Located in a rural area, transportation to and from the program sites is becoming a major issue with rising gas prices. The Consortium plans to seek more private foundation resources at both the regional and national level for substantial funding.



For more information, contact The Finance Project at 202.587.1000 or visit our web site at www.financeproject.org/irc/ost.asp

June 2006