

CRS Report for Congress

21st Century Community Learning Centers: Background and Funding

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Summary

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), including the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program (21st CCLC), ESEA Title IV-B, is being considered for reauthorization by the 110th Congress.

The 21st CCLC program was originally authorized as Part I of Title X, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended. The amendment authorizing the 21st CCLC program was included as part of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, P.L. 103-382. The 21st CCLC program was authorized for five years, FY1995-FY1999. The 21st CCLC program was not reauthorized in the 106th Congress, and consequently its authorization (but not its funding) expired in FY2000. The 21st CCLC program was reauthorized (for FY2002-FY2007) by H.R. 1, the No Child Left Behind Act, a bill to extend and revise the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The President signed H.R. 1 into law (P.L. 107-110) on January 8, 2002. This report provides background on the 21st CCLC program and summarizes its major provisions.

Prior to its reauthorization in P.L. 107-110, the 21st CCLC program was operated as a competitive grant program with grantees selected by the U.S. Department of Education (ED). Grant recipients could receive an award for up to three years and were required to include at least four out of 13 potential activities intended to serve the local community.

In contrast, the reauthorized 21st CCLC program is structured as a formula grant program to states, with local grants awarded competitively to eligible local entities for a period of three to five years. State educational agencies (SEAs) must award at least 95% of their state allotment to eligible local entities (defined as local educational agencies (LEAs), community-based organizations (CBOs), other public or private entities, or consortia of one or more of the above). To the extent possible, SEAs are to distribute funds equitably among geographic areas within the state, including urban and rural communities. SEAs are to make awards only to eligible entities that will be serving students who attend schools eligible for schoolwide programs under Section 1114 (i.e., are eligible for Title I-A grants on a schoolwide basis because they have a high percentage of low-income pupils) and the families of these students. Eligible entities may use 21st CCLC grants for a broad array of before- and after-school activities that advance student academic achievement. The program's focus is now exclusively on after-school-hours activities for children and youth, and literacy-related activities for their families.

For FY2009, the Administration has requested that the program be restructured into a scholarship program titled 21st Century Learning Opportunities. The Administration has request \$800 million in funding for FY2009 for the newly designed program. The 21st CCLC program received funding of \$1,081,166,000 (includes a 1.747 across-the-board reduction) for FY2008. This report will be updated in response to legislative developments.

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21st Century Community Learning Centers: Background and Funding

Introduction

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), including the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program (21st CCLC), ESEA Title IV-B, is being considered for reauthorization by the 110th Congress.

The CCLC program was last reauthorized in 2002 as part of the No Child Left Behind Act (P.L. 107-110) with a new location (Title IV, Part B, 21st Century Schools), and several substantive changes. This report provides background on the 21st CCLC program and summarizes the major provisions of the reauthorized program.

The 21st CCLC program, as reauthorized by P.L. 107-110, is structured as a formula grant program to states, in response to concerns that a program as large as the 21st CCLC could no longer be equitably administered as a competitive grant program. In addition, the reauthorized program formally endorses a focus for the 21st CCLC on after-school hours activities for children and youth.

The 21st CCLC program emphasizes activities during non-school hours that offer learning opportunities for children and youth. The stated purposes of the program, as reauthorized, are threefold:

1. Provide opportunities for academic enrichment to help students (particularly those attending low-performing schools) to meet state and local student academic achievement standards;
2. Offer students a wide variety of additional services, programs, and activities intended to reinforce and complement their regular academic program; and
3. Offer families of students served an opportunity for literacy and related educational development.

Funding

P.L. 107-110 authorizes the 21st CCLC program at \$1.25 billion for FY2002, \$1.5 billion for FY2003, \$1.75 billion for FY2004, \$2 billion for FY2005, \$2.25 billion for FY2006, and \$2.5 billion for FY2007. The 21st CCLC program received funding of \$1,081,166,000 (includes a 1.747 across-the-board reduction) for FY2008. (See **Table 1** for the program's entire funding history.)

Proposed FY2009 Program Restructuring

The Administration has requested that the program be restructured as a scholarship program and funded at \$800,000,000 for FY2009. It would be renamed 21st Century Learning Opportunities. Grants would be awarded by formula to states; states would then award competitive grants to public or private nonprofit organizations to administer scholarships for eligible students. States would need to ensure that families would be able to choose from a variety of providers. All programs would be required to be high-quality, focused on increasing the academic achievement of disadvantaged students, and aligned with state standards.

Table 1. 21st Century Learning Centers: Funding History

FY	President's Budget Request (in \$)	Appropriation (in \$)
1995	0	750,000
1996	0	750,000
1997	0	1,000,000
1998	50,000,000	40,000,000
1999	200,000,000	200,000,000
2000	600,000,000	453,377,000 ^a
2001	1,000,000,000	845,614,000 ^b
2002	845,614,000	1,000,000,000
2003	1,000,000,000	993,500,000 ^c
2004	600,000,000	999,070,000 ^d
2005	999,070,000	991,077,440
2006	991,077,440	981,166,230 ^f
2007	981,166,230	981,166,000 ^g
2008	981,180,000	1,081,166,000 ^h
2009	800,000,000	

- a. This amount includes a reduction of FY2000 discretionary budget authority required by the FY2000 appropriations act (P.L. 106-113).
- b. This amount includes an across-the-board reduction of FY2001 appropriations adopted in the Miscellaneous Appropriations Act (H.R. 5666) enacted into law by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2001 (P.L. 106-554).
- c. This amount includes an across-the-board reduction per P.L. 108-7.
- d. This amount includes an across-the-board reduction per P.L. 108-199.
- e. This amount includes an across-the-board reduction per P.L. 108-447.
- f. This amount includes an across-the-board reduction per P.L. 109-148.
- g. This amount is based upon the FY2007 Annual CR Operating Plan.
- h. This amount includes an across-the-board reduction per P.L. 110-161.

National Reservations

From amounts appropriated in any fiscal year, the Secretary of Education shall reserve not more than 1% for national activities and not more than 1% for the outlying areas (Guam, American Samoa, the Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.¹

Formula Grants to States

The current 21st CCLC program, unlike its predecessor, is structured as a formula grant program to states. States are awarded grants in proportion to the awards they received under Subpart 2 of Title I-A for the preceding fiscal year. All states receiving awards receive at least one-half of 1% of the total allotted for state awards. The Secretary of Education must make a written determination that a state's application is not in compliance within 120 days of its receipt, or the state's application is deemed to be approved.

State educational agencies (SEAs) may use up to 2% of their award for state administration (including administrative costs, establishing and implementing a peer review process for grant applications, and supervising the awarding of funds to eligible entities). In addition, SEAs may use up to 3% of their award for other state activities (including monitoring and evaluation, training and technical assistance, and comprehensive evaluation).

Competitive Local Grants

SEAs must award at least 95% of their state allotment to eligible local entities (defined as local educational agencies (LEAs), community-based organizations (CBOs), other public or private entities, or consortia of one or more of the above.) This is a change from the program as originally authorized, which only permitted schools or consortia of schools (or LEAs operating on their behalf), to be directly awarded 21st CCLC grants.² P.L. 107-110, Section 4204 (b) (2) (D) indicates that in order to receive a 21st CCLC grant in the reauthorized program, recipients must provide "an assurance that the proposed program was developed, and will be carried out, in active collaboration with the schools the students attend." In practical terms, this means that grant recipients other than schools must partner with a school or LEA. All recipients are strongly encouraged to form a partnership; however, P.L. 107-110, Section 4202 (I) (2) states that if an eligible LEA: "demonstrates that it is unable to partner with a community-based organization in reasonable geographic proximity and of sufficient quality to meet the requirements of this part," then this

¹ National reservations included amounts for continuation grants under the antecedent program, through the final year of funding for such grants, FY2003.

² Although they were encouraged to "collaborate with other public and nonprofit agencies and organizations, local businesses, educational entities, recreational, cultural, and other community and human service entities."

LEA is to be given the same priority by the SEA awarding grants as given to eligible LEAs with a partner.

Grants are awarded competitively by SEAs for a period of three to five years. To the extent possible, SEAs are to distribute funds equitably among geographic areas within the state, including urban and rural communities. SEAs are to make awards only to eligible entities who will be serving students who attend schools eligible for schoolwide programs under Section 1114 (i.e., are eligible for Title I-A grants on a schoolwide basis because 40% or more of their pupils are from low-income families), or schools that serve a high percentage of students from low-income families; and the families of these students.

SEAs are to give priority to applications that propose to target services to students who attend schools that have been identified as in need of improvement under Section 1116 (schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years by state measures); and are submitted jointly by an LEA and a CBO or other public or private entity.³

Local Uses of 21st CCLC Grants

Eligible entities may use 21st CCLC grants for a broad array of before- and after-school activities that advance student academic achievement, including

1. Remedial education activities and academic enrichment learning programs;
2. Mathematics and science education activities;
3. Arts and music education activities;
4. Entrepreneurial education programs;
5. Tutoring services and mentoring programs;
6. Programs that emphasize language skills and academic achievement for limited-English-proficient students;
7. Recreational activities;
8. Telecommunications and technology education programs;
9. Expanded library service hours;
10. Programs that promote parental involvement and family literacy;
11. Programs that provide assistance to improve academic achievement for students who have been truant, suspended, or expelled;
12. Drug- and violence-prevention programs, counseling programs, and character education programs.

³ Unless, as discussed above, an LEA demonstrates that it is unable to partner with a CBO of sufficient quality and reasonable geographic proximity.

History

The 21st CCLC program was authorized by Title X, Part I, as amended, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (SEA), and is administered by the U.S. Department of Education (ED). The amendment authorizing the 21st CCLC program was included as part of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, P.L. 103-382. The 21st CCLC program was authorized for five years, FY1995-FY1999.⁴ The 21st CCLC program was a competitive grant program with grantees selected by ED. Grant recipients could receive an award for up to three years and were required to include at least four out of 13 potential activities intended to serve the local community.⁵

The 21st CCLC program has grown dramatically, as evidenced by the program's funding trajectory (see **Table 1**). The program shifted in emphasis as the amount appropriated for the program increased. The original authorizing language included an absolute priority for those 21st CCLC projects that "offer a broad selection of services which address the needs of the community."⁶ Beginning with the program's significant expansion in FY1998, an additional absolute priority was added for: "activities that offer expanded learning opportunities for children and youth in the community and that contribute to reduced drug use and violence."

Program Effectiveness⁷

The U.S. Department of Education has contracted with Mathematica Policy Research Inc. for an evaluation of 21st CCLC after-school programs. The first report from the evaluation was published in February of 2003. Based on data for the 2000-2001 school year, the first year evaluation did not find significant improvements from 21st CCLC programs in academic outcomes or in the numbers of latchkey kids. The study was designed to focus on outcomes of typical 21st CCLC programs, rather than of programs implementing best practices. The study authors indicated more confidence in the results for middle school students (sample size 4,400) than for the elementary school students (sample size 1,000).

⁴ Section 422 of the General Education Provisions Act provides an automatic one-year extension authority to all ED programs. Thus the 21st CCLC program's authorization (but not its funding), expired in FY2000. Legislation reauthorizing the program through FY2007 was signed into law on January 8, 2002.

⁵ For more history on the program, see CRS Report RL30306, *21st Century Community Learning Centers: A History of the Program*, by Gail McCallion.

⁶ 20 U.S.C. § 8244. Only projects that met these absolute priorities were funded. In addition, the Secretary had the discretion to include competitive priorities that awarded additional points to potential grantees' applications.

⁷ For more discussion of these issues, see CRS Report RL32174, *21st Century Community Learning Centers: Evaluation and Implementation Issues*, by Gail McCallion.

A second report, based on a larger sample of elementary school students and with an additional year of data on middle school students, was published in 2004.⁸ Like the first report, the second report did not find significant improvements in academic achievement or in the numbers of latchkey kids. However, it did find that elementary school students attending 21st CCLC programs felt safer than comparison group children not attending these programs; and that the parents of elementary school children attending these programs were more likely to attend school events.

⁸ Mark Dynarski, Susanne James-Burdumy, Mary Moore, Linda Rosenberg, John Deke, and Wendy Mansfield, *When Schools Stay Open Late: The National Evaluation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program: New Findings*, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (Washington: GPO, 2004).