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Lilly Foundation Announces \$30 Million Comprehensive Counseling Grant

by: Brandie Oliver, Butler University

On behalf of the school counseling profession, it is with great enthusiasm that I share the wonderful grant opportunity that the Lilly Foundation is providing to Indiana schools. On September 30, a press release announced the *Comprehensive Counseling Initiative* for Indiana K-12 Students, a five-year effort that includes encouraging public school corporations and charter schools to explore how they help students from elementary grades through high school prepare for academic, career and personal success. This grant is available to any public or charter school in Indiana.

There are two rounds of funding available to schools and the size of each grant will be based on student enrollment. The first phase (planning grant) has been defined as non-competitive. Schools can apply for funding between \$30,000-\$50,000 that will be disseminated January 2017. The grant allows for great flexibility in how these funds can be used but the intent is to take the spring semester to conduct a thorough analysis of the strengths and challenges of existing school counseling programs. Using the knowledge gained during the planning grant phase (January-May 2017), schools then have the opportunity to apply for an implementation grant (up to \$100/per student in corporation). The implementation grant is competitive and schools will need to clearly articulate how the proposed items/interventions in the grant will connect to student outcomes.

“The Endowment’s aim is to help school corporations and charter schools eventually implement comprehensive approaches to school counseling that address the academic, college, career, and social and emotional needs of K-12 students,” said Sara B. Cobb, the Endowment’s vice president for education.

I strongly encourage schools to submit a planning grant proposal. The funding for the planning grant will be disseminated in January 2017 and will provide funding to develop a structure to deeply explore strengths and challenges facing your school community. There are several tools, resources, and professionals eager to assist your school team. Below is a general strategy and ideas that schools can utilize as they develop the planning grant.

1. Assemble a school team
 - a. Recommended team members: Administrator, School Counselor, Teacher, Parent, Community Member, and any other professional directly connected to school counseling programming/student outcomes
2. Brainstorm what data is currently available to assess school counseling programming in your school and how it is being used
 - a. How are you assessing the school counseling program in your school?
 - b. How do you use attendance, behavior, and standardized test scores to inform the work of the school counseling program?
 - c. What other surveys or measures does your school counseling program use to assess effectiveness?
3. Brainstorm other measures that could be implemented to gather additional data to inform strengths and growth opportunities connected student outcomes (these measures/tools could be implemented during the Spring 2017 planning grant phase)
 - a. What surveys would be useful to develop and disseminate to gather information to inform next steps? And what audiences would they be targeting (i.e., parents, teachers, community partners, alumni)?
 - b. Would focus groups be helpful in gathering data to inform next steps?
 - c. Do you have a consistent evaluation tool to measure effectiveness of school counseling programming?
 - d. Have the school counselors completed a time-use log?
 - e. Does the school counseling program vertically align student outcomes/standards across the K-12 system?
4. Based on discussions, determine what resources would be beneficial to answer questions and provide a comprehensive analysis of the current strengths, growth opportunities, and evidence-based strategies to address student needs
 - a. Would visiting a school site that implements a comprehensive school counseling program that addresses similar student needs faced in your school be helpful in your work?
 - b. Do your school counselors need professional development/training in certain areas so they are equipped with current knowledge and practices in the field?
 - c. Would team members benefit from similar professional development?
 - d. What evidence-based programs support school counseling programming and address student needs prevalent in your school?
 - e. Would assistance with creation and analysis of data (surveys, focus groups, etc.) be helpful to your school?
 - f. How does your school assess effectiveness of school counseling program and interventions? Do you need help with the development of a continuous assessment plan?
5. Contact professionals that align with your needs that can assist you during the planning grant phase (Spring 2017 Semester) and budget for their services
 - a. Organizations/professionals are available to conduct research, provide professional development, assist with grant writing, and provide other services to meet your needs
 - b. University (specifically Graduate School Counseling Programs in Indiana) are available to assist in research, professional development/training, and the development of evidence-based school counseling programs
6. Finalize proposal and budget

The Lilly Endowment has provided funding to the Indiana Chamber, Indiana Youth Institute (IYI), and Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning (CELL) to enable them to provide technical assistance through orientation conferences the Endowment will convene and webinars and other on-line forums. In addition, to these organizations, Fleck Education also is providing consultation services to Indiana schools.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding this grant opportunity. I am eager to assist schools in their development of the proposal and hope to provide support to improve school counseling in our state.

Link providing additional information for the Lilly Foundation Comprehensive Counseling Grant:

http://www.lillyendowment.org/ed_ci.html

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