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Dear Project Director:

We are delighted to be able to make this fact sheet available to you to help you make your mentoring program a success. This publication was funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools under contract with EMT Associates, Inc. Although this publication has not yet been officially released by the U.S. Department of Education, we have been authorized to make it available on the Web at this time to solicit your feedback.

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We value your feedback on this publication. Please send your comments to us at:

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Sincerely,

Judy Strother Taylor
Project Director

MENTORING FACT SHEET

U.S. Department of Education ■ Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools
Mentoring Resource Center
#12, September 2006

Preparing for Tomorrow Today:

Reinventing Partnerships to Sustain Your OSDFS Mentoring Program

Since 2003, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (OSDFS) has awarded over $150 million in grants to school-based mentoring programs. This considerable investment is designed to improve the scope and quality of mentoring programs in the nation's schools. To achieve this goal, grantees need to not only run high-quality programs over the life of the grant but also plan effectively to keep the newly created mentoring services going beyond the three-year OSDFS grant cycle.

Unfortunately, this is easier said than done. While all grantees were required to build sustainability plans into their initial proposals, implementing those plans has been a challenge for a number of reasons:

- Staff members who wrote the sustainability plans (or were slated to do much of the work) have moved on from the program since securing the grant
- Changes in program structure have made the sustainability plan obsolete
- Mentoring program staff may not have the skills or abilities to implement the plan
- Sources of funding once thought available have dried up
- The program and its partners are unwilling or unable to face the realities of the grant coming to an end

The active OSDFS mentoring grantees are beginning to address these issues, and the search for replacement funds is intensifying. Many grantees are realizing that fully replacing the ample funds provided by the grant will be challenging.

There are few other federal funds for dedicated mentoring services available to OSDFS grantees, and those that do exist, such as the Department of Health and Human Services' Mentoring Children of Prisoners initiative, focus on specific populations and mentoring models that may not be easy for a school-based program to adopt. And while many programs often find success securing state and local funds, these sources often to not equal the full level of large-scale funding that the original grant provided.

Within this challenging framework, how can OSDFS grantees honor the federal investment in mentoring by extending the life of their mentoring programs? How do programs reinvent themselves for a prosperous long-term future? The key, as it often is, is collaboration. This fact sheet examines a process your program can use to get creative with its partnerships and work collaboratively with program stakeholders to plan for a future without large grant funding.

Taking Steps Towards Sustainability

There are several concrete steps you can take to begin planning for and making decisions about the future of the program:

1. **Confront your fears**— People have a tendency to shy away from challenges and difficult situations when they feel overwhelmed by the task at hand, and replacing a large federal grant is such a situation. Many a mentoring program has closed its doors because the staff and program partners were unwilling to face the realities of their situation. Sometimes programs are intimidated by the amount of funding that must be replaced and just assume that they will be closing their doors when the grant ends. They fail to investigate all of the options

available to them. Sometimes programs simply fail to ask for the ongoing support they need because they do not want to be told “no.”

Instead of fearing “what’s next” for your program, realize that this type of transition is part of the natural life cycle of all youth-serving nonprofit programs (see sidebar). Out of the chaos of reorganization and restructuring come many positive results: streamlined services, new relationships never thought possible, and a recharged sense of purpose and mission.

If your mentoring program is to thrive, you must be willing to face a sometimes uncertain future and be willing to explore all your options, even to take some risks. Sustaining the program will not be easy, but it will become easier if you keep the youth you serve in mind and use their needs to remind yourself of why your program is worth fighting for.

2. Capture your current reality— In order to move effectively into the future, you’ll need a good understanding of where you are today. Regardless of where you are in your grant cycle, take some time to examine the status of your program. When will your grant funding end (this is often quite different than the award period of the grant as programs spend money more slowly or quickly depending on unanticipated circumstances)? How are the program’s partnerships working? How many matches are currently active? And will you be adding more before the end of the grant? What successes (and failures) has the program had? What have you learned about running your program since getting the OSDFS award? What would you do differently in the future if you could?

Take the time to capture the answers to these questions on paper. It will be valuable information as you move through this process and make decisions about how the program should look in the future.

3. Create some likely scenarios and corresponding budgets and timelines— This is where the real work of determining your future begins. Based on your current reality, sketch out three or four likely funding scenarios. The best case would be that your program finds significant government or foundation funds to maintain the current funding level and program structure. The worst case has your program unable to find enough funding to keep the program going, even at a bare minimum number of matches and staff. Your likely future lies somewhere between these two extremes, but they offer a good starting point (see the sidebar for the realities that other mentoring grantees have faced). Even the worst case scenario is valuable in that it sets a baseline of funding and staffing that the program cannot fall below. Knowing where that point lies will help you plan to close the program properly and avoid the potential harm to your youth and volunteers that happens when closure is handled poorly.

Stages of Organizational Development

- **Stage One: Imagine and Inspire**— *“Can this dream be realized?”* (The writing of your grant and the creation of your partnerships.)
- **Stage Two: Found and Frame**— *“How are we going to pull this off?”* (Getting your grant and opening your doors.)
- **Stage Three: Grow and Ground**— *“How can we build this to be viable?”* (Getting matches made and growing to scale.)
- **Stage Four: Produce and Sustain**— *“How can we keep our momentum?”* (Moving into years two and three of the grant.)
- **Stage Five: Review and Renew**— *“What do we need to redesign?”* (Replacing the grant funding and forming new partnerships. This process loops you back to any of the previous four stages depending on how successful you are.)
- **Decline and Dissolution**— Not a stage, but rather the end of all stages. This is the full program closure you are attempting to avoid.

Adapted from: Sharken Simon, J., with J.T. Donovan. (2001). *The five life stages of nonprofit organizations: Where you are, where you’re going, and what to expect when you get there*. Saint Paul, MN: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

The obvious starting point for doing budget scenarios is your current OSDFS program budget. If you are not the person in charge of tracking the program's finances, have that individual work with you to develop some alternative budgets based on the scenarios you create. The key in this step is to be creative in how you envision scenarios playing out. For example, you know from your current budget that the program is paying $20,000/year for office space. What would your budget look like if the school district was able to provide free office space in the future? Or if you simply moved to a cheaper commercial space? If you are currently operating with a full-time Program Coordinator and two Match Supervisors, would the program still be able to function with a half-time Coordinator and one Match Supervisor? Or would that leave the program understaffed and unable to properly monitor matches for safety? Would that configuration work if the program served half the number of students it does today? Be creative in asking questions about your program's potential future.

Each of your scenarios should cover:

- ***Governance***— Who has "ownership" over the program or various aspects of it
- ***Staffing***— Not just at current levels, but at lower levels and different configurations
- ***Office space/supplies/technology***— The physical realities of running your program
- ***Roles and responsibilities around program activities***— Who would handle the recruiting, screening, matching, training, and supervision tasks if staffing was altered?
- ***Ongoing sustainability efforts***— Ideally, the less-than-best-case scenarios are a temporary circumstance, with program stakeholders continuing the effort to fully replace funds and get the program back up "to scale" in the near future.

For each scenario, craft a fully-detailed budget and timeline of when funds would be needed. This gives you and your partners a good understanding of the many components that go into your program and provides firm numbers to discuss as you make decisions together.

4. Meet with current program partners to discuss scenarios— This is the step where the real decisions about your program's future are made. You may choose to discuss your scenarios with program partners individually at first. This can avoid the "turf" issues that can arise when trying to restructure program services in a group setting.

Life after the grant: What other mentoring programs have experienced

From 1995 to 2005 the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) funded over 250 mentoring programs through its Juvenile Mentoring Program (JUMP) initiative. Like the OSDFS mentoring grants, JUMPs were three-year projects designed to build lasting mentoring programs where none had existed previously.

OSDFS programs should find comfort in the fact that most of the JUMP programs were able to keep services going beyond the grant cycle, often through a process of consolidation and restructuring like the one discussed here. Of the last three JUMP cohorts:

- Over 60% were able to maintain full-scale mentoring services after the grant ended.
- 38% were successful in replacing all or some of the mentoring funds *before* the grant even expired.
- 60% of those who applied for new federal funds received them.
- The success rates were 78% for state funds, 55% for county funds, 89% for municipal-level funds, and 72% for foundation awards.
- Those programs that had businesses or community organizations as partners were much more likely to sustain their programs than those who did not.

These results suggest that JUMP grantees were very successful in pursuing and securing new funding from a variety of sources but that those new funds often did not equal the initial OJJDP funds. However, most of the grantees were able to keep their services going by leveraging their partnerships, restructuring services, and finding creative solutions to the challenges they faced.

Source: *National Mentoring Center, Portland, OR*

Alternatively, if you have a very engaged and planning-savvy Advisory Council or Board of Directors, you may decide to get them involved in making decisions together from the beginning.

Your program partners are likely to have many concerns and questions about the scenarios you have created. They will all have varying levels of interest in taking on new roles and responsibilities. They will be motivated to change (or not) for different reasons—some will be focused on the needs of the youth, others will be focused on the financial aspects of your scenarios, still others may have concerns about "ownership" of the program. The trick will be to determine what will motivate your partners to step up and meet the challenges presented in your scenarios.

Ideally, your program partners will be willing to look creatively at potential solutions to your challenges. If they are committed to mentoring and to maintaining the services the OSDFS grant helped develop, then they should be willing to rethink the program's structure and scope. Flexibility is the key. If current staffing levels will be tough to maintain, could the school apply for an AmeriCorps member to help out with recruitment and screening? Could your business partners donate space or supplies? Can the school get the mentoring program integrated into the district budget so that the program is not so reliant on large-scale grants? If the school cannot provide the Program Coordinator salary would it make sense to transfer the program leadership roles to a community partner?

Answering these types of collaborative questions is never easy. Schools and community-based youth serving agencies are always in tight funding circumstances. Directing new funding towards the mentoring program may be a tough sell. But there is no way to determine who is willing to step up and assume new roles to keep the program going unless you have these conversations. The budgets and timelines you have created will help the discussion, but ultimately the program's stakeholders must be committed philosophically to keeping the mentoring services going. If they are not, then you at least have a timeline and a process for dissolving the partnerships and ending the program properly (as opposed to closing suddenly when the grant ends). Knowing what your current partners will, and will not, commit to also helps you decide if you should…

5. **Forge new partnerships**— If your current program partners are unable to provide funds, space, staffing, or other support moving forward, you may still have options. There may be others in the community willing to join your effort. One likely scenario is that your partners can absorb many of the services and staffing levels from the grant, but not all of them. You might find that there are gaps—in terms of staff, office space, volunteer pools, etc.—that your current partners simply cannot fill without the grant. Because you have created very specific budgets for your scenarios, you can now easily go to new community partners with a very specific appeal for support. For example, imagine your partners can maintain level staffing for the program by transferring control of the program from the school to a community-based mentoring program, but in doing so lose the campus offices where the program was housed and the free background checks that the school district provided. You can then go to business and community-based organizations and ask for the specific in-kind donations that complete your new program structure. New partners are much more willing to join your cause if they know their contribution will fill a targeted program need.

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Restructuring program services and courting new partners is never easy. It's been said that collaboration is an unnatural act. But your mentoring program has found great success through its current partnerships, and if that type of collaboration was worth considering to initially apply for the OSDFS grant then it's worthy of consideration moving forward. After all, the youth that your program serves need these mentoring relationships. Your program leadership should do whatever it takes to reinvent and reinvest in your services so that the magic of mentoring can continue to happen in your community.

Additional Reading and Resources

online:

Basic Context for Organizational Change
http://www.managementhelp.org/mgmnt/orgchnge.htm

Collaboration Framework: Addressing Community Capacity
http://crs.uvm.edu/nnco/collab/framework.html

Community Collaboration
http://www.nonprofitrisk.org/mc/collab.htm

Nonprofit Collaboration & Mergers: Finding the Right Fit. A Resource Guide for Nonprofits
http://epic.cuir.uwm.edu/NONPROFIT/collaboration.pdf

A Practical Approach to Collaboration
http://news.gilbert.org/PracticalCollaboration

Working Together: Nonprofit Collaborations, Alliances, and Integrations Improve Performance and Advance Missions
http://www.nonprofitresearch.org/usr_doc/48553.pdf

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OSDFS Mentoring Programs should also be sure to access the other MRC sustainability-themed resources:

- *Building a Sustainable Mentoring Program: A Framework for Resource Development Planning*
  http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/sustainability.pdf
- *Fact Sheet 5: Getting Started with Program Sustainability*
  http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/factsheet5.pdf
- *Fact Sheet 9: Quick Sustainability Tips*
  http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/factsheet9.pdf

from the MRC Lending Library:

Carroll, S.R., and D. Carroll. (2000). *EdMarketing: How smart schools get and keep community support.* Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

Chaskin, R.J., et al. (2001). *Building community capacity.* New York: Aldine De Gruyter.

Clifton, R.L., and A.M. Dahms. (1993). *Grassroots organizations: A resource book for directors, staff, and volunteers of small, community-based nonprofit agencies.* Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

Sharken Simon, J., with J.T. Donovan. (2001). *The five life stages of nonprofit organizations: Where you are, where you're going, and what to expect when you get there.* Saint Paul, MN: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

These items are available to OSDFS programs throught the Mentoring Resource Center Lending Library at:
http://www.edmentoring.org/lending_library.html

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