STEAMBOAT SPRINGS EDUCATION FUND BOARD GRANT COMMISSION MEETING January 21, 2015; 6:00 PM Human Service Center Board Room

Grant Commission members present included Chairman Stuart Handloff, Cristina Magill, Beth Wilhelm, Paul Berry, Mark Clark, Kathy Wichelhaus, Dean Massey, Susan Heckel, Barb Winternitz, Kevin Lind and Tina Kyprios. Sarah Katherman prepared the minutes from a recording of the meeting.

**Call to Order:**

Chairman Stuart Handloff called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

**Public Comment:**

There was no public comment.

**Commission Member Reports:**

Dean said that the EFB had approved a budget of $105,000 for Community Grants.

**Minutes:**

**MOTION - Approval of Meeting Minutes for Grant Commission**

* **Meeting of December 17, 2014**

*Mark moved to approve the meeting minutes listed above as written. Cristina (?) seconded;* ***the motion carried unanimously.***

**Accountability Reports**

Mark reported that he had presented the accountability reports to the EFB and had discussed the process through which they were compiled. There were no questions.

**Community Group Grant Presentations**

Stuart stated that $105,000 had been allocated to the Community Group Grants, noting that the total amount requested was more than $176,000. He said that each group will be allotted approximately 15 minutes, including questions, for their presentations. Stuart said that he would recuse himself from the consideration of the REPS request. Cristina will take over the meeting during that portion of the meeting.

* Integrated Community – Sheila Henderson

Sheila Henderson, the Executive Director of Integrated Community (IC), stated that IC works with immigrants and other limited-English speakers in the community. She stated that IC works with every human services agency, medical provider and clinic in the community, as well as with the schools. She said that the immigrant population in Routt County is growing rapidly and is comprised of people from more than 30 different countries. Sheila noted that 17% of the current kindergarteners are ELL students. She said that IC adjusts its programs to fit the needs of the community, and the current need is in the schools. Sheila reviewed the resource and referral program through which IC works with struggling ELL students and their families. She said that she also works with students in the Spanish for Spanish-speakers class on completing their documentation to qualify for temporary work permits. Laura Riley, the Education Programs Coordinator, reviewed the Study Friends and tutoring program to assist limited-English students with their school work, focusing on literacy. She offered that there are cultural barriers to achievement for many of these students, in addition to the language issue. Laura also described the internship program through which high school students work with IC, and the MotherRead program that teaches moms how to connect with their kids through reading. Roddy Beall, the Translation and Interpretation Services Coordinator, stated that he manages a team of independent translators and interpreters who work in the community, often addressing issues related to crime, violence or illness. In the schools the programs are pro-active, working to prevent problems before they occur. Roddy noted that some of the best interpreters have come out of the ELL classes in the schools.

Barb asked about the legal responsibility of the schools to provide interpretation and other services performed by IC. Dean said that the schools would be required to provide interpretation, but not the tutoring programs to keep kids from falling behind. He asked why these programs are only offered in the SSSD. Laura said that the program is new, and that they struggle to find enough volunteers. She said that IC would love expand the program to the Hayden and Soroco districts. Kathy asked how IC works with Partners. Sheila said that IC has worked with Partners in the past, but that they now have their own bi-lingual staff member. Laura offered that the Study Friends program is much different from the Partners program and meets a different need. It is focused entirely on school work. In response to a question regarding partial funding, Sheila said that with partial funding services could not be expanded and would focus on the tutoring and at-risk work.

Beth offered that ELL is a small group of students and Barb stated that while she supports the program, she is not confident that it is aligned with the EF mission statement. Cristina agreed. Stuart offered that the need for ELL is growing in the community. Dean stated his support for funding IC, as it is not funded by the district and supports academic achievement. He suggested that funding should be limited to the tutoring element of the program, which is student-facing. The GC decided to pencil in $8,000 as a starting point.

* REPS – Meghan Francone

Meghan Francone, the Executive Director of Reaching Everyone Preventing Suicide (REPS), stated that REPS is requesting funding for the Question Persuade Refer (QPR) program which is provided to all high school freshmen each year, and the It Takes Courage (ITC) program, which addresses anti-bullying. She said they would like to expand the QPR program to the middle schools. She noted that the data show that troubled kids turn to friends more often than to teachers or other trained adults, so it is important for kids to know what to look for in each other. Meghan stated that 30% of middle and high school students are at-risk, low-income or LGBT – high risk populations for suicide. She said that if these kids get the help they need early they are unlikely to be suicidal again, and more likely to be successful academically.

Kathy asked about $5200 toward training services. Meghan said that QPR takes one hour and is offered through the civics classes in the high school. She said that the goal is to ensure the program remains free to the schools and the kids. She also reviewed the ITC program and the link between bullying and suicide. Beth offered that her kids have commented on how much time is spent on anti-bullying presentations and asked if the teachers are not already trained in these issues. Meghan described the teacher training that is provided through REPS, noting that suicide is an ever-changing issue. In response to a question from Dean, Meghan said that she has offered the program to Soroco and Hayden, as well as Moffatt County.

Mark asked how the REPS program enhances academic achievement. Barb offered that the program scores well on both student impact and student-facing. She said that she is disappointed that the districts do not support this program through their budgets. Dean offered that while teachers can talk about these issues, having someone come in with personal experience makes a big difference. Kevin added that programs promoting the discussion of mental health should be supported. Following discussion, GC set an initial grant amount for discussion of $3,000.

* Yampa Valley Science School – Gretchen Van De Carr

Gretchen, the Executive Director of the Yampa Valley Science School (YVSS), reviewed the history of the YVSS, noting that the program now reaches every 6th grade student in Routt County. She offered that YVSS aligns perfectly with the EF mission statement. Gretchen stated that program is fully integrated with the school curriculum and fulfills 6 of the 9 content standards for 6th-grade science. She reviewed how the journals developed during YVSS are referred to throughout the school year. She added that longitudinal monitoring demonstrates that YVSS improves testing scores. Gretchen stated that 20 – 30 high school students are chosen to serve as junior leader mentors in the program, and noted that these students also really benefit from the experience. Gretchen stated that the 6th graders receive 25.5 hours of academic education over the week, plus the pro-social activities, equaling 45.5 hours of direct service per student. She said that she is asking for $35,000 in grant funding. She said that prior to the recession it was not unusual for YVSS to receive $25,000 – $35,000 from the EF. Funding over the last several years has been pretty flat, despite rising costs. Gretchen said that RMYC’s investment in the program has gone up, but so has the number of students. She said that the cost per student is $123. She noted that during the majority of the time the student to teacher ratio is approximately 4 or 5:1. She reviewed that students’ readiness is enhanced by increasing their desire to learn.

Beth asked that the paperwork sent home with each 6th-grader regarding YVSS include a note that the program is funded in part by the Education Fund. Kathy stated her support for YVSS, noting that it is famous in the community. Cristina noted that an additional benefit of the week at YVSS is the interaction the kids have with all the 6th graders from the other schools and with their middle school teachers. Following discussion, the GC decided to start with an award amount of $35,000.

* Booktrails – Emily Krall / Susie ?

Susie ?, a member of the Brooktrails Board of Directors, and Danielle Scope, a teacher and Booktrails Board member, reviewed the program. Danielle said that last year they had worked very hard to get scholarships for the Soda Creek ELL students to participate in the Booktrails summer program. She said that the summer break has a significant negative impact on the academic performance of the ELL and lower-income student populations, increasing the gap between them and the middle- and upper-class students. She stressed the importance of summer oral language programs to counteract this trend. Danielle added that the other social activities included in Booktrails camps also have a very positive impact on integration.

Cristina asked where the scholarship funding for the program came from last year. Danielle said that last year Booktrails won the Impact 100 grant. In response to a question from Beth, Danielle said that the scholarships will target the ELL students who qualify under the READ act. She added that Booktrails is seeking other funding to expand the scholarship program. Beth asked why the scholarships are focused on the ELL populations and not also on kids from middle-income families for whom the $400/week is prohibitive. Danielle said that 35% of the participants receive partial scholarships. In response to the question of partial funding, Susie said that they are seeking funding from other sources, but that the number of scholarships would probably be reduced. Danielle said that they might limit the recipients of scholarships based on teacher recommendations. She said the ELL populations were chosen for this application because it is oral language that holds many of those students back academically. Susie said that supporting academic growth in the ELL population equals academic growth district-wide, and is aligned with the strategic planning committee’s recommendations. Susan noted that the program is only one week long. Susie said that research has shown that interest in reading carries over beyond the program. In response to a question from Kathy, Danielle discussed the importance of experience in vocabulary development. Cristina noted that the library runs an excellent free summer program. Danielle offered that Booktrails is one of many elements being used to address the problem of the summer slide. Susan recommended a smaller grant for a pilot program that could then be assessed for its effectiveness.

* Steamboat Springs Orchestra – Mical Hutson

Mical Hutson, the Executive Director of the Steamboat Springs Orchestra (SSO), stated that in addition to the three professional concerts each year, the SSO offers two educational outreach ensemble workshops for any kid in the County that wants to participate and can produce the music. She said that Earnest Richardson comes in to work with the kids. She said that there is no other strings education of this sort in the community. In 2014 the program involved over 2000 hours of face to face student time. Mical described the impact that the music program has had on her daughter, offering that this program serves an otherwise unmet need in the community.

Barb suggested funding the program at the same level as last year: $5,000. Dean asked about the timing of the grant funding. Mical stated that the funding would be spent after July 2015.

* Yampatika – Sonja Macys

Sonja Macys, the Executive Director of Yampatika, noted that the program has expanded and developed over the years with the help of EF funds. She said that since 2009 the program has grown from serving 6 classrooms to 75 classrooms and is now offered to every student in Routt County. When the current schedule of programs is complete, 1,116 students will have participated in the Yampatika environmental education program. Sonja stated that the program was developed by and for teachers and is designed to make the most of experiential learning. She reviewed that 91% of teachers support the program, feel that it improves academic excellence, is integrated well into several disciplines within the curriculum and addresses common core standards. She said that the scheduling process for the program has improved. She added that 100% of teachers said that the program was a new experience for their students. Sonja noted that the independent evaluations are all posted on the Yampatika website. She noted that teachers have asked for support in the classroom after the program ends, which Yampatika is now developing. Sonja said that the addition of before and after testing will help the students prepare for required online testing. Sonja said that the funding request was increased marginally to reflect increased costs. She reviewed that while the request for EF funding has remained fairly flat the student numbers have increased dramatically and some of the other funding sources have dried up.

In response to a question from Dean, Sonja said that she has initiated talks with the new STEM coordinator about how to integrate the Yampatika program into the districts’ budgets. GC decided to budget $25,000 for discussion.

* Partners – Michelle Petix

Michelle Petix, Executive Director for Partners, introduced Nick Loeb, a former school-based mentor and current science teacher, and Lee Cox, the Secretary of the Partners Board. Michelle reviewed the materials that had been submitted with the application, including the recommendations submitted by the schools’ principals. Michelle stated that the program is evidence based and that AmeriCorps supports the program not only with funding, but with people. She stated that Partners is work all year in their relationships with disadvantaged students who are most likely to score below proficiency level. She said that the Partners program provides 81,000 hours of direct contact with students. Regarding the request amount, Michelle stated that Partners has asked for the same amount each year since 2008, and has been able to find other funding sources to make up the decreased funding from the EF. She noted, however, that the match required by AmeriCorps has increased to 50% along with the requirement that the program demonstrate growth. Michelle stated that the program has grown significantly, while the EF award has decreased. Nick stated that in South Routt Partners is a core element in the school and supports the administrative staff during school hours and provides non-athletic afterschool programs that the school cannot. He said that the stipend provided to mentors is not enough to live on, and the additional money would make a big difference in the amount of time mentors can spend with students and not at second jobs. Lee noted that kids often find mentors more easily approachable than their teachers. Michelle added that AmeriCorps is more likely to fund the program if it is supported by the EF as well.

GC proposed starting the funding discussion at $40,000.

* Steamboat Robotics – Diane Maltby

Jim Lambert representing the program in Diane’s absence, stated that his son has participated in the program and went to the statewide competition last week. He reviewed the program and noted that it has potential to grow into the high school level. He said that many STEM and charter schools incorporate the robotics program into the curriculum. Jim described the state competition. He said that there is a lot of college scholarship money available for kids who participate in these competitions. He noted that the program provides a rare opportunity that is not available anywhere else in the school system. The requested funding will support higher level robotics kits and 10 scholarships.

In response to a question from Dean, Jim said that he thinks the kits will belong to the school. He said that he would love to get this program integrated into the school curriculum. Cristina expressed frustration that there are kits owned by the schools that are not being used. Susan described the progression of the program from the lower level Lego kits to the advanced level where the kids do all the design and construction, as well as the programming. Dean stated that the kits should be owned by the schools. Barb asked how the program is integrated into the school curriculum. GC agreed that it should fund the program at some level. Mark offered that the obstacle with robotics is often finding the people to teach. There was a discussion about which levels of the program had been funded last year and which needed to be funded to allow the current participants to continue. Mark offered that scholarships to allow more kids to begin the program was more important that ensuring that existing participants be allowed to continue.

**Community Group Grants Discussion**

Cristina offered that the GC should refer to the EF mission statement in its decisions regarding which programs should be funded. Dean added that some of the awards for proven programs that have been consistently supported by the EF have taken a hit in their funding over recent years and deserve to have their funding restored to former levels. He suggested that some of the newer programs should be funded at a pilot program level that would allow them to demonstrate their effectiveness.

Several GC members reviewed the funding amounts they had allotted to each recipient in their preliminary evaluations of the applications. Paul offered that some of the programs that have received funding from the EF for many years should be integrated into the districts’ budgets, citing that these programs have become integral parts of the educational system within the community. He offered that continuing to fund them precludes funding newer programs that are not as well-established.

Barb offered that the EF should not be providing 100% funding for any group. Community groups should be expected to find multiple funding sources. Cristina expressed concern with funding scholarships for summer camps. Beth agreed. Kathy suggested that some of the ELL providers could join together to be more efficient, perhaps through the Partners program. Dean agreed that there is a lot of overlap in the ELL programs. He stated his support for funding the IC tutoring program.

Stuart reviewed the initial amounts suggested for each applicant and noted that they were significantly over budget. Kevin proposed trimming each, arguing that each of the programs received support following its presentation. Dean suggested that there are enough questions around the robotics program that it might be best to skip them this year and push to get the program integrated into the districts. There was consensus to fund at least the purchase of the next level kit to keep the program going. Cristina and Beth emphasized that both Science School and Yampatika serve all the students in all the districts. Susan suggested reducing the Booktrails program to a small pilot program for scholarships. Following discussion, the GC settled on the following allocations:

Integrated Community $ 7,000

REPS $ 1,000

Yampa Valley Science School $ 29,000

Booktrails $ 1,500

Steamboat Springs Orchestra $ 3,000

Yampatika $ 22,000

Partners $ 40,000

Steamboat Robotics $ 1,500

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TOTAL $105,000

**MOTION – Community Groups Grant Allocation**

*Mark moved to approve the above listed allocations for Community Group Grants, for a total of $105,000. Cristina seconded the motion.* ***The motion carried unanimously.***

**Adjourn:**

The Education Fund Grant Commission meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.