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ESEA: The Promise Neighborhoods and Full-Service Community Schools Programs

The Promise Neighborhoods and Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) programs are authorized under the Community Support for School Success subpart (Title IV-F-2) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), most recently and comprehensively reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; P.L. 114-95). Both programs were previously authorized through the annual appropriations process using authority available to create programs of national significance under the ESEA Fund for the Improvement of Education (formerly Title V-D-1). The Promise Neighborhoods program was initially created through the Department of Education Appropriations Act, 2010 (Division D, Title III of P.L. 111-117). The FSCS program was initially created as a demonstration program through the Department of Education Appropriations Act, 2008 (Division G, Title III of P.L. 110-161).

Both the Promise Neighborhoods and FSCS programs are designed to provide pipeline services, which deliver a “continuum of coordinated supports, services, and opportunities,” to children in distressed communities. Some examples of pipeline services include early childhood education programs, family and community engagement and support, workforce readiness activities, and mental health services and supports. Pipeline services are provided based on the needs of the children in the communities served.

Promise Neighborhoods

The purpose of the Promise Neighborhoods program is to provide pipeline services to improve the academic and developmental outcomes of children living in some of the most distressed communities of the United States, and also to schools implementing school improvement activities under Title I-A of the ESEA. Distressed communities are neighborhoods with high concentrations of low-income individuals or multiple signs of distress (e.g., high rates of poverty, academic failure, and juvenile delinquency).

The Secretary of Education (hereinafter referred to as the Secretary) must award not less than 95% of the funds appropriated for the Promise Neighborhoods program to eligible entities on a competitive basis. Not less than 15% of the funds made available for competitive grants must be awarded to eligible entities in rural areas. The Secretary must award at least three grants each fiscal year. Grants may be awarded for not more than five years, and may be extended for an additional two years. Grantees must match 100% of the amount received using federal, state, local, or private sources. The Secretary may require that a portion of the match be provided through private sources. The Secretary may also adjust the matching requirements for

high-need applicants. Any funds that remain after making these grants may be used by the Secretary for technical assistance and evaluation.

Entities eligible to apply for a grant under the program include institutions of higher education (IHEs), Indian tribes and tribal organizations, and nonprofit organizations. To be eligible, nonprofit organizations must partner with an IHE, an Indian tribe or tribal organization, another nonprofit organization, a high-need local educational agency (LEA), or an office of a chief elected official of a unit of local government. Priority in awarding grants is given to entities that will use the funds for evidence-based activities that demonstrate a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes and other relevant outcomes.

To receive a grant under this program, an eligible entity must submit an application to the Secretary. Applications are required to include an analysis of the needs of children in the community, a plan to provide pipeline services based on the needs identified in the needs analysis, measurable annual objectives based on the performance indicators selected by the Secretary, and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between each partner entity. The MOU describes each partner’s “financial, programmatic, and long term commitment.”

Funds awarded must be used for planning activities to “develop and implement pipeline services,” implementing the services, and continuously evaluating the success of the program and improving it based on the findings. In the first year of the grant, grantees are required to use not less than 50% of the funds for planning activities. In the second year, grantees must use not less than 25% of the funds for this purpose.

The Secretary selects program performance indicators, which focus on academic and developmental outcomes. These indicators must measure school readiness, high school graduation rates, postsecondary education and career readiness, and other relevant outcomes.

Grantees are required to submit annual reports to the Secretary. Reports must include the number and percentage of children in the neighborhood served by the grant, the number and percentage of children using each pipeline service offered, and data on the performance indicators. Grantees are also required to make their reports publicly available and accessible to families in the community served by the grant.

Full-Service Community Schools

The purpose of the FSCS program is to provide “support for the planning, implementation, and operation of [full-service community schools] that improve the coordination and integration, accessibility, and effectiveness of services for children and families,” particularly for children enrolled in high-poverty schools. A full-service community school is defined as a public elementary or secondary school that participates in a community-based effort to provide coordinated and integrated comprehensive services, such as education and health services, through community-based organizations and public and private partnerships. Services can be provided to students, families, and communities during the school year (including on weekends) and during the summer.

The Secretary must award not less than 95% of the funds appropriated to eligible entities on a competitive basis. An eligible entity is a consortium of (1) one or more LEAs or the Bureau of Indian Education and (2) one or more community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, or other public or private entities. Not less than 15% of the funds made available for competitive grants must be awarded to eligible entities in rural areas. The Secretary must award at least 10 grants each fiscal year. Grants may be awarded for not more than five years, and may be extended for an additional two years. The minimum annual grant amount is \$75,000. Grantees must match some or all of the grant using non-federal sources as determined by the Secretary. The Secretary may require that a portion of the match be provided through private sources, which can come in part from in-kind contributions.

To receive a grant under the FSCS program, an eligible entity must submit an application to the Secretary. Applications are required to include a needs assessment of students, families, and residents in the community; measureable annual objectives to increase the number and percentage of students and families served; a plan to provide pipeline services based on the annual measurable performance objectives; a plan for continuing to provide services after the end of the grant period; and a MOU between each partner entity. The MOU must describe each partner’s role and how partners will help the eligible entity coordinate and provide pipeline services. In awarding grants under the program, the Secretary is required to give priority to eligible entities that (1) will serve two or more full-service community schools eligible to operate schoolwide programs under ESEA Title I-A, (2) include an LEA that meets various eligibility requirements under the Rural Education Achievement Program in ESEA Title V-B, (3) are consortiums comprised of a “broad representation of stakeholders” or consortiums with a demonstrated history of effectiveness, and (4) will use funds in accordance with program requirements for evidence-based activities that demonstrate a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes and other relevant outcomes.

Funds can be used to coordinate existing pipeline services, provide new pipeline services, integrate services into a coordinated continuum, and coordinate community-based and government-provided services. Grantees may use not more than 10% of the grant in the first year for planning

purposes. They are required to provide at least three pipeline services by the date they receive the grant, and to implement at least two additional pipeline services after receiving the grant.

Grantees are required to conduct annual evaluations of their progress toward accomplishing the aims of the FSCS program. They must use their evaluations to adjust their activities to meet the objectives. They must also make their annual evaluations publicly available. Grantees that receive multi-year awards are required to submit reports annually that provide current performance and financial expenditure information. The Secretary must conduct evaluations of the effectiveness of grants toward fulfilling the purpose of the program.

Appropriations

Table 1 details appropriations for the Promise Neighborhoods and FSCS programs since their inception.

Table 1. Appropriations for the Promise Neighborhoods and Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) Programs: FY2008–FY2019
Dollars in thousands

Fiscal Year	Promise Neighborhoods	FSCS
2008	–	\$4,674
2009	–	\$5,368
2010	\$10,000	\$10,155
2011	\$29,940	\$9,753
2012	\$59,887	\$10,094
2013	\$56,754	\$5,344
2014	\$56,754	\$10,649
2015	\$56,754	\$9,710
2016	\$73,254	\$10,000
2017	\$73,254	\$10,000
2018	\$78,254	\$17,500
2019	\$78,254	\$17,500

Source: Table prepared by CRS based on data from the U.S. Department of Education, Budget Service, annual appropriations tables and *Justifications of Appropriations Estimations to the Congress*, various years.

In 2018, 15 new FSCS grants and 3 Promise Neighborhood continuation grants were awarded. Grant funds under both programs must be used to supplement, and not supplant, federal, state, or local funds that would otherwise be available for activities authorized under the program.

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