

## **EXPLORING FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS**

Webinar Summary  
July 20, 2011

This National Charter School Resource Center webinar focused on exploring grant opportunities and effectively competing for funds. It was attended by 165 people, with most representing charter schools.

The hour-long webinar featured Danny Corwin, vice president of development at the California Charter Schools Association; Rhonda Kochlefl, chief development officer of the Noble Network of Charter Schools in Chicago; and Erin Pfeltz and Ann Margaret Galiatsos of the U.S. Department of Education's Charter Schools Program.

The presenters shared information about grant programs, best practices, development strategies and tips that have helped charter schools sustain and enhance their programs.

Corwin outlined key ways to think about accessing support. He noted that growth in the number of charter schools also means increasing competition for funding and that collaboration and creativity are essential.

Charter school leaders should hone their pitches, concentrating on accomplishments that make the school unique. He counseled that tight economic times are not necessarily the best for starting new projects. Leaders should consider enhancing what's already in place.

Corwin encouraged pressing charter school governing board members into service for annual fund raising campaigns. Urgency should be created around the campaign, which he advised holding over a defined period and early in the school year so the money raised can be put to use during the year.

It can be hard to raise money from low-income families, but even collecting small amounts from many people can pay off -- and not just in the form of additional revenue. To be able to say, for example, that 100 percent of families are contributing sends a "very strong message."

Corwin urged that fundraisers preserve as much flexibility as possible for use of the money. But he said there are times when it makes sense to seek support for a specific program or item. For example, he said a specific company might be approached to provide specific assistance related to its work.

Kochlefl said that about 65 percent of the funding for the network's 10 campuses comes from Chicago Public Schools per pupil funding, with philanthropy and other public funding each contributing 14 percent, and 7 percent coming from student fees.



She recommended casting a wide net for grants, going beyond the major foundations and government education agencies. The school network has tapped into a variety of agency support programs, including those run by agriculture, energy and health agencies. But she said it is important to critically assess specific fund raising efforts and grants and not waste time pursuing support when there is little chance of success.

She recommended keeping up with news about grants and building relationships with organizations that issue grants, including local arts groups that offer education support. She also described the school's facilities development efforts, noting the value of the New Market Tax Credits program, which provides assistance in high-needs areas. She advised maintaining detailed information about donations and making sure news of the school's success is well known.

