

## Education Service Center 6: *Developing Mutually Beneficial Partnerships to Promote Community Success*

March 2015



In 2009 Education Service Center (ESC) 6 applied for a 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) grant to serve students in Huntsville ISD and New Waverly ISD, both of which reside roughly 70 miles north of Houston. ESC 6 found the 21st CCLC program to be in great demand and easily exceeded the required number of students to be served by several hundred. The grant staff was shorthanded; in addition to meeting the demand of families and students the initial budget for the program failed to take into consideration several staff positions required by the grant requirements. From day one, Project Director Consuelo Stone cultivated new community partnerships and engaged a task force to support the program during the grant and beyond.

### Overcoming Budget Challenges

ESC 6 started their 21st CCLC program in 2011, a year into Cycle 6, after additional federal money became available to fund grantees. From the beginning, the program faced a budget challenge because the original grant application did not include funding for specific staffing requirements. “Immediately we had to look for resources that would be able to help us so we would be able to afford one site coordinator at center rather than one to coordinate all six centers,” said Consuelo Stone, Project Director of the 21st CCLC program. “That created a need and the need was to be able to partner.” Stone reached out to the community and found support from many sources.



The program was able to attract Site Coordinators by supporting participation in ESC 6’s alternative teaching certificate program. ESC 6 reduced the cost of the certification program by nearly 50% for ACE Site Coordinators with Bachelor’s Degrees and the participating school districts used continuing education funds to help the Site Coordinators earn their teaching certification for less than \$250.

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**-Consuelo Stone, Project Director,  
ESC 6 ACE Program**

The engagement of community partners allowed each organization to benefit from the sharing of resources. For example, Sam Houston State University (SHSU) provided over 280 volunteers from the College of Education. “One of the things we are always concerned about is providing appropriate field placements for our teacher prep students, particularly in ESC 6 and early childhood through sixth grade. We only have four elementary schools in Huntsville,” said Dr. Barbara Greybeck, Faculty Member in the Department of Literacy, Languages and Special Populations at SHSU. “Sam Houston State is a fairly

middle sized university now—we have over 19,000 students. We’re always looking for options where students can practice the skills that we’re teaching in the methods courses. The afterschool program really helped us out with that. Not only did it help the children, but also our students had a chance to practice their skills outside of the regular classroom.”

Stone assembled a diverse Community Task Force including representatives from SHSU, the Boys and Girls Club of Walker County, the Huntsville Family YMCA, the city council and the mayor. She also developed partnerships across Walker County with local businesses, non-profit organizations and rural churches. The partnerships developed over the course of the grant proved to meet multiple community needs inside the 21st CCLC program and beyond. Stone credits the success of the Task Force with one guiding principle for all included: “It’s not about what’s in it for us; it’s about what’s in it for them.” Michelle Spencer, the executive director of the Boys and Girls Club noted the partnerships her organization and the 21st CCLC program and SHSU were mutually beneficially for all involved. “The Boys and Girls Club is a non-profit that raises our own

funds. Depending on year and time in community, our budget fluctuates often so this is a great partnership.” The 21st CCLC program also offered placements at the Boys and Girls Club and the 21st CCLC program to college students participating in work-study programs, which were funded from SHSU’s Financial Aid Office.

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*-Michelle Spencer, Executive Director,  
Boys and Girls Club of Walker County*

## Planning for Sustainability

Stone is the first to tout the program’s success in the face of initial budget difficulty. “Our grant was written to serve 350 students and 130 families each year. We exceeded these numbers each year to serve over 500 students and provided several activities in the community on the weekend.” By leveraging

developed partnerships with the YMCA and Boys and Girls Club, the former 21st CCLC program plans to sustain services to all children after the conclusion of the grant in July 2014. The YMCA, which offers national recognized curriculum on family engagement and healthy living, as well as trained counselors, plans to continue all in-kind contributions and offer a sliding scale fee to ensure any student in need of services is able to participant.

In planning for a sustainable program, Stone credits training and the Community Task Force as the tenets of success. As a 21st CCLC grantee, ESC 6 participated in numerous trainings offered by TEA’s technical assistance provider Edvance Research, Inc. and engaged with a regional technical assistance consultant to ensure appropriate program implementation. The Texas 21st CCLC technical assistance team developed many publically

available resources that were invaluable such as the Texas ACE Blueprint and online modules available at [MyTexasACE.org](http://MyTexasACE.org).

The Community Task Force, which was a grant requirement, evolved into an Advisory Board over the course of five years. Stone utilized resources from the ACE Blueprint to leverage resources. She also sits on the Advisory Board for the Center of Community Engagement at SHSU, which focuses on providing community experiences to college students from college students across all disciplines.

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## Lessons Learned

### Create a Community Advisory Council

Establish partnership that will continue and grow each year. Find mutually beneficial solutions to community problems. When asked about the sustainability of relationships developed in the Advisory Council, Sandra Clifton, Director of Huntsville Family YMCA responded “This is just a new beginning for us trying to enhance these partnerships continue on.” “It’s about being an integral party of the community and a part of the community culture,” Stone added.

### Don’t focus exclusively on the grant budget. Get creative!

Advisory Council member and Director of Adult Education at ESC 6 Kristi Hayman explained, “As long as your program is successful, then that will segue into many more opportunities. The uniqueness of this program due to the limited budget, we’ve had to pretty much be in sustainability mode from the beginning. It made us stretch outside the box and really pull in community resources so we could provide and meet the requirements necessary. Then it brought about these wonderful partnerships and collaborations.”

### Design Programming Based on Needs

Stone summed up her sustainability planning best when she said, “When we looked at this grant, we never talked about what was required or what is minimum. We always talked about what is the right thing to do, what will meet that need, what will be able to close that gap in our community.”

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