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***FACE a Shoestring Budget:*** *This article is part of a series on low-cost, effective family and community engagement (FACE) strategies for Title I districts and schools. Have an example that we should feature? Submit an idea by email to [toffutt@lrp.com](mailto:toffutt@lrp.com).*

## **No budget for families? Seek and you will find funds**

At one Ohio school, a private grant paid for a handmade portable stage where students could perform during family events. When construction day rolled around, a group of Lowe's employees arrived, hammers in hand and ready to help.

Educators who ask for a little help, just as this school did, might be surprised how quickly businesses respond, said Ann Bohman, an education consultant for federal programs and parent involvement for the [Ohio Department of Education](#).

What's more, such dollars often aren't tied to complex grant applications or monitoring requirements, she said.

"Most companies and businesses in their budgets always have money for their communities, and nobody ever asks for the money," Bohman said.

Bohman and her colleague Barbara Boone, the director of ODE's Office of Family and Community Support, realized schools, districts, and parents needed a straightforward guide to family engagement funding. They created [Family-School Partnership Funding Sources](#) as a starting point. It's available online and lists federal, state, and private grants.

Whether you take advantage of Ohio's listing or create your own, here are some pointers.

- **Offer reminders.** Many federal entitlement and competitive grants include various parent involvement requirements and make this area an allowable expense. Remind your districts they can look toward those federal dollars to fund parent involvement efforts even if a specific set-aside isn't required. For example, in the case of Title I, a requirement to set aside 1 percent for parent involvement isn't triggered until a district receives more than \$500,000; however, Title I funds still can be used for parent involvement no matter how much a district receives.
- **Urge "by-the-book" applications.** Particularly for competitive federal grants, districts can lose out just by failing to follow directions, she noted. "The key to grantwriting is to simply do exactly what they ask you to do." Even though such grant applications are time-consuming and you'll have monitoring and renewal requirements later, some do offer funding amounts that would enhance your parent involvement efforts and help sustain your program, Bohman said.
- **Draw parents into the process.** One advantage of providing a sources guide is that it gives parents an easy-to-understand document that explains various federal and state funding streams as well as private grant options. A principal could share the guide with families and ask parents for help in generating project ideas that align with school improvement goals and help families support student learning. Such applications are often easy and even fun to complete, she added.

*Related Story:*

## **Tap into private funding streams**

Here are a few examples of private grants you can tap into for family engagement funds. For more ideas, download the free guide [Family-School Partnership Funding Sources](#) from the [Ohio Department of Education](#).

## **Dollar General Family Literacy Grants**

If you're in a state where Dollar General is located, you are eligible to apply for these grants; however, your family literacy program must include four components: adult education, children's education, parent and child together time, and parenting classes.

Grant applications for 2013 will be available in January. For more information, visit [www.dgliteracy.org](http://www.dgliteracy.org). The site also has a National Literacy Directory that families can use to find GED, adult literacy, and ESOL classes.

## **Kohl's Cares Associates in Action**

Educators fill out a brief application about a school event or project and submit it to their local Kohl's. When at least five employees volunteer for three hours to help with the event or project, the school earns a \$500 grant.

For more information, visit [www.kohlscorporation.com](http://www.kohlscorporation.com) and click on the "Kohl's Cares" menu option.

## **Lowe's Toolbox for Education**

Both schools and nonprofit parent groups can apply for up to \$5,000. The current deadline is Oct. 12, 2012, or until 1,500 applications are received. A second grant cycle has a February 2013 deadline.

Lowe's favors proposals that would permanently enhance a school's campus and those focused on parent involvement and community spirit.

Lowes also offers another program for a "Large Toolbox for Education" grant of \$50,000 to \$100,000, and one of the allowable uses is parenting education.

For more information, visit [www.toolboxforeducation.com](http://www.toolboxforeducation.com). See the frequently asked questions section for more about the Large Toolbox grants.

--[Tricia Offutt](#) is a former Title I teacher and author of LRP Publications' [Title I Family Engagement in the Field: Partner with Parents to Transform Student Achievement](#).

**August 2, 2012**

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