



# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR  
AND CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Jane Light

**SUBJECT:** SEE BELOW

**DATE:** March 22, 2010

Approved

Date

3-23-10

**COUNCIL DISTRICT:** City-Wide  
**SNI AREA:** N/A

**SUBJECT: GRANT APPLICATION FOR THE SMART START SAN JOSE  
PROGRAM QUALITY GUIDELINES PROJECT**

## RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a resolution authorizing the City Manager, or designee, to:

1. Submit a grant application in the amount of \$300,000 to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services for an early childhood education improvement grant for the Smart Start San José Program Quality Guidelines project.
2. Accept any grant funds awarded to the City and negotiate and execute all necessary documents related to any grant funding from the Department of Health & Human Services for this project.

## OUTCOME

This grant would enable the City, through its Smart Start San José (SSSJ) program, to develop Program Quality Guidelines for Smart Start San José preschools and child care sites. By using these guidelines, SSSJ sites would be able to identify their program strengths and areas for improvement. The grant would also provide mini-grants that sites could use to address program quality. These guidelines and mini-grants would allow participating sites to gauge and enhance the quality of their programs. This project will further raise the caliber of child care in San José and increase positive developmental outcomes for children in Smart Start San José sites.

## BACKGROUND

In accordance with the legislative priorities adopted by the City Council on December 16, 2008, City staff, working with the City's legislative representatives in Washington, D.C., requested a

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

Due Date

Subject: Grant Application for Smart Start San José

Page 2

Federal appropriation for this project. The City was recently informed that under the Senate-House conference agreement, this project was recommended for \$300,000 in funding and that an application must be received by April 13, 2010 in order to award the grant.

The Smart Start San José program is managed by the Early Care and Education Services Unit of the Library Department. Smart Start San José is an early childhood education initiative to improve the quality of educational experiences for young children through access to quality child care services and programs. All 57 Smart Start San José sites currently comply with Smart Start Program Quality Standards developed in 1999. These standards, however, do not include benchmarks that support sites in continuous quality improvement. While several assessment tools exist to measure specific program elements, there is currently no comprehensive tool available with benchmarks that align with Smart Start Program Quality Standards. Clear guidelines will allow early education programs to gauge program quality and set targets for improvement where needed.

Local experts from the Santa Clara County Office of Education, Local Early Education Planning Council of Santa Clara County, and the Santa Clara County Partnership for School Readiness have already committed to working with the City on this project.

### ANALYSIS

This grant would enable the development of Program Quality Guidelines for use in Smart Start San José preschools and child care sites. The project will be led by SSSJ program staff and local experts from early education organizations. The Guidelines that will be developed will be based on best practices in the early childhood education field and align with California Title V and Title 22 licensing regulations as well as established SSSJ Program Quality Standards. The Guidelines will address a number of program aspects such as parent participation, cultural competency, and quality environments and provide a range of best practice strategies.

Once the guidelines are in place they will be introduced to all Smart Start San José sites. Program sites will be encouraged to self-assess and be available to provide peer review support to sites that may request it. Smart Start staff and qualified volunteers from existing Smart Start programs will work with approximately 45 SSSJ sites to review their programs based on the developed guidelines and provide support.

This action aligns with the SJ2020 Initiative to close the achievement gap. One of the primary strategies is to provide high-quality preschool programs that are accessible to all children that will prepare them to be successful in kindergarten. This action also aligns with the vision of the City of San José Early Care and Education "Investment in the Future" Strategic Work Plan 2009-2014 which is "to assist families and educators to support the development and well-being of children" and the goal to increase the number of quality early care and education spaces to meet the diverse needs of San José families. This document was approved by Council on June 2, 2009.

In addition, the State of California is currently developing statewide quality standards for preschools and family child care homes that will be put into practice over the next several years. The Program Quality Guidelines for SSSJ sites established through this project will better

position these sites to readily meet these upcoming state standards. Further, by developing these guidelines, San José will be seen as a leader in the state, and potentially a pilot location for these new statewide standards.

### **EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP**

This project aligns with the Neighborhood Services CSA Outcome Measure of "80% of students entering kindergarten from Smart Start San José programs with the foundation needed for academic and social success." These Program Quality Guidelines will help to ensure SSSJ programs provide the services necessary to ensure children are kindergarten ready.

If the grant is awarded, the Library will keep Council apprised of the project through reports to the Early Care and Education Commission and the Neighborhood Services & Education Committee.

No additional follow-up to the City Council is necessary as a result of this memorandum.

### **POLICY ALTERNATIVES**

*Alternative #1:* Do not approve resolution.

**Pros:** Does not require staff time to prepare the application package.

**Cons:** Inconsistent with City Council's approach of seeking grant funds to develop projects.

**Reason for not recommending:** This project is well suited for this funding source and the funds have already been set aside for the project at the Federal level. If the City did not submit the application, it would lose grant funds to complete this project.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH/INTEREST**

- Criterion 1:** Requires Council action on the use of public funds equal to \$1 million or greater. **(Required: Website Posting)**
- Criterion 2:** Adoption of a new or revised policy that may have implications for public health, safety, quality of life, or financial/economic vitality of the City. **(Required: E-mail and Website Posting)**
- Criterion 3:** Consideration of proposed changes to service delivery, programs, staffing that may have impacts to community services and have been identified by staff, Council or a Community group that requires special outreach. **(Required: E-mail, Website Posting, Community Meetings, Notice in appropriate newspapers)**

While this item does not meet any of the criteria, this memorandum will be posted on the City's website for the April 6, 2010 Council agenda.

**COORDINATION**

This memorandum has been coordinated with the City Attorney's Office and the City Manager's Budget Office.

**FISCAL/POLICY ALIGNMENT**

Not applicable.

**COST SUMMARY/IMPLICATIONS**

There are no fiscal impacts to the General Fund or other City funds arising from this proposal. Funding is from a Federal Health & Human Services grant and no local match is required for the grant.

**BUDGET REFERENCE**

Not applicable.

**CEQA**

Not a project.

  
JANE LIGHT  
Director, Library Department

For questions please contact Jane Light, Library Director at (408) 808-2150