

## OPI Guidance for the Creation of Consortia to Accept ARP-HCY II Funding

The Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) received \$1,407,618 in American Rescue Plan-Homeless Children and Youth (ARP-HCY) II funds to distribute to districts across the state based on a federal funding formula. Each district that received Title I funds and/or identified students experiencing homelessness during the 18-19 or 19-20 school years is eligible to receive ARP-HCY II funding. Half of the allocation is based on the district's proportionate share of Title I funding, and half of the allocation is based on the district's proportionate share of students identified as homeless during the two eligible school years (whichever year had a higher number of identified students). The OPI has posted the full list of [preliminary allocations](#) on the [ARP-HCY tab](#) of the [OPI Homeless Education webpage](#).

To receive an ARP-HCY II allocation, an eligible district must have an allocation of at least \$5,000, per federal regulations. Any district with an allocation that is less than \$5,000 must join a consortium to receive funding. To assist in this process, the OPI has outlined a number of recommended configurations for ARP-HCY II consortia. All districts are encouraged to reach out to their neighbors to determine the type of consortium that will work best in your local area. Districts should understand that consortia are necessary to ensure that all students experiencing homelessness have the opportunity to access services and supports. The OPI is aware that consortia may provide additional challenges but understands that through shared sacrifice our students will reap the benefits of this funding.

Due to the nature of the services and supports that students and families experiencing homelessness require, the OPI encourages districts to form consortia with their close neighbors.

**Forming a consortium** – To form a consortium for the ARP-HCY II grant, the consortium partners will need to designate one district as the fiscal agent for the group. The fiscal agent will be the district that completes the grant application and where all funding will reside. The OPI will automatically transfer all consortium partner funding to the fiscal agent. The fiscal agent will complete the grant application for the consortium partners and will provide services to each partner as agreed upon. A consortium's total allocation **MUST** be \$5,000 or more.

Districts choosing to participate in a consortium will need to accept their funds and name their fiscal agent on the ARP-HCY II Intent to Apply application within the Egrants system.

**Statewide Consortium** – The OPI, in collaboration with the CSPD Regions and the School Services of Montana (SSoM), is encouraging the formation of a statewide consortium to provide services and supports to all districts that elect to participate in this model. The benefit of a statewide model is that it may combine a large number of small grants to create a pool of funds that can be effectively utilized to provide both professional development and regionally based supports to the many members. Under this model, one district would serve as the fiscal agent for the consortium. Grant funds from each member would be combined into the grant application for the fiscal agent. The fiscal agent would then contract with SSoM to provide services and supports under the grant.

SSoM would use a portion of the money to host at least one, but possibly two, conference-type events to provide professional development on issues surrounding the education of students experiencing homelessness; including social-emotional learning, related special education issues, Infinite Campus, MTSS, trauma-informed approaches, and other related topics. These professional learning events would

be included in consortium membership. In addition, SSoM would work with each of the CSPD regions to place staff (AmeriCorps VISTAs or independent contractors) in each region to create infrastructure and long-term sustainability. Their work would include resource identification and mapping, assisting member districts in creating programming in the form of school-based food pantries, supply closets, and other local resources. Regional staff would also provide support to district level liaisons in providing referrals to resources for students and families experiencing homelessness.

### **Fiscal agent for this consortium – Twin Bridges**

For additional information on the Statewide Consortium model, contact Tom Franta with SSoM at [tfranta@mt-schools.org](mailto:tfranta@mt-schools.org).

Districts may elect to create other consortium models based on the options described below, or on a model agreed upon by the members of the consortium.

**Feeder Pattern** – K-12 systems and districts that accept students into their middle and high schools from surrounding K-8 and K-6 districts are strongly encouraged to reach out to these districts to form a consortium. This type of arrangement would assist with the transition of students experiencing homelessness from one district to another and would create a seamless system of supports and resources. To determine the final allocation for your consortium, consult [the preliminary allocation spreadsheet](#) on the [OPI's Homeless Education ARP-HCY tab](#).

**Countywide** – Districts are encouraged to reach out to their county superintendent for assistance in forming a consortium between other districts within their county. For convenience, the OPI has calculated the total grant award for each county. Districts highlighted in green may apply for funding on their own. Counties with a total in green have met the \$5,000 minimum requirement to apply for funding as a countywide consortium. Larger districts should consult this page to understand the critical role they may play in creating opportunities for smaller districts within their county.

**Reservation-based** – Districts located within the borders of one of Montana's seven reservations are encouraged to create consortia with their fellow districts. This type of regionally based consortia allows the members to focus on the unique needs of American Indian students experiencing homelessness and to tap into partnerships with either tribal government agencies or reservation-based community organizations that are ideally suited to meet the needs of students in their communities. Tribal education agencies, or other branches of tribal governments, are acceptable partners for this work. A consortium may choose to contract with such an agency to provide services and supports to students experiencing homelessness. Districts and tribal governments should be aware that ARP-HCY II funds must be used to support ALL students experiencing homelessness within a district's boundaries. This includes tribally enrolled students, tribally related students, and non-tribal students. Refer to the OPI spreadsheet for consortium calculations for districts located within the borders of each reservation. Reservation-based districts are also encouraged to reach out to border communities that may wish to participate in such a consortium due to the demographics of their student population and their proximity to the reservation.

**CSPD Regions and Special Education Coops** – Due to the rural nature of Montana, districts may need to look at larger geographic regions to form partnerships that will result in a total allocation of at least \$5,000. In these cases, the OPI encourages districts to look at existing structures that may support both the formation of the consortium and a central location where a staff person might be housed. The CSPD regions and Special Education Coops are two possible opportunities to provide support to smaller districts with limited funding and limited numbers of students experiencing homelessness.

For questions or additional information about the ARP-HCY II grants, the Intent to Apply application, or identifying students experiencing homeless contact the OPI Federal Programs Director, Jack O'Connor at [joconnor2@mt.gov](mailto:joconnor2@mt.gov), or 406-444-3083.