

# Harris County



# Precinct One

**RODNEY ELLIS**  
*Commissioner*

**COVID-19**  
**SUPPLEMENTAL AGENDA ITEM**

March 30, 2021

County Judge Lina Hidalgo  
Members of Commissioners Court

**RE: Request for approval of County Connections youth summer enrichment programming initiative**

Dear Judge Hidalgo and Commissioners Cagle, Garcia, and Ramsey:

Precinct One respectfully requests approval for funding of up to \$712,250 from the COVID Response and Recovery Fund for a County Connections initiative with the Harris County Department of Education for the purpose of supporting youth summer enrichment for school-aged youth across Harris County.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Commissioner Rodney Ellis

RE: EC  
Attachment  
xc: Brandon Dudley



## **Harris County Connections**

### **Youth Summary Enrichment Programming Initiative**

Recommendation: Pursue an inter-local agreement allocating \$712,250 to the Harris County Department of Education for the County Connections program for the purpose of supporting youth summer enrichment programs for school-aged children across Harris County.

In 2020, Harris County Commissioners Court established the COVID Response and Recovery Fund to address ongoing needs created and exacerbated by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. School-aged youth and their families are among those most affected by the pandemic, in light of virtual learning, restrictions in school environments, and disrupted childcare options. Low-income students, including 600,000 economically disadvantaged students in Harris County alone, are mostly like to experience an academic summer slide. Budget cuts and continued safety precautions mean that many summer enrichment programs are at risk of not operating in 2021 without additional support.

*County Connections* is a proposed collaboration between the Harris County Department of Education (HCDE) and Harris County to serve school-aged youth (grades Kindergarten- 12<sup>th</sup> grade) in the summer of 2021. HCDE, through its program CASE for Kids, will select organizations that operate summer enrichment in-person and virtual programs to minimize the summer learning gap and provide safe spaces for children. If in person, class sizes will be smaller to accommodate social distancing; the grants will allow the programs to provide typical services without reducing the quality. The City of Houston has a similar program, *City Connections*, for youth within city limits; Harris County's program will serve a broader range of organizations across Harris County.

Funds will be available to any qualified non-profit organization<sup>1</sup> serving school-aged youth in Harris County, including but not limited to unincorporated parts of the County. Priority will go to grantee organizations serving the highest need youth or communities, based on the percent of economically disadvantaged youth in schools serving the same population. Programs will also include their fees, tuition, scholarship and scholarship data as part of the application. A grantee organization can use the funds flexibly to meet

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<sup>1</sup> Organizations must have 501(c)(3) status, be registered with the Texas Secretary of State as a non-profit organization for at least one year, and serve youth between ages 5-18 (kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade).

the needs of their summer programming. CASE for Kids must match 50% of the grant awarded.

The total budget for the proposed *County Connections* is \$712,250 to serve over 1,750 youth and support, in part, over 162 staff. Harris County will use COVID Response and Recovery Funds for this initiative. CASE for Kids (representing HCDE) will select at least 50 programs, and each grantee organization would receive up to \$20,000, based on the specific needs of the program. The students will benefit from comprehensive summer programs, short terms camps, college and career readiness services, and program coaching. Research shows that for every \$1 invested, the community saves \$3 by increasing the earning potential of students, improving school performance and reducing crime and juvenile delinquency. The total cost includes a 10% administrative fee for CASE for Kids.

If Commissioners Court approves the establishment of a County Connections program, the implementation timeline will be:

- 4/5/21 Initial RFP Advertising
- 4/30/21 2021 RFP Grant Application Deadline.
- 4/30/21 Establish inter-local agreement no later than the end of April
- 5/10/21 CASE for Kids confirms approval with final list of grantees provided to HC Commissioners
- 6/14/21 Grant Term Start Date
- 8/15/21 Grant Term End Date
- 8/30/21 Final Attendance and general report due to Commissioners Court
- 9/30/21 Final Report and analysis due to Commissioners Court.