

First 5 Commission of San Diego
January 12, 2009
Proposed Innovative Grant Award

The action before the Commission is to consider approval of the Source Selection Committee recommendation to award an Innovative Grant to Riding Emphasizing Individual Needs & Strengths (REINS) for up to \$44,000.

Background:

The Commission approved a Policy for Innovative Grant Funds on August 4, 2003 (Item 8), and revised the Policy on November 1, 2004 (Item 10), June 20, 2005 (Item 5) and December 3, 2007 (Item 8). To date, the Commission has awarded 35 Innovative Grants providing a wide variety of services benefiting children ages 0-5 and their families.

Innovative Grant applications are reviewed on a quarterly basis by a Source Selection Committee (SSC). The SSC members discuss and evaluate each application in accordance with the criteria contained in Commission Policy F5C-010. Each proposal is reviewed for how well it:

- Supports the vision, mission, values and operating guidelines of the Commission. (This is both a requirement for funding, and an evaluation criterion.)
- Addresses one or more of the Commission's desired results.
- Demonstrates the potential success for meeting the project's stated objectives.
- Documents and addresses an unmet need or needs in the community.
- Demonstrates an innovative approach or technique that addresses an unmet need.
- Describes how the project will be sustained after the termination of the grant funding.
- Leverages additional resources and/or is able to provide matching funds. Such resources include other funding or in-kind support such as equipment, supplies, or volunteer services provided by the organization.
- Demonstrates linkages with other community organizations that provide services to children and their families.
- Documents positive impacts and results of its project.
- Supports reasonable project costs.

Recommendations:

The SSC recommends the following project for award:

- REINS' Occupational and Physical Therapist Program

The SSC also recommends that applications from the following organizations not be considered for award. Their proposals didn't adequately address all of the required criteria contained in Commission Policy F5C-010:

- Heart and Hands Working Together
- La Cuna, Inc.
- SDSU Research Foundation
- Universal Alliance for Family Health

All applicants will be notified by mail of award status and will be provided with the strengths and weaknesses of their applications. The applicants not recommended for award have the option to revise and resubmit their applications for future consideration.

Fiscal Impact:

Up to \$44,000 from the Innovative Grants allocation in the Commission's budget for FY 2008-09. If these grant awards are approved, the balance remaining in the Innovative Grant Fund for FY 2008-09 will be \$689,305.

Summary of Innovative Grant Application Recommended for Award:

**REINS' (Riding Emphasizing Individual Needs & Strengths)
Occupational and Physical Therapist Program**

Up to \$44,000

The REINS' Occupational and Physical Therapist Program provides therapeutic riding lessons to children ages 3-5 who have disabilities such as Cerebral Palsy, Autism, Downs Syndrome, and seizure disorders. Through the REINS program, each child is assessed and given a unique set of therapy goals, depending on the type of disability and their abilities.

Therapeutic horseback riding has been shown to improve balance, strengthen muscles, improve coordination, speed reflexes, improve motor planning, stretch muscles, reduce spasticity and increase the range of motion (research: Children's Hemiplegia and Stroke Association). In a study done by the United Cerebral Palsy Research and Educational Foundation, the gross motor scores of participants in such therapy improved by 8.7% in just 12 weeks. Many of the children in this program are in clinics and hospitals most of their time. Their participation in REINS is often the only time in a week when they are outside and engaged in a physical activity they relish. For children with severe motor disabilities, the REINS program is often the only experience they have that enables them to participate in a physical activity (such as a trail ride outing) along side children without disabilities. As such, there are also social-emotional benefits to the program that are difficult to measure, but clearly demonstrated in the faces of the children and their enthusiasm for their time on horseback. (In one case cited in the application, a nonverbal child began to sing while riding.)

With First 5 Innovative funds, REINS' will be able to enhance its existing program in two ways. The riding instructors will receive additional training by the occupational and physical therapists to improve the therapeutic aspects of their riding lessons. In addition, these funds will support creating a follow-up evaluation component performed by one of the therapists on each children age 5 and under. This evaluation will be performed at a 3 to 6 month interval with a goal of better assessing the progress of the student and the appropriateness of the therapeutic program and lesson design. This new program component was identified through the experience and success of the pilot Therapeutic Consulting Partnership project (initially funded by First 5 Innovative funds) that created partnerships between each student, instructor, parent and therapist.

In its 24-year history, the local REINS program has grown to serve 190 children annually with a network of 70 volunteers, 10 licensed therapeutic riding instructors and the consulting services of an occupational therapist. The program is recognized by the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association as one of the best programs nationally. The REINS program has strong community support for its ongoing operations. First 5 funding of this innovative project would further strengthen the therapeutic component. The Applicant proposes to serve 58 children and 56 families.

Total Innovative Funds - Up to \$44,000.00