

### KIBSD - Grants and Grant Funding - #3

(shared by Kerry Irons, KIBSD Board Member, April 2024)

Published in the *Kodiak Daily Mirror* on April 2, 2024

[PART 3: How grants and grant funding works for KIBSD | Opinion | kodiakdailymirror.com](#)

Hi everyone,

This is the third installment in a series about grant funds the Kodiak Island Borough School District (KIBSD) receives. Remember, the Grant funds are NOT included in the annual balanced budget the School District is required to present to the State of Alaska each year - even though they are part of our district's revenues and expenditures. That is because grants only **supplement** the programs we provide our students, and the amount we receive can vary considerably from year to year. When we talk about the revenues for balancing the budget, we are talking primarily about those coming from the State as determined by the Foundation Formula (which includes the Base Student Allocation, or BSA) and those from the Kodiak Island Borough. Those funds go into our operating budget, our General Fund.

So what ARE grants? And how are they used? Well, there are basically two different kinds of grants school districts receive:

- **Formula Grants** are the grants that are awarded based on formulas that are established by Congress. The Title Grants (such as Title I, Title II, etc.) are formula grants. We don't need to apply for these each year, although the annual oversight and accountability paperwork is certainly not trivial!
- **Discretionary Grants** are awarded following a competitive process. They are generally focused on very specific topics, for a very specific amount of time (1 or more years) – and then the funding goes away.

In this column, I'll focus on the Discretionary Grants. (In a previous Guest Opinion column, I shared some information about the Title Grants our district receives).

- Discretionary Grants can come from a wide variety of sources, including the Federal Department of Education, the State Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), private foundations, Municipal governments, businesses, local community organizations. Probably more!
- In most cases, the granting organizations perceive a need, and, if they have funds available that meet their mission, they send a Request for Proposals (RFP) out to their target organizations - like school districts.
- In KIBSD if the needs of our district match what is specified in the RFP, there is discussion about who might write the grant. Whoever takes on that responsibility is committing considerable time and energy to the process!
- All grants, regardless of the amount, require approval from the School Board before they are accepted. The school board has oversight of these grants to ensure they match the mission of the district.
- There's almost always a hard deadline for submitting the grant. Once submitted, there is often a wait of several months before hearing back from the granting agency. Some grants are highly competitive, so may take a lot of time to evaluate.
- If the grant is approved by the granting organization, our district's business office gets involved. They are responsible for receiving the funds, setting up accounts, and ensuring that the funds are spent as outlined in the grant.

A few other things to note about discretionary grants:

- They almost always have a limited life-span – 3 to 5 years is common. They are a temporary infusion of funding for a specific purpose. They are generally intended to support the establishment of a program or initiative – and then, presumably after the program or initiative is established, they go away.

- Because it's short-term funding, our district rarely hires people using grants, even when the grant allows for that. There are exceptions, of course, but they are unusual.
- Some grants can be written to include support for professional development of our instructional team (teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators). For example, KIBSD has a large team of educators attending the Science of Reading Symposium in Anchorage on April 19-21. Their registration and travel will be paid for by several different grants (NOT the district's General Fund) that provide funds for this kind of important professional learning.

Thank you for learning about this complicated topic with me. And if there is a particular area you'd like to know more about, please send me an email at [Kerry.irons@kibsd.org](mailto:Kerry.irons@kibsd.org).