

SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based only on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

BILL: CS/SB 1122

SPONSOR: Education Committee and Senator Scott

SUBJECT: Off-site Learning Grants

DATE: March 6, 2000 REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Esner</u>	<u>O'Farrell</u>	<u>ED</u>	<u>Favorable/CS</u>
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

The bill provides a process for funding off-site learning grants, based on annual recommendations of the Commissioner of Education, to nonprofit and community-based organizations to provide learning opportunities for public school students in nontraditional settings. The nonprofit and community-based organizations may include mathematics, science, art and environmental facilities. The organizations must demonstrate the educational components of their programs.

Funding for the grants would be provided through the General Appropriations Act. The Commissioner of Education will annually request funding for these grants in the Department's annual legislative budget request. The applicants requesting funding for an off-site learning grant must apply through the Department of Education. The Commissioner of Education will annually appoint a panel to review the grants and make recommendations as to funding levels and merits of the project. A public forum must be provided prior to any panel votes on the grants.

Each grant recipient must comply with all provisions of statute and rule as outlined in the grant.

This bill creates the following section of the Florida Statutes: 228.507.

II. Present Situation:

The General Appropriations Act passed during the 1999 legislative session contained dollars for several nonprofit museums to provide educational opportunities for teachers, students, and parents; however, the items were vetoed by the Governor. When the criteria used by the Governor during the budget review process was applied to line items for proposed projects by nonprofit and community-based organizations, they failed to meet the following questions:

- Did the project have an overall statewide benefit, as opposed to benefiting just one or a few select localities?

- Did the project possess an overall public benefit to help the public at-large rather than narrowly defined special interests?
- Did the project proceed through an already-established objective, competitive review process?
- And were there any technical problems with funding a particular project such as using an inappropriate source of funding, or using an inappropriate agency for the funding?

Dollars for specific cultural and educational projects provided by nonprofit public and private organizations are requested annually. The allocations are usually included in the Department of Education's budget or another state agency budget for administrative purposes. The projects are most often designed to provide staff development for teachers and hands-on learning experiences for students that encourage parents participate along with their children. Local hands-on science centers located in Broward, Orange, Duval, and Leon counties are preparing to provide experiences for teachers and students as the state gears up for the first Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test in science to be given to students in 2003. There is a need for staff development in science at the elementary level, especially the K, 1, 2, and 3 grade levels, for veteran and recently employed teachers. These science centers are familiar with the Sunshine State Standards developed for science and integrate them into their programs.

The Museum of Discovery and Science in Broward county hosted approximately 75,000 students last year on field trip excursions. There are about 1,000,000 students in the museum's tri-county area of Broward, Dade, and Palm Beach counties in public and private schools. The museum holds summer science camps for at-risk students from the tri-county area. Likewise, the Odyssey Science Center/Museum of Art in Tallahassee provides similar services to the schools in Leon, Jefferson, Gadsden, and Wakulla counties. The science centers provide learning experiences that teachers are unable to provide in their classrooms. There are other nonprofit organizations in Duval, Pinellas, and Dade counties that provide learning experiences for public and private school students. There are museums located all over the state that can provide educational opportunities for students.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Nonprofit and community-based programs would have an additional avenue to request state dollars for projects. The process to be followed will provide parameters and direction by the Department of Education through the required State Board of Education Rules to be developed. Projects will be recommended by a review panel appointed by the Commissioner of Education, who must recommend funding through the Department's annual legislative budget request. The organizations must demonstrate the education component in their program.

Funds for off-site learning grants may not come from the Public Education Capital Outlay and Debt Service Trust Fund, the Florida School Improvement and Academic Achievement Trust Fund, the Classrooms First Program, the effort index grants nor the Public Education Capital Outlay and Debt Service Trust Fund (as authorized in the State Constitution).

Each grant recipient must comply with all provisions of statute and rule as outlined in the grant.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Unknown

C. Government Sector Impact:

The Department of Education states: "Fiscal impact cannot be determined. There would be cost associated with travel expenses for the grant review panel appointed by the Commissioner, but the number of participants is unknown. Additionally, it is not know how many organizations would apply for grants nor the extent of program content and costs of proposals."

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Amendments:

None.

