



Community Schools Pricing Study

How are program fees determined? In most programs, coordinator intuition is used to determine how much or how little to charge. Then, the question becomes, "What informs coordinator intuition?"

Rural Community School Partnerships

From 2003 to 2006, sixteen Oregon communities received funds from The Ford Family Foundation to create community school programs through the Rural Community School Partnerships (RCSP) program. At the pre-proposal workshops and again at the initial RCSP conference, participants were advised (but not mandated) to charge fees for their programs. The Foundation encouraged programs to raise funds during the grant years and save for the future.

While many communities did charge for lifelong learning classes, the fees (in most cases) covered the actual cost of the class and did not contribute to program administration costs. Only one community charged for facility (gym) use.

All sixteen communities were projected to sustain some elements of their program beyond the grant period; however, only eight programs expected to sustain their entire program into the foreseeable future. Three programs created sustainability through local funding, one developed sustainable school-based enterprises, and four received new grants. One additional community received a new grant to support a half-time coordinator.

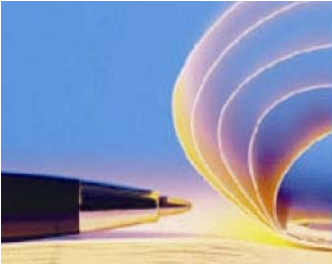
RCSP coordinators would often explain that their programs could not be supported by fees because community members could not afford to pay more than token amounts. So, at the end of the grant, a pricing study was conducted to determine if this view was correct and to identify the market value of the community school program.

A total of 506 random surveys were conducted in six communities (which ranged in size from 1,000 to 18,000 in population). The following optimal prices were discovered:

Program	Optimal Fee
Lifelong Learning Courses	\$50 each
After School Programming	\$170/month
Facility Use	\$32/month

This sample suggests that a community school program in a town of 10,000 residents and charging these fees would have a potential market value of more than \$1.5 million. Clearly, coordinator intuition was incorrect.

Steve Lamb, *Leadership Services Specialist, Oregon School Boards Association*



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For a copy of the paper "Addicted to Grants: The Unintended Consequences", or other information about the pricing study, please contact Steve Lamb, HYPERLINK "<mailto:slamb@osba.org>" slamb@osba.org.