

Go Big! Knoxville

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Funding Sources:

The State of Tennessee, Department of Finance and Administration, Office of Criminal Justice Programs

Project Cost and Budget Narrative:

This project has a three-year budget of \$228,834.00. This funding covers the employment of the project's Youth Volunteer Program Coordinator, the Knoxville Police Department's partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Tennessee, promotional materials and other supplies (e.g. billboards, brochures), and professional development costs for the Youth Volunteer Program Coordinator.

Project Description:

This project is a collaborative effort between the Knoxville Police Department and Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Tennessee. Go Big! Knoxville seeks to improve outcomes for at-risk youth within Knox County, Tennessee through one-to-one mentoring. In this project, the Knoxville Police Department and Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Tennessee work together to recruit, train, and match volunteer mentors from the community with children and youth that could benefit academically and/or behaviorally from a mentor. The primary goal of Go Big! Knoxville is to reduce crime rates amongst at-risk children and youth, diverting youth from criminal activity and/or risky behaviors, and increasing their ability to succeed in adulthood. While this project does not solely serve children and youth who have been victims and perpetrators of crime, it does prioritize this population.

Staffing Pattern:

This project's budget supports the employment of the Knoxville Police Department's Youth Volunteer Program Coordinator. The Youth Volunteer Program Coordinator works closely with the Knoxville Police Department's designated Grant Manager as well as the designated supervisors.

The Youth Volunteer Program Coordinator also works closely with Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Tennessee's staff:

- Community Engagement Staff (Recruiting volunteers from the community, promoting community awareness)
- Enrollment Staff (Processing volunteer applications, training volunteers, matching mentors with children and youth)
- Match Support Staff (Sets individualized goals with specific mentor/mentee matches, tracks matches' progress towards these goals)
- Administrative Staff (Developing community partnerships, program development)

Mentors, or "Bigs," are unpaid volunteers from the community that serve as the heart of the program.

Population Served:

Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Tennessee serves children and youth ages 6-17; however, this project prioritizes children and youth ages 9-16. This program specifically serves children and youth in Knox County, Tennessee. Typically, the children and youth in this program come from low-income neighborhoods and/or single parent households. While Go Big! Knoxville prioritizes

students who have been victims, perpetrators, or witnesses to criminal activity, it also serves students who do not fall under these three categories. Go Big! Knoxville also partners with the Knox County Juvenile Court's (KCJC) First Offender Program, a program serving youth who have committed non-felony offenses for the first time. KCJC encourages youth in the First Offender Program to participate in this mentoring program.

Project Origination:

The Knoxville Police Department sought to establish a mentoring program serving the population previously described. Rather than reinventing the wheel, the Knoxville Police Department approached Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Tennessee, a one-to-one mentoring agency that has served Knoxville for over 50 years and implements highly developed, evidence-based mentoring programs. Big Brothers Big Sisters is recognized by the National Institute of Justice Crime Solutions as a program that effectively serves children that have been exposed to trauma and/or violence in their home or in their community.

Issues Addressed:

The primary issue addressed by this project is the high level of violence and crime that children and youth have been exposed to within the City of Knoxville. In the years 2014-2015, 2055 children between ages 9-16 were suspects of crime and 906 were victims of crime. The zip codes primarily effected by these statistics were 37909, 37902, 37914, and 37915.

Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives:

Intended Outcomes:

1. 85% of mentor/mentees will complete the one-year mentoring program.
2. 10 or less youth in the program have been arrested for a crime, offense, and/or a violation within the last 12 months.
3. 90% of the youth will maintain or decrease their participation in risky behavior.
4. 80% of the youth will maintain or improve academically.

Intended Outputs:

1. Reach 5000 people through community awareness programs
2. Recruit 75 churches and other organizations to participate in the program.
3. Establish 100 matches between mentors and mentees.
4. 4800 hours spent together (All mentors and mentees over a three-year period.)

Strategies and/or Interventions of the Project:

Big Brothers Big Sisters' one-to-one mentoring relationships have been proven to help students:

- a. Gain interpersonal skills
- b. Avoid alcohol and drug use
- c. Build self-confidence
- d. Build healthy relationships
- e. Successfully graduate high school within four years

Big Brothers Big Sisters requires mentors to commit to at least one full calendar year of mentoring in order to effectively achieve these results. They also require mentors to spend

approximately one hour per week with the child they were matched with. These designated amounts of time are based on extensive research and are designed promote positive outcomes for the children in their programs.

Big Brothers Big Sisters’ Match Support Specialists meet with the mentor and mentee at the beginning of the match relationship to make introductions and establish personalized goals for the mentee. These Match Support Specialists check in with mentors monthly to track the progress mentors and mentees have made towards these goals and provide professional advice when needed. Goals are typically oriented around academics, college and career readiness, behavior, and relationship strength. All mentors receive training before they are matched with a child and may receive ongoing training when necessary.

Results (Outcomes and Achievements):

This projected is still being conducted; therefore, final outcomes and achievements are not available at this time.

Project Timeline:

Project Implementation Timeline		
Year 1: 2017 – 2018	Year 2: 2018 – 2019	Year 3: 2019 - 2020
Advertise, interview, and hire the Youth Volunteer Program Coordinator.	Host a kickoff event for mentors, children, and community partners.	Strategize with partners to continue to support the program beyond the grant.
Develop and implement and community awareness program to educate the community about the goals and objectives of the mentoring program.	Gather data from Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Knoxville Police Department Crime Analysis Unit, Knox County Schools, and pre/post surveys.	Gather data from Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Knoxville Police Department Crime Analysis Unit, Knox County Schools, and pre/post surveys.
Identify children between ages 9-16 to match with mentors.	Continue to implement and community awareness program to educate the community about the goals and objectives of the mentoring program.	Continue to implement and community awareness program to educate the community about the goals and objectives of the mentoring program.
Recruit and train mentors.	Recruit and train mentors.	Continue to recruit community partnerships to enhance the R.E.A.C.H. concept.
Conduct background checks on potential mentors.	Continue to identify children between ages 9-16 to match with mentors.	Continue to conduct background checks on potential mentors.
Develop and distribute educational materials for the mentoring program.	Continue to distribute educational materials for the mentoring program.	Continue to identify children between ages 9-16 to match with mentors.

Develop policies and procedures for the mentoring program.		Continue to distribute educational materials for the mentoring program.
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Outcomes Related to School Completion, Dropout Prevention, and/or Graduation Rates:

This project is still being conducted; therefore, final outcomes are not available at this time. Upon match closure, students will be issued a post-survey in order to measure the effects of the mentoring program on the individual student.

Special Conditions, Expertise, and/or Skills Required to Carry Out Project:

1. Effective communication is a necessary skill for all those who are involved in this project (e.g. project staff, organizations involved, mentors, mentees, mentees’ families).
2. A project of this extent and size requires many actively involved community partners. Before implementing a project like this, I recommend gathering interest amongst organizations in your community and maintaining active, frequent communication with each interested organization throughout the entirety of the project.

Current Status of Project:

This project is in its third year of implementation. While this program has not made as many matches as hoped at this point in time, all matches that have been made appear to be heading in a positive direction. Student outcomes will be measured and analyzed upon the end of this project in June 2020. Until then, we will continue to implement the mentoring program and recruit as many mentors as possible so that we can reach our goal of establishing 100 matches between mentors and mentees.

Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant:

I am currently serving as the project’s Youth Volunteer Program Coordinator. I am also the liaison between the Knoxville Police Department and Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Tennessee. My primary duties are set forth in the Project Implementation Timeline. My primary responsibility is to work alongside Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Tennessee in (a) the development of the program and (b) the tracking of relevant data.

Lessons Learned:

1. Begin volunteer recruitment as early as possible. This could even potentially begin before the grant period; gathering interest early on is key.
2. Not all results will be observable within the time span of the project, particularly when younger children are involved in the program.
3. All relevant employees must be dedicated to this project from beginning to end in order to achieve the desired results.
4. The scope of your project must be broad at the beginning in order to build the project’s foundation. Once a strong foundation is established, your program can become more specific (e.g. specific to a certain population, specific to a certain neighborhood).

Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners about the Project:

While it is crucial that the application process for mentors is thorough, the application process must be timely in order to ensure the retention of interested volunteers. Do whatever you can to foster potential volunteers' enthusiasm about mentoring throughout the application process and provide frequent updates.

1. Set reasonable goals for your project based on anticipated community involvement, the size of your community, etc.
2. Find ways to keep in touch with mentors and mentees beyond the scope of the project in order to measure the efficacy of the project.
3. Your local school district is a key partner in a project like this. Focus on building strong relationships with school principals, school counselors, and other relevant faculty and staff.
4. Your organization must be involved in the community in order for a project like this to be successful. Build upon your organization's existing relationships in the community in order to get this up and running.
5. Build strong relationships with your mentors, your mentees, and your mentees' families.