


Distance Education Grant

2017-18 REPORT TO THE
JOINT EDUCATION INTERIM COMMITTEE



WYOMING
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

October 1, 2018

2008 Wyoming Session Laws 204-05 requires an annual Distance Education Grant report. The requirements include the expenditure of grant amounts awarded, the number of students enrolling in the distance education program receiving grant assistance, the number of students successfully completing the distance education program, the impact of the grant, and program evaluation addressing student needs.

HISTORY

In 2008, the Distance Education Grant (DEG) was established as a competitive grant funding opportunity to assist school districts and postsecondary institutions in further developing and maintaining distance delivery programs to best meet statutory and educational quality requirements. The funding was allocated as a means for distance programs to create or improve core courses, including Hathaway Success Curriculum offerings, and dual enrollment and advanced placement courses. In addition to course design improvements, the grant was intended to strengthen program efficiency and individual educator effectiveness in the online environment.

The DEG has consistently provided funding for six categories:

1. Course Design and Creation
2. Additional Content Design and Creation
3. Professional Development
4. Course/Program Evaluation
5. Accreditation
6. Maintenance and Operations

2017-18 DEG AWARDS

For the 2017-18 DEG award cycle, a total of \$234,843.40 was awarded to six school districts from the DEG biennium budget. The awards represented each type of distance education program available in Wyoming and were utilized for approved activities from August 2017 through July 2018.

This report includes data charts and tables that represent a breakdown of the 2017-18 awards by each program funded and the DEG funding priorities, provides award summary information, and includes a compilation of the reports submitted by each DEG recipient at the end of the grant period.

AWARDS BY PROGRAM

Chart 1 includes a breakdown of the award information including grant amounts, expenditures, and unexpended funds by each 2017-18 DEG recipient.

Chart 1: DEG 2017-18 Program Awards and Expenditures

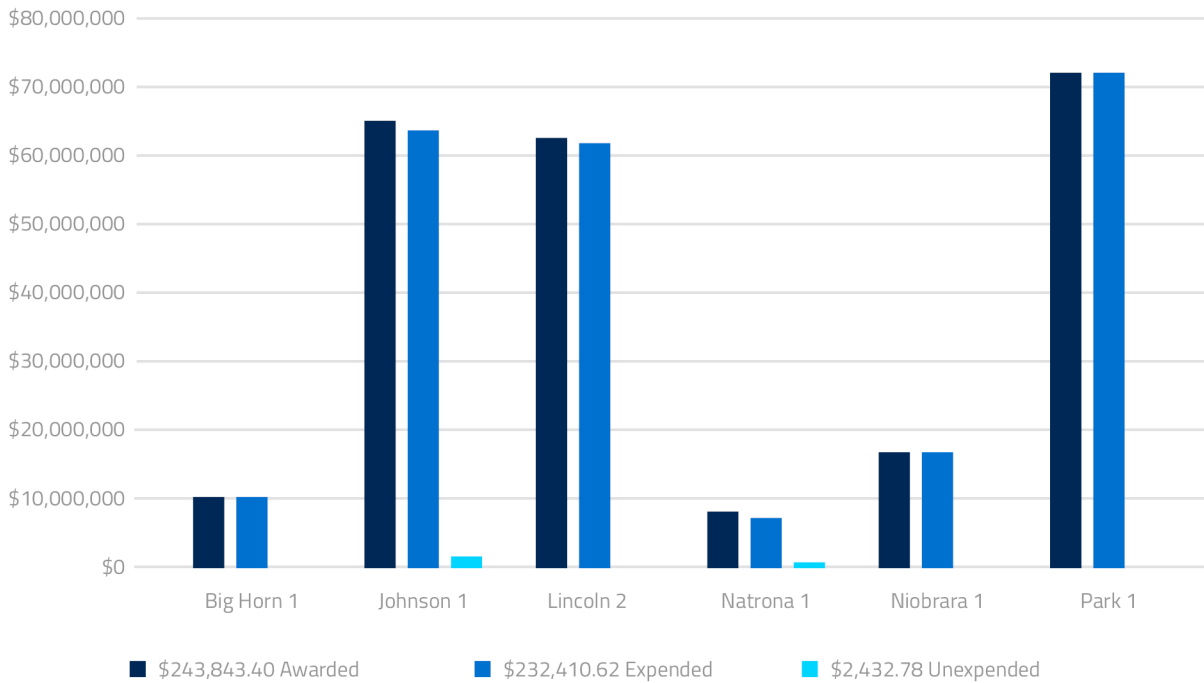


Table 1 is a breakdown of the amounts awarded to each grantee and the amount of unexpended funds at the end of the grant period. Also included in the table are the percentage of the total award funds granted to each program and the percentage of award funds that were not utilized.

Table 1: DEG 2017-18 Award and Unexpended Funds Totals and Percentages

Distance Ed Program	Awarded	% of Funds	Unexpended	% Unexpended
1. Big Horn 1	\$10,000.00	4.25%	\$0.00	0.0%
2. Johnson 1	\$65,655.00	28%	\$1,806.25	2.75%
3. Lincoln 2	\$63,000.00	27%	\$250.00	0.397%
4. Natrona 1	\$8,000.00	3.4%	\$363.64	4.5%
5. Niobrara 1	\$16,211.44	7%	\$0.00	0.0%
6. Park 1	\$71,976.96	30.6%	\$12.89	0.0178%
Totals	\$234,843.40	100%	\$2,432.78	1.03%

AWARDS BY PRIORITY FUNDING

Chart 2 is a breakdown of the funding priority information which includes the amount granted per category, expenditure totals, and unexpended funds remaining at the end of the 2017-18 grant cycle.

Chart 2: DEG 2017-18 Awards and Expenditures by Funding Priority

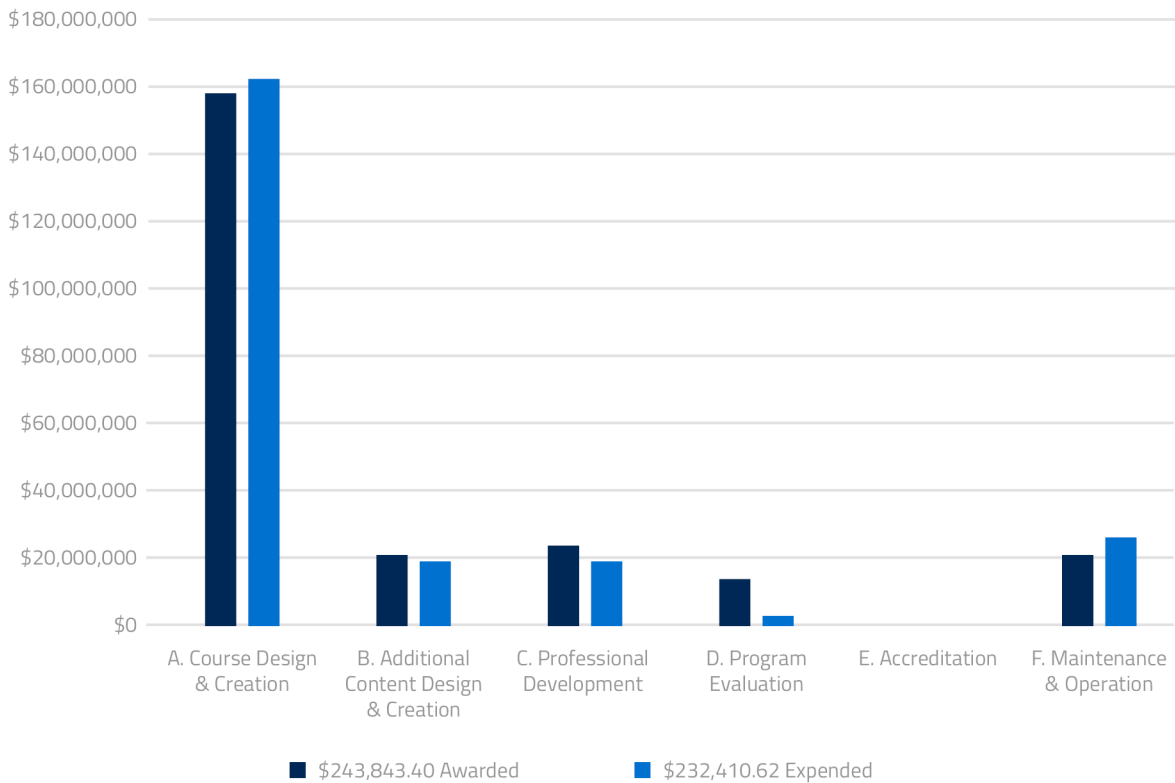


Table 2 includes the total amounts awarded by grant priority and the percentage of those funds as well as the amount of unexpended or increased spending of funds in each category.

Table 2: DEG 2017-18 Award, Percentage of Funds, Unexpended Funds and Increased Spending Totals and by Funding Priority

Funding Priority	Awarded	% of Funds	Unexpended	Increased
A. Course Design	\$158,865.34	68%	\$0.00	\$6,249.70
B. Additional Design	\$19,463.88	8%	\$754.25	\$0.00
C. Professional Development	\$22,650.28	10%	\$3,795.18	\$0.00
D. Evaluation	\$13,563.90	6%	\$9,365.55	\$0.00
E. Accreditation	\$0.00	0%	\$0.00	\$0.00
F. Maintenance & Operation	\$20,300.00	8%	\$0.00	\$5,232.50
Totals	\$234,843.40	100%	\$13,914.98	\$11,482.20

2017-18 DEG AWARDS SUMMARY

More than half of the awards for the 2017-18 award period were allocated to Course Design (68%) with Professional Development being the next highest award category at 10%. Course Design activities included the development of fifty-one middle school and secondary level online classes. Rather than being purchased through a vendor, these courses were developed by educators within the districts who will also teach the courses they've developed. This practice increases the capacity of school districts to meet the needs of the students they serve and potentially reach students in other districts as their programs are fully implemented and expanded.

As has been the case for the previous five years, no requests for Accreditation activities were included in the grant applications. For this award period, funds were reallocated to Course Design (\$6,249.70) and Maintenance & Operation (\$5,232.50) to develop more classes than originally projected and to broaden the reach of learning management system features. The Maintenance and Operations expenses were pivotal in providing students participating in full-time virtual education statewide programs with the opportunity to test with their online peers and teachers at conveniently located sites that limited the need for them to travel great distances.

Each grant recipient reported the grant had a positive impact on meeting the current and future needs of students. The recipients with professional development awards were also better able to train staff to teach online, closely monitor student progress, and meet the diverse needs of students who select online learning. In the instances of statewide programs, professional development also aided in bringing staff from around the state together for district staff development opportunities.

DEG RECIPIENT REPORTS

1. BIG HORN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 1

Program Name: Wyoming Connections Academy

Available For: Students statewide

Number of Students Enrolled: 570

Type: Online Full-Time

Grades Served: K-12

Completed: 535

Impact of DEG: The grant assisted the district in meeting distance education program requirements by supporting teacher professional development, a learning management system to record and monitor student progress, and support for administration of in-person student assessments.

Evaluation of Program: For the 2017-18 school year, the independent survey conducted reported the following results:

- 89.9% of parents gave the overall WYCA online school program an “A” or “B” grade
- 91.1% of parents would recommend WYCA to parents whose children are not enrolled in the program
- 85.5% of parents are more satisfied with the WYCA program than their child’s/children’s previous school
- 93.3% of parents say their child/children are satisfied with WYCA’s program
- 88.8% of parents agree that their child/children are making good progress at WYCA
- 85.5% of parents agree that their child/children are enjoying the program

2. JOHNSON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 1

Program Name: Johnson County Virtual School

Available For: Students within district only

Number of Students Enrolled: 0

Type: Online Part-Time

Grades Served: 9-12

Completed: 0

Impact of DEG: The grant allowed for Johnson County School District personnel to begin the process of creating courses and additional course content that will allow for the district to provide “instruction primarily through technology outside of the physical classroom in the statewide educational program... through a program accredited by the state board.” At the time the grant was written, the goal of JCSD #1 was to be an approved statewide Virtual 307 provider including both full-time and part-time options for the 2018-19 school year. The grant permitted the district to make progress towards the goal; course lessons are created and additional content drafted. However, there are additional steps the district needs to take before being able to offer classes full-time and statewide. The district may be able to offer part-time classes to Johnson 1 students starting in the 2018-19 school year.

Evaluation of Program: Not applicable

3. LINCOLN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 2

Program Name: Star Valley Learning Center

Available For: Students within district only

Number of Students Enrolled: 51

Type: Blended, Part-Time & Credit Recovery

Grades Served: 7-12

Completed: 51

Impact of DEG: We have allocated district funds, along with the Distance Education Grant, to begin building a course catalog of "core" academic and courses. This course development has been helpful as we design a virtual option for students in our district. We continue to only focus on students who reside in our district. The grant has allowed staff to commit time outside of their contract to developing courses, creating syllabi, and evaluating courses for improvement. Our virtual team has been able to use district provided opportunities for professional development to incorporate strategies into development of the courses. The district commitment, along with the Distance Education Grant, has been a great learning opportunity for our district. We continue to explore options for delivering content to students in a variety of situations.

Evaluation of Program: The purpose of the virtual program was to offer opportunities for students outside of the traditional program. Our small virtual offering, allows flexibility and personalized learning for many students in our district. We continue to get requests for virtual learning at all grade levels. We hope to provide the largest number of courses during the spring semester 2019. If we can provide all core courses and additional elective courses for students, we will be able to meet the increasing demand from our stakeholders.

The virtual program has allowed us to create time during the day for students to receive additional counseling services and behavior therapy, when our local providers are available. This flexibility has increased the success rate for our at-risk population. Some students participate in one course and then transition back seamlessly to the regular classroom. Others students, seem to be more successful within the blended environment.

Providing an opportunity for students to meet graduation requirements in an alternative way has been proven to be a valuable part of the virtual school. In the past, we had to direct students to an independent study program outside of the district. This required students to enroll and pay for remediation credits. Our virtual school provides students the opportunity to retake courses immediately after failing the original course. Generally, they would have to wait until Summer School or enroll in independent study courses. Enrolling in a virtual course locally, allows students to complete the local course, with access to the local teacher, and with support of local counseling and administrative staff.

The Distance Education Grant has been helpful in directing our efforts to create a distance learning option in LCSD#2. We hope to extend this program to students in Cokeville and to our Swift Creek High School students (both high schools within our district) during the 2018-19 school year.

4. NATRONA COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 1

Program Name: Natrona Virtual Learning
Available For: Students within district only
Number of Students Enrolled: 73

Type: Online Full-Time & Credit Recovery
Grades Served: K-12
Completed: 62

Impact of DEG: With our additional content creation portion of the grant we were able to expand our Lego Robotic program by purchase challenge sets and supplies for the students. The student's learning experience will continue to benefit from the purchase of items used for this program. The granted funds for our Lego Robotic program were also used to purchase a Lego League Team memberships and t-shirts for the competition.

Using the professional development portion of the grant, supplies were purchased and trainers were hired. We continue training of all our virtual teachers on the latest technologies to best educate our students.

Evaluation of Program: With our end of the year questionnaire parents and students were asked for their feedback. Again our teacher interaction and involvement with students and parents was very highly rated. However, many parents believed the riggor of the curriculum and amount of work expected as being too much for a typical student. This summer our teachers and administration will review the curriculum to address this concern.

5. NIOBRARA COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 1

Program Name: Wyoming Virtual Academy
Available For: Students statewide
Number of Students Enrolled: 743

Type: Online Full-Time & Part-Time
Grades Served: K-12
Completed: 539

Impact of DEG: These funds were of great need and impactful for the Wyoming Virtual Committee as they allowed us to back fill our budget with needed funds for Staff Development and on Student Assessment. The funds from the grant allowed our staff to meet in a face-to-face setting multiple times during the school year. With all our staff spread across the state, staff were able to travel and stay at our P.D. sites for

our meetings. We all feel that face-to-face meetings are so much more impactful for the staff than doing all our trainings virtually.

These grant funds also allowed Wyoming Virtual Academy (WYVA) to set up 13 sites across the state to administer required assessments. This higher number allowed our students to not have to travel as far for testing, which in turn we hope would allow them to be refreshed and better prepared mentally to take these important assessments.

Evaluation of Program: WYVA has been very helpful in serving its students across the state of Wyoming. Using the funds provided to us by the DEG, we can provide a more comprehensive assessment plan for our students and their families. We know some families have trouble with travel, so WYVA can provide up to 15 locations across the state for students to test, reducing the travel and possibly lodging time and costs for these families. We would be unable to provide testing locations close to many of our families, who are spread across every county in the state, if we did not have our grant funding. We also use the grant funds for our staff professional development. In the P.D. sessions, we discuss the needs of our students. Using family surveys, the feedback we receive is used to help us plan for our courses and set our school goals in providing what is needed for our students.

6. PARK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 1

Program Name: Park #1 Online Learning
Available For: Students within district only
Number of Students Enrolled: 41

Type: Online Full-Time and Part-Time
Grades Served: 6-12
Completed: 41

Impact of DEG: The impact of the Distance Education grant during the past period was significant in that Park County School District #1 was able to demonstrate compliance with W.S. 21-13-330 and provide distance education opportunities to students in need of academic coursework through a mutually agreed upon distance learning plan. It is a relatively seamless process that focuses on student needs, and solid measurement of progress through an LMS platform.

Over the past year, our district continued to look at solidifying our foundation in both the creation and implementation of distance learning endeavors. Our main focus continued to augment and support students and staff at the secondary level (i.e. Middle and High School) where time and space greatly impacts every student's ability to learn and make progress toward learning goals and standard expectations. By increasing our availability to Canvas at the secondary level, we anxiously await the response from students, teachers, and parents. Providing students with on-demand, live curriculum, timely feedback, and a comprehensive honest course overview, we believe our distance education and learning hopes for our students is looking very bright!

Evaluation of Program: In meeting state standards and our expectations in Park County School District #1, we must evaluate all programs developed by our staff. The district process to protect the integrity of the program will cover bias, availability, clear understanding, and viable assessments. Our validation/evaluation process includes a three peer team review process using the Quality Matters rubric as the standard to measure all courses against. Courses will not be offered until the validation team has approved the course for deployment. The peer validation process cost was \$4,198, but it was worth the time and money invested to ensure quality courses. Course modifications were necessary for a number of our courses after the validation process took place. These modifications totaled \$7,896 throughout the year. In addition to this process, our courses will administer common standard assessments in order to maintain consistent expectations in both F2F and online settings.