

E4 Fresh Start for Kids!

Growing a National Outreach Network to Model Integrated Academic Alternatives through Service

PROJECT SUMMARY

The E4 Fresh Start for Kids initiative will enrich and extend the academic, social emotional and civic understandings embedded in Eckerd's Alternative School programming and empower youth to help children, families, and low income communities grow in self-reliance and increase their personal food security by participating in hands-on organic gardening activities with Eckerd students.

To this end, Eckerd requests a \$ 229,700 National Giving Program award to be applied over the course of three years in three distinct ways: a.) by creating an Environmental, Agri-Science, and Biotechnology college and career ready workforce overlay which will supplement the currently successful multi-state E3 Curriculum; b.) by creating an ***E4 Fresh Start for Kids*** Coaching Kit that supports Eckerd youth and facilitators in community-focused gardening and fresh food projects; and c.) through the building of a national network of alternative learning partnerships that supports the replication of program activities using evidence-based best practice, nationally.

The ***E4 Fresh Start for Kids*** initiative will capitalize on Eckerd's 43 years experience in educating at-risk and behaviorally challenged children and build upon Eckerd's solid foundation of success in teaching over 100,000 at-risk youth. The Eckerd Educational Experience (E3) Curriculum, successfully implemented and evaluated in Eckerd regions across the US, is a customized, fully integrated alternative approach to student engagement. The E3 Curriculum uses experiential strategies, evidence-based differentiated learning methods, and thematic instruction that combines all core subjects: English, language arts, math, social studies and science into meaningful units of study. The E4 overlay will further connect the Eckerd alternative service model to in-demand career fields and to expert knowledge that will add to the outlined gardening and food security efforts for the benefit of communities.

Rooted in giving back and being of service, rich in entrepreneurial and economic possibilities, and rolled out via 14-18 year old previously at-risk youth, the ***E4 Fresh Start for Kids*** initiative aligns with Eckerd's mission "to provide and share solutions that promote the well being of children and families in need of a second chance," and at the heart of the Walmart's giving efforts "to meet the unmet needs of underserved populations and support organizations that give individuals access to a better life."

Correspondence to Program Area of Interest

The ***E4 Fresh Start for Kids*** youth-led family gardening projects and Eckerd's operational capacity to maintain regional demonstration sites while growing a national network to support replication projects relates directly to the Walmart Foundation's four main focus areas which are: Education, Workforce Development, Environmental Sustainability and Health & Wellness.

Program Goal

Reconnecting disengaged, at-risk youth through service learning and leadership opportunities that involve food insecure children and families in hands-on, home grown gardening activities-- with a three-year vision to model and share strategies for success across a national network.

Objectives & Issues Addressed

The E4 Fresh Start for Kids program aims to mutually benefit two distinct target populations – previously disengaged at risk youth and low income food insecure families.

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For participating communities, this means:

- addressing food security needs of low-income people and neighborhoods
- increasing self-reliance to provide for their own food needs
- long term collaboration toward strong and sustainable, food, farm, and nutrition systems

For previously disengaged at risk youth, this means:

- successful assimilation into the community as law-abiding citizens and local leaders
- capacity-building of youth as environmental and agricultural experts, able to give back through service.
- easing school-to-work transitions with: coaching in experiential settings beyond the formal classroom, the formation of apprenticeships and connecting to community partner

Outcome Measures

Major components used to evaluate *Fresh Start for Kids* success may include:

- Number of E4 deliverables produced, field-tested and disseminated (electronic/print)
- Number of trainings held
- Timeline-driven milestones completed (checklist/sign off)
- Hours of service logged
- Number of low income and food insecure participants in each local community
- Percentage of average and above satisfaction ratings on target audience surveys
- Percentage of visitors to regional demonstration sites
- Number of collaborative partnerships formed

Specific *Fresh Start for Kids* gardening and fresh food activities will vary depending on the identified needs within each community. E4 youth will work with local community members and Eckerd staff to compile quantitative federal data from WIC, Food Stamp, or free and reduced lunch program percentages. Qualitative data will also be considered through interviews with food-distribution programs, soup kitchens and shelters, local farmers and urban gardeners, churches, community development corporations, government agencies and local youth service organizations.

Organizational Capacity

Founded in 1968, Eckerd is a private, national nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization headquartered in Clearwater, Florida with a full continuum of behavioral health and child welfare programs in eight states. Eckerd's 32 programs are fully accredited by the Council on Accreditation (COA), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), and Presidium, a specialized accreditation that ensures Eckerd meets the highest abuse risk management standards in the nation. Eckerd was also the winner of the 2010 Tampa Bay Business Journal Nonprofit of the Year and has also received the Independent Charities Seal of Excellence.

When philanthropists Jack and Ruth Eckerd were seeking how to best invest in the lives of troubled youth and their families, they researched a variety of treatment models available in the nation and were intrigued by the outcomes of a therapeutic wilderness program in Texas. The Eckerd's brought this model to Florida in 1968 with the opening of a 60-bed outdoor therapeutic program for troubled boys in Brooksville. This model was an alternative to the then practice of institutionalizing youth. Over the next 35 years, an additional 15 outdoor therapeutic programs were opened in six states, including the opening of the first girls' wilderness camp in the Southeast.

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In 1982, Eckerd expanded its continuum of care by entering into juvenile justice residential services when then-Florida Governor Bob Graham asked Mr. Eckerd to assist the state by helping to turn around the troubled Okeechobee School for Boys. Eckerd took over this program in the midst of the “Bobby M.” and “LeClair vs. Williams” class action lawsuits and before the resulting consent decrees were published. Eckerd assumed operation of the Okeechobee School for Boys (later renamed the Eckerd Youth Development Center) that housed approximately 300 of the State of Florida’s highest risk juvenile offenders. Over the next few years, Eckerd introduced a variety of individualized and group based treatment practices including the establishment of a peer-group culture and group counseling process in each of the resident cottages, the development of multi-disciplinary classification and treatment teams, creation of transitional programming, and the development of prevocational and educational programming. Results of a modified treatment and leadership approach were almost immediate and the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services (HRS) consistently acknowledge Eckerd for operating an exemplary program. During this same time, additional juvenile justice residential programs were established by Eckerd to serve both male and female youthful offenders in both Florida and Ohio.

In addition to the residential programming listed above, Eckerd’s continuum of care now includes private care, community-based care, preventative care, and aftercare as illustrated in Figure 1 which follows.



Figure 1: Map of Eckerd Programs

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Eckerd's philosophy and objectives are to:

Assure the safety, well-being and permanency of all children served through the child welfare system, while concurrently attempting to strengthen and preserve the child's family through front-end intervention and services.

Financial Stability: Eckerd has the highest rating of financial stability as defined by Dun and Bradstreet's financial performance indicators. Eckerd is one of the largest children's services agencies in the country with over \$100 million in operating revenue. A certified public accounting firm audits Eckerd's financial statements independently and the organization routinely receives audit results without qualification or management letters.

Performance Improvement: Eckerd has a performance improvement initiative that monitors compliance with program standards and supports the efforts of all Eckerd programs to identify key needs, corresponding performance indicators, and metrics and measures for reviewing progress. Components of this process include bi-weekly data calls and performance indicator reviews with program leadership, Regional Directors and Performance Improvement staff from Eckerd headquarters. Programs are reviewed against these standards at least once every 12 months by a team of performance improvement specialists who spend up to three days onsite reviewing documentation, training, billing and programming.

Community Resources: Eckerd works to bring communities into its residential and non-residential programs. Volunteers, tutors, church groups, civic organizations, mental health and medical service providers and potential employers have all contributed their talents to various Eckerd programs. Over 400 community service projects were completed by youth in Eckerd programs in 2010 and over 340 have been completed to date in 2011.

Client Tracking: An innovative client information computer system and comprehensive database allows Eckerd to track report and evaluate statistical information regarding clients and their families. This information is valuable to states and to Eckerd's own research efforts.

Research and Outcome-Based Programming: Eckerd programs use the most up-to-date research regarding effective treatment practices with troubled and vulnerable youth. Eckerd has partnered with the Justice Research Center in Tallahassee Florida and the University of New Hampshire in the enhancement of Youth Program Outcomes, including data collection, data verification, data analysis and report production. Evidence-based practices are implemented with fidelity checklists and a variety of youth and family assessments are used to measure treatment outcomes.

Key Leadership

Name/Title	Brief Biography	Contact Information
David Dennis President & Chief Executive Officer	Responsible for administration and leadership of Eckerd Youth Alternatives, Inc. Eighteen years of experience in leadership roles at private and public juvenile justice, child welfare, mental health, behavioral health, governmental and social services agencies. In 2003, appointed by Florida Department of Children and Families as District Administrator for District 7 Central Florida Operations. Licensed childcare administrator and licensed marriage and family therapist.	E-mail: ddennis@eckerd.org 727-461-2990 100 N. Starcrest Dr. Clearwater, FL 33758

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Name/Title	Brief Biography	Contact Information
<p>Leonard Hartman Chief Administrative Officer</p>	<p>Responsible for the administration of the finance and accounting functions of EYA. Prior to joining EYA, he was the Senior Director of Operations for Devereux Foundation responsible for the development of \$400M in budgets of programs spanning 12 states. He has held various increasingly responsible positions at Devereux for over 10 years. Mr. Hartman has an MBA and General Contractors license and has extensive experience in financial accounting, management and budgeting.</p>	<p>E-mail: lhartman@eckerd.org Phone: 727-461-2990 Address: 100 N. Starcrest Dr. Clearwater, FL 33758</p>
<p>Ronald M. Zychowski, Vice-President of Operations and Interim COO</p>	<p>Over 30 years of senior leadership in a range of social services organizations—both in the public and private sectors. Prior to joining EYA, served as CEO of Community Partnership for Children, Inc. A partial list of his leadership positions include Executive Director of Community Based Care of Seminole, Inc., District Administrator of the Florida Department of Children and Families – District 12, and Deputy Regional Director for Operations for the Suncoast Region of the Department of Children and Families. Mr. Zychowski has an MBA from the University of Alabama.</p>	<p>E-mail: rzychowski@eckerd.org Phone: 727-461-2990 Address: 100 N. Starcrest Dr. Clearwater, FL 33758</p>
<p>Greg Holeman Chief Quality Officer</p>	<p>Extensive quality management experience in multiple industries, including healthcare, education and manufacturing. Prior to joining EYA, he was a managing partner with the Center for Mental Healthcare Improvement (CMHI), nationally known for its expertise in helping organizations improve the quality and efficiency of care through the use of information technology and the development of evidence-based best practices for the Medicaid and managed care markets.</p>	<p>E-mail: gholeman@eckerd.org 727-461-2990 100 N. Starcrest Dr. Clearwater, FL 33758</p>
<p>Tony Moore Chief Personnel Officer</p>	<p>Eleven years of senior management experience in the human resources field. Previously served as Training Manager for The Children’s Campus and Manager of Customer Relations force at S.I.T.E.L. corporation.</p>	<p>E-mail: tmoores@eckerd.org 727-461-2990 100 N. Starcrest Dr. Clearwater, FL 33758</p>
<p>Keith Philipson Chief Academic Officer and Director of Education Services</p>	<p>Over 30 years of experience in educational leadership positions including 24 years with Eckerd, serving as Director of Education services at both the program and corporate levels. Approved Chair for the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA) and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI). Extensive knowledge of local, state and federal educational and governmental entities to align appropriate educational standards and benchmarks. Serves on several professional boards at the state and national level.</p>	<p>E-mail: kphilipson@eckerd.org 727-461-2990 100 N. Starcrest Dr. Clearwater, FL 33758</p>

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Program Budget: Three Year TOTAL \$ 229,700.00

Budget Narrative: Eckerd will apply the one-time \$ 229,700.00 award across the following major resource categories during the *Fresh Start for Kids* three year project start-up.

1.) Staff & Resource Personnel.....	\$ 187,500
2.) Project Supplies & Instructional Materials.....	\$ 36,000
3.) Software System for Networking Infrastructure	\$ 6,200
TOTAL 3 YR AWARD	\$ 229,700

The \$ 187,500 **Staff & Resource Personnel budget** will be used for project coordination, goal management, oversight of grant implementation and evaluation processes; curriculum design and development, pilot testing and publication of the E4 academic and Agri-Science overlay, a teacher training curriculum and coaching kit for facilitators, outreach campaign coordination, with on-site field operations staff during community events.

The \$ 36,000 **Project Supplies & Instructional Materials budget** will be used to purchase gardening tools, academic textbooks, pre and post testing instructional supplies, youth travel to and from community service events and consumable materials for sponsored gardens for 12 regional demonstration sites over a two year span.

The \$ 6,200 **Software System** will be used to build a strong communication and evaluation infrastructure to support the growth of a national network that supports replication and collaboration. The software dashboard, which allows for real-time reporting, supports efficient and cost-effective tracking of event schedules and attendance, stakeholder involvement, participant surveys, and the various initiatives of network members. Ongoing data collection will inform day-to-day decision-making, and document formative and summative outcome measure for evaluation purposes.