

STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES FUND
DOCKET I – APRIL 6TH, 2012
PROPOSED GRANT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Strategic Opportunities Fund (SOF) recommends the following 2 grants for approval by the President. Both recommendations are in support of SOF's discrete initiative in 2012 that seeks to dismantle the school to prison pipeline.

New York State Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children
(\$63,400 over one year; project support)

The New York State Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children (the Commission) is seeking support for the upcoming National Leadership Summit on School-Justice Partnerships titled: *Keeping Kids in Schools and Out of Courts*. The Commission was established in 1988 to improve the lives and life chances of children involved with New York courts; is chaired by the former Chief Judge Judith Kaye, and its members include judges, lawyers, advocates, physicians, legislators, and state and local officials.

The proposed grant will support the Leadership Summit which will be held in New York City on March 11-13, 2012. It will convene leaders in the court systems, school administration, law enforcement and community stakeholders to keep children in school and out of the juvenile and criminal justice systems. Cross-stakeholder teams from approximately 25 states will participate, including each state's top justice and education officials along with a juvenile court judge and other key representatives. The goal of the summit is to provide an opportunity for teams from each state to come to a national kick-off event for a discussion about policies and practices to reduce the number of children entering the justice system from schools by promoting positive student behavior, safe learning environments, and respectful and supportive school communities; and reserving the use of punitive measures – including school suspension and mandatory arrest – for the most egregious cases while still holding children accountable for their behaviors. The aim is to raise participant awareness of the importance of focusing on school-justice partnerships in order to: 1) promote promising and emerging practices and policies of the education and justice systems that can help reduce the number of children entering the juvenile and adult court systems; and 2) help children succeed and stay in school.

National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges
(\$100,000 over two years; project support)

Since its founding in 1937 by a group of judges dedicated to improving the effectiveness of the nation's juvenile courts, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) has worked to improve courts and systems and raise awareness of the core issues that touch the lives of many of our nation's children and families. As a nonprofit headquartered on the

University of Nevada campus in Reno, NCJFCJ provides training, technical assistance, and research to support a membership base of approximately 20,000 judges, court administrators, social and mental health workers, police, probation officers, and others working in the juvenile and family courts throughout the country. In the proposed project, NCJFCJ will draw upon judicial leaders and allied professionals active in reducing unnecessary school referrals and system penetration to develop critical training materials for the field. Juvenile courts across the country are struggling with the unintended consequences of policies such as “zero tolerance”. Specifically, juvenile courts are struggling to handle the numbers of youth referred by schools for truancy or behavioral problems that have traditionally been handled within the education system. Apart from juvenile courts becoming bogged down with the sheer numbers of cases referred from schools, they are seeing unnecessary advancement into the juvenile justice system for these youth – in other words the realization of the “school-to-juvenile justice pipeline”. With SOF support, NCJFCJ will provide support to jurisdictions in the form of intensive on-site and office-based technical assistance and strategic planning to implement recommended changes in practice. The proposed activities are aligned with the training and technical assistance component of the DOJ/DOE Supportive School Discipline Initiative and the NCJFCJ will work with DOJ/DOE to help ensure coordinated services. In addition, the National Leadership Summit, also recommended on this docket, will intentionally build momentum for NCJFCJ’s initiative.