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## **Winners Announced in GovLoop / NASPAA 2011 Graduate Public Service Scholarship Essay Contest**

It seems as if every story about government lately involves the budget in some capacity.

Elected officials and government employees are tasked with the difficult process of creating solutions in the face of financial restrictions, and with budgets getting smaller and smaller, this task sometimes seems impossible.

At [GovLoop](#), we're a bit more optimistic about the current budget situation, especially after we teamed up with the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration ([NASPAA](#)) for this year's [scholarship competition](#) to ask aspiring government leaders: *what would you do with \$100 million in the Federal budget to create an innovative, cost effective project?*

The scholarship contest generated more than 170 entries that a panel of professional and peer judges narrowed to a group of [15 finalist essays](#), which were then read and voted on by members of the GovLoop community.

The community has spoken, and the three scholarship winners are:

- [Evan White](#), University of California, Berkeley – Goldman School of Public Policy and School of Law (Boalt Hall)
- [Mauricio Cifuentes](#), Texas A&M University – Bush School of Government
- [Brian Footer](#), New York University – Wagner Graduate School of Public Service



Evan White took first place, a \$2,500 scholarship, for his essay, "[Promise Neighborhoods for a Promising Future](#)." In his essay, White suggested that the \$100 million be allocated to ten communities to create "Promise Neighborhoods" that aim to eliminate poverty by taking a cradle-to-career approach with children.

"Because each child should have an opportunity to succeed, the racial achievement gap — which starts at age two — is a national disgrace. But it is also our greatest untapped potential. A more educated populace will spur innovation and create jobs. Increasing student success will decrease the nation's widening inequality gap, with attendant improvements in crime, health, and levels of trust," White wrote in his essay.

White is in his final year of simultaneously pursuing two graduate degrees: a Masters of Public Policy and a Juris Doctor (Law), both from UC Berkeley. He says that he would like to work for the Domestic Policy Council in a second Obama administration. During his first summer in graduate school, he interned at the White House Office of Management and Budget and would be thrilled to return to the Executive Office.



Mauricio Cifuentes won second place, \$1,500, with his essay, “[The Social Innovation Fund: Implementing Effective Bottom-up Solutions.](#)” Cifuentes said he would put the \$100 million toward the Corporation for National & Community Service’s Social Innovation Fund (SIF). The funds distributed through the SIF would go to local communities, matched dollar-for-dollar by the grantees and sub-grantees, enabling \$100 million to have a greater reach.

“In addition to the great marginal benefits of the Fund, the program targets the most critical needy areas. By channeling funds directly to local communities, through organizations such as AIDS United and regional United Way chapters, the federal government can reach demographic areas that do not receive the necessary national attention. The idea is not to reinvent the wheel, but to use already established effective organizations and avoid creating more layers of bureaucratic red tape,” Cifuentes explained.

Cifuentes is pursuing a Masters in Public Administration at Texas A&M University. He says he chose to study Public Service and Administration because he believes that public service is an instrument for change. A native of Colombia, he was the only international student selected as a finalist.



Brian Footer was awarded third place, \$1,000, for his essay, “[Local Government Grant Program,](#)” which suggests that the \$100 million be used to create a new grant program that would make funds available to serve communities that miss out on much needed assistance.

“I believe government’s inherent social value is establishing services essential to provide basic human needs. This, however, is not a mandate for government to deliver services. Rather government should be a coordinator of parties and resource, and no one understands the unique demands of each geographic community better than local government,” Footer wrote in his essay.

Footer is pursuing a Masters in Public Administration at New York University. His future career goals are to combine the organizational and financial management skills learned through his MPA program with his passion for creative policy to run a progressive and responsive government sector.

GovLoop and NASPAA were impressed by the number and quality of submissions, and thank all of the participants in the competition, both applicants and judges. We congratulate the three winners.

The contest was a very successful partnership with the public affairs education community, and we invite MPA/MPP students, faculty, and alumni to join GovLoop’s “[MPA/MPP degrees](#)” group.

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