

William Penn Foundation

Request for Proposals

Caregiver Supports and Opportunities for Early Learning

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Introduction

The William Penn Foundation (WPF) has a long history of investing in efforts to improve the lives of young children in Philadelphia. The Foundation’s Children and Families program was created to expand access to programs and resources that support the healthy development and academic success of young children, ages 0 to 8, in Philadelphia. A full description of the Children and Families program, its goal, and all of its objectives can be found on the Foundation’s website. This specific Request for Proposals (RFP) was created to help organizations to advance the following objective:

By 2035, the Foundation will fund programming that provides caregiver supports and opportunities for early learning for 15,000 pregnant and parenting families with young children.

All families can benefit from increased resources and opportunities to maximize their ability to support their children's early development. In Philadelphia, a stagnant and stubborn poverty rate and a high rate of adverse experiences compound the need for programs and services that can empower and support families. In conversations over the past couple of years, families emphasized the value of community-based programs that provide assistance such as parental support, literacy building, and enrichment opportunities. However, parents and caregivers shared that services and programs that may be of interest to them are not always accessible due to factors such as transportation and childcare. This RFP seeks to address barriers to participation by funding projects that will increase opportunities for pregnant and parenting families with young children to engage in programs and experiences that provide supports and opportunities for early learning.

The Foundation recognizes that there are many ways that organizations and communities can provide supports and opportunities for early learning for families with young children ages 0 to 8. For this RFP, we will prioritize proposals that focus on direct service. Organizations may choose a small geographic focus or may seek to make change on a citywide scale.

Regardless of the approach, all applicants should describe a compelling explanation for how their proposed work will make tangible improvements in the quality of life for residents of Philadelphia. The specific criteria that will be used to assess all proposals can be found on pages 7 and 8 of this document.

Why is the Foundation using a Request for Proposals to advance this objective?

The Foundation has chosen to advance this objective using a Request for Proposals for several reasons. First, we believe that stakeholders across the region have a great deal of expertise and experience that can be supported to make progress on an objective that we heard was important to communities in our region. We want to hear about the impactful projects that are underway or could get underway and need funding. Second, we want to be as transparent as possible about the opportunity for non-profit organizations in the region to secure funding for work to advance this objective. Third, we heard from applicants and grantees in the past that our grant application process was overly burdensome, had unpredictable timelines, and did not provide sufficient information about the funding availability or the criteria used in selecting grantees. Fourth, we heard that applicants wanted an opportunity to show Foundation staff their work, not just tell them about it. The RFP process, including site visits as described below, is part of our effort to address this important feedback and to align with the Foundation's grantmaking values (as detailed on our website).

This RFP seeks projects that will provide caregiver supports and opportunities for early learning for pregnant and parenting families with young children.

Background

Services for young children and their families have significant impacts on short-term and long-term outcomes for child development, family well-being, and society as a whole.

Programs that serve children and their families can help build “protective factors, resiliency, and parental capacity to enhance child and family well-being and prevent child abuse and neglect.”¹ The most successful programs and services meaningfully and authentically engage caregivers, families, and communities in all aspects of programming, planning, and implementation. Through this RFP, WPF is looking to support approaches that serve children and their families through integrated and coordinated programs and services.

Research indicates that designing and implementing programs that serve children and their families *together* lead to better outcomes than those that focus on caregivers or children individually.²

34% of children entering kindergarten lack the basic language skills needed to learn how to read.³ Often, this is due to limited early exposure to vocabulary and literacy activities at home.



¹ [Child Welfare Information Gateway, *Two-Generation Approaches*.](#)

² [Ascend at the Aspen Institute. \(2021\). *State of the Field: Two-Generation Approaches to Family Well-Being*](#)

³ [Council on Early Childhood, High, P. C., & Klass, P. \(2014\). *Literacy promotion: an essential component of primary care pediatric practice. Pediatrics, 134\(2\), 404–409.*](#)

Opportunity Overview

WPF seeks to support efforts that increase access to caregiver supports and opportunities for early learning for pregnant and parenting families with young children. Funding will be limited to projects that will positively impact families with young children, ages 0-8.

Proposals must include activities that:

- Develop adults’ ability to support their children’s healthy development (e.g., academic, social-emotional, physical, etc.).
- Offer ongoing, interactive, intergenerational programming and services that promote parent-child interactions.
- Include an early learning component (social-emotional, STEM, math, literacy, etc.) for children ages 0 to 8.
- Provide resources, supports, and referrals for caregivers and families as needed.

Programming can take place in a variety of settings and with varying frequencies. See chart below for examples.

	Eligible for Funding	Not Eligible
Location	Homes, health care settings, community-based settings, libraries, recreation centers, etc.	Programming/services that take place solely in a virtual setting.
Frequency	Programming/services that take place bi-weekly, weekly, monthly, bi-monthly are all eligible.	Programs/ services that only consist of one-time programs or workshops (e.g., book fair, concert).
Dosage	Programs/services proposed for funding should include a minimum of six meetings/sessions.	Programs/services that do not enable ongoing opportunities to connect with families.
Age Focus	Expectant parents; Families with children ages 0 to 8 (or a subset in that range).	Programming that primarily serves children ages 9 and above.

Please note, under this RFP, the Foundation will **not** consider proposals to support the following:

- Physical health services such as well child and adult exams or treatment
- Early intervention services
- Mental and behavioral health services
- Full-day childcare

An RFP focused exclusively on grandfamilies/kinship care will be released on March 19, 2025. If the population for your project is focused primarily on **grandparents raising their grandchildren**, you should **not** respond to this RFP and are encouraged to consider the RFP that will be released in March.

We are requesting proposals for **up to three years of funding**. After reviewing proposals, WPF will conduct site visits and gather additional information from a limited number of organizations.

Organizations that propose projects in partnership with other applicants will be considered on their individual merits. However, the Foundation recognizes that making significant progress on the objective is difficult and encourages organizations to include partnerships that leverage complementary strengths, resources, and expertise to reach proposed goals.

Furthermore, the Foundation recognizes that there are many different tactics or approaches that could be used to advance the objective stated above. All proposals that meet the review criteria described below are encouraged.

WPF has **\$8 million available** to advance this objective at this time. The maximum amount of funding that organizations may request for direct expenses is \$800,000 over three years. (This does not include the overhead amount that will be added to project budgets, based on a formula described on the “How to Apply” section of our website).

At least \$1.5 million of the total amount awarded under this RFP will be reserved for grants to organizations that have budgets under \$2 million per year and/or are led by individuals who are members of groups with a history of discrimination or exclusion.

Eligibility

Applicants must be recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as 501(c)3 public charities or operate under a public charity fiduciary. Public charities include community-based organizations, schools and educational institutions, and other types of public-serving groups. Government entities are also eligible to apply.

Proposed projects must occur in Philadelphia and serve families who are residents of Philadelphia.

Review Criteria

Proposals will be judged on the criteria below. **Applicants should address these criteria in their narrative responses to the application questions.**

Alignment with Objective			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
Project activities and goals are unrelated to the defined objective.	Project activities and goals may advance the defined objective, but connection is vague.	Project will make a clear but indirect contribution to advancing the defined objective.	Project will make a clear and direct contribution to advancing the defined objective.
Program Design			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
The approach to the work is vague or unclear.	Outlines an approach to the work that describes one of the following: the organizational capacity to carry out the proposed program, a feasible plan to implement the work, or a detailed plan to track the outcomes and impact on the relevant objective.	Outlines a clear approach to the work that describes two of the following: the organizational capacity to carry out the proposed program, a feasible plan to implement the work, or a detailed plan to track project outcomes and impact on the relevant objective.	Outlines a clear approach to the work that describes the organizational capacity to carry out the proposed program, a feasible plan to implement the work, and a plan to track project outcomes and impact on the relevant objective.
Partnerships and Collaboration			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
No identified partners or plans for collaboration.	Partners are identified but there are no clear commitments.	Some existing partnerships, a clear plan to build new partnerships, and a description of each partner's role to maximize impact.	Sufficient existing partnerships or commitments from partner organizations and a description of each partner's role to maximize impact.
Organizational Experience			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
No implementation experience and no track record of success.	Limited implementation experience (less than two years) with advancing the specified objective and a minimal track record of success.	Some implementation experience (2-5 years) with advancing the specified objective and a track record of success in Philadelphia or other relevant cities or regions.	Extensive implementation experience (5+ years) with advancing the specified objective and a track record of success in Philadelphia and/or Pennsylvania.
Community Engagement			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
No evidence of familiarity with the intended beneficiaries of the proposed effort and no plan for future engagement.	Minimal evidence of the applicants' familiarity with intended beneficiaries of the proposed effort, but there is a commitment to develop a stakeholder engagement plan during implementation.	Evidence of the applicants' familiarity with the intended beneficiaries of the proposed effort and there is a plan for ongoing stakeholder engagement during implementation.	Key components of the project were informed by the intended beneficiaries of the proposed effort and there is a plan for ongoing engagement during implementation.

Additional expectations:

Focus Population	Proposal should focus on providing supports for traditionally marginalized communities including low-income, people of color, and non-English language speakers.
Evidence Base	Proposal clearly describes goals of the program and provides evidence (e.g., research, survey results, family testimonials, etc.) that the program has a positive impact on families.
Demand	Applicant can demonstrate interest or demand for the proposed services (feedback from current or intended participants, waitlists, etc.)
Cost to Families	Programming and services are provided at no cost to families.
Accessibility	Planned services should take place in accessible locations, during convenient times, with consistently available language supports for non-English speaking individuals.
Budget	The requested budget is reasonable for the proposed activities, numbers of families served, and the stated results.

Learning and Evaluation

Grantees will be expected to complete a brief written report each year describing how they have made progress toward the objective above and what they have learned during the year.

In addition, organizations funded as a result of this RFP will be convened in a Learning Community to build networks among those advancing a common objective, to share learning and best practices, and to identify ways in which progress could be enhanced. Grantees will help to determine the frequency, content, and specific goals of the Learning Community. The overhead funding included with any awarded grants is, in part, meant to help subsidize staff participation in the Learning Community.



Webinar

Interested organizations are invited to participate in an optional informational webinar on **Thursday, December 12, 2024 at 1:00PM ET.**

Register for the webinar at <https://lu.ma/williampenfoundation>

Budget

Project budgets should cover up to three years of funding and may include up to three months for planning. Organizations are encouraged to build on their existing programs, using WPF funding to supplement or enhance those efforts.

Project budgets should be all-inclusive, including any fees to partner organizations or consultants. This information can be provided in the proposal narrative.

Except in rare circumstances, total funding from WPF should not exceed 25% of a participating organization's operating budget.

All aspects of project development and execution, including planning, design, materials, community engagement, staffing, professional development, and implementation are eligible for funding.

Application Process

Before you apply, please review your responses to the four questions below. If you can confidently answer “yes” to the questions, this funding opportunity may be relevant to you. If you respond “no” to any of the questions, this opportunity is not a good match for your project, and you should not apply.

	YES	NO
Does your program provide services to families in Philadelphia?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your program serve pregnant and/or parenting families with children ages 0 to 8?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your program provide learning opportunities for both caregivers and their young children?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is your program provided to families at no charge?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please also review all of the criteria on pages 7 and 8 and make sure that your program aligns with those.

If you answered “yes” to all of the questions above and meet the stated criteria, the application process begins by completing a proposal on our online submission system at <https://wpcf.my.site.com/grantee>. Submit your application by 5:00PM ET on **January 31, 2025**. A WPF team will review all proposals and will notify applicants if they have been selected to move forward in the review process. **To download a working copy of the application to draft responses, please [click here](#).**

Within the narrative of the application, applicants should provide the following:

- Goals of the proposed program and how those goals will be accomplished via programming and services offered
- Frequency, duration, and dosage of programming (e.g., bi-weekly for 60 minutes for six weeks)
- Estimated number of families to be served

Selected organizations will take part in a site visit with WPF staff so that the Foundation can learn more about applicants’ work. Site visits will be approximately two hours in duration. We ask that organizations use this time

Timeline

December 9, 2024

Proposal submission period opens.

December 12, 2024

Informational Webinar (see page 8)

January 31, 2025

Proposals due by 5:00PM ET

February 12-14, 2025

Select applicants notified that their proposals have been chosen for further consideration and a site visit. Other applicants will be notified that their proposals are not advancing in the process.

February 17- March 7, 2025

Site visits conducted by WPF staff with selected applicants.

April 25, 2025

WPF Board review selected proposals.

May 2025

Project implementation can begin.

to introduce key staff working on the proposed project, to show WPF staff where the work will take place, and to elevate the voices of the potential beneficiaries of the proposed project. Based on a combination of the written materials and the learning from the site visit, **a final slate of organizations** will be recommended to the WPF Board for consideration of their proposals.

This request or any subsequent response does not commit William Penn Foundation or the responding organization to any future funding or engagement.

If you have any questions, contact Amanda Charles at acharles@williampennfoundation.org