

William Penn Foundation

Request for Proposals

Supporting Grandfamilies and Kinship Caregivers

Published March 19, 2025

Due April 25, 2025

William Penn Foundation
Two Logan Square, Suite 1100
100 North 18th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103
williampennfoundation.org



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 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.

According to the Philadelphia Department of Human Services, as of June 2024, almost half (46%) of the children in foster care were in kinship foster care.¹ There are many reasons why young children may be raised by grandparents or family members other than their parents.

Grandfamilies often result from biological parents' challenges that include divorce, drug use, incarceration, job loss, and illness. Despite facing a myriad of challenges, grandfamilies can provide children with increased feelings of belonging and acceptance and lead to better educational outcomes and educational stability.² Supports and services can help grandfamilies navigate complex challenges and provide tools and resources to help young children and their families thrive. Grandfamilies make up one part of the population that the Foundation hopes to support through the objective stated above.

The Foundation recognizes that there are many ways that organizations and communities can contribute to advancing this objective. With that understanding, there are few limitations on the project designs or applicants' approach to addressing this issue. 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 provide supports and services to grandparents and kinship caregivers raising young children. 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).

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¹ [City of Philadelphia Office of Children and Families Department of Human Services. \(2025\). Fiscal Year 2024 Q4 Quarterly Indicators Report.](#)

² [Generations United. \(2023\). Fact Sheet: Children Thrive in Grandfamilies.](#)

Please note in this document, the terms "grandfamilies" and "kinship care" are used interchangeably to refer to families in which grandparents or other adult family members raise children whose parents are not in the home. These families can be either associated with or not associated with the child welfare system.

This RFP seeks projects that will provide supports and services to grandparents and kinship caregivers raising young

Background

Research shows that when grandfamilies receive the supports they need, children raised by grandparents or other relatives thrive. Compared to children in foster care with non-relatives, children living with relatives have more stability, better behavioral and mental health outcomes, and are more likely to stay connected to siblings, family connections, and cultural identity.³

However, grandfamilies and kinship families often face complex challenges including insufficient financial resources to address the basic needs for their new family, isolation, lack of tools to enable them to manage the demands of caregiving, and difficulty navigating services and opportunities provided by non-profit organizations and government.⁴

The William Penn Foundation’s Caregiver Supports objective supports all caregivers of young children in Philadelphia with a focus on traditionally marginalized communities. The RFP released in December 2024 was reflective of that commitment and solicited requests for caregiver supports more broadly, as will future RFPs released for this objective. In order to be responsive to the evolving needs of caregivers in our city, on occasion, WPF may release an RFP focusing on a specific subpopulation of caregivers. This RFP focused on grandfamilies is one such example. Given the high rates of grandfamilies in Philadelphia and the specific needs of this population, WPF is releasing an RFP focused on this population of caregivers.

Over 14,000 children in Philadelphia live in homes where grandparents provide their primary care.⁵



³ [Rogers, A., Hayslip, B. \(2021\) *Grandfamilies of Philadelphia: Strengths, Needs, and Supports*.](#)

⁴ [Rogers, A., Hayslip, B. \(2021\) *Grandfamilies of Philadelphia: Strengths, Needs, and Supports*.](#)

⁵ [United States Census Bureau. \(2023\).](#)

Opportunity Overview

The Foundation seeks to support programming and strategies that improve outcomes for young children in grandfamilies or kinship families through expansion or improvement of services and access to resources. Funding will be limited to projects that will positively impact families with young children, ages 0-8.

Proposals can include the following activities. The most competitive proposals will include at least two of the following activities.

- Increase the number of grandfamilies being effectively served in needed programs and services.
- Develop adults' ability to support their children's development (e.g., adult-only workshops, trainings, seminars).
- Offer ongoing, interactive, intergenerational programming and services that include an early learning component (social-emotional, STEM, math, literacy, etc.) for children ages 0 to 8.
- Strategies that enhance outreach and support to targeted families.
- Peer-to-peer supports for adults in grandfamilies (e.g., support groups, mentoring).
- Provide resources, supports, and referrals for caregivers and families as needed.
- Efforts focused on advocacy, system changes, or ecosystem development.
- Other ideas not mentioned here that improve services, access to resources, and outcomes for children in grandfamilies and kinship families.

Please note, under this RFP, the Foundation will **not** consider proposals to support the following (though these may be services your organization offers with other funding):

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

Program/services proposed for funding can take place in-person or in a combination of in-person and virtual settings. The majority of activities proposed for funding must take place in-person. Programs/services that take place solely in a virtual setting will **not** be eligible for funding.

As noted previously, this opportunity is focused on families in which grandparents or other adult family members raise children whose parents are not in the home. These families can be either associated with or not associated with the child welfare system. Proposals should focus solely on this population and projects should be intentionally designed to meet the distinct needs of grandfamilies/kinship families.

We are requesting proposals for **up to two 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.

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

WPF has **\$4 million available** to advance this objective through this RFP. There is no minimum or maximum amount of funding that organizations may request. However, grant requests under \$400,000 will be most competitive. (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 \$500K of the total amount awarded under this RFP will be reserved for grants to organizations that have budgets under \$1 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.
<i>Developing or Strong Required</i>			
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.
<i>Strong Required</i>			
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.
<i>Developing or Strong Required</i>			
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.
<i>Emergent, Developing, or Strong Required</i>			
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.
<i>Developing or Strong Required</i>			

Additional expectations:

Focus Population	Proposal focuses on families where grandparents or other adult non-parent family members are the primary caregiver for a child or children whose parents are not in the home. Families can be associated with or not associated with the child welfare system.
Evidence Base	Proposal clearly describes goals of the program and provides evidence (e.g., research, survey results, etc.) that the program has a positive impact on grandfamilies.
Demand	Applicant can demonstrate unmet 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.
Past Performance	Applicant can provide specific information about current efforts supporting grandfamilies including number of families served, lessons learned, successes, and challenges.

Learning and Insights

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 through 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 **Wednesday, March 26, 2025 at 11:00 AM ET.**

Register for the webinar at <https://lu.ma/william penn foundation>

Budget

Project budgets should cover up to two 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 an organization's operating budget.

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

Application Process

Before you apply, please review the 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
Are you seeking funding to serve only families in Philadelphia?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your proposed project primarily serve families with children ages 0 to 8?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your proposed project focus exclusively on families in which grandparents or other non-parent adult family members are the primary caregiver for a child or children whose parents are not in the home?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your program include at least two of the elements listed on page 5 of this RFP?	<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://wfp.my.site.com/grantee>. Submit your application by 5:00PM ET on **April 25, 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](#).**

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 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

Timeline

March 19, 2025

Proposal submission period opens.

March 26, 2025

Informational Webinar (see page 8)

April 25, 2025

Proposals due by 5:00PM ET

May 7-12, 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.

May 12-June 6, 2025

Site visits conducted by WPF staff with selected applicants.

July 25, 2025

WPF Board review selected proposals.

August 2025

Project implementation can begin.