

WilliamPennFoundation

Request for Proposals

Increasing Access to Out-of-School Learning Opportunities

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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:

Through 2035, enable 550 additional children to participate in out-of-school learning opportunities each year, particularly in underserved areas of the city.

Out-of-school time (OST) learning opportunities provide a range of benefits to young children including gains in academic achievement and social-emotional skills, and exposure to new experiences and opportunities.¹ However, there are barriers to accessing OST programming in Philadelphia, particularly in certain neighborhoods. As a result, our goal is to provide direct support to existing, high-quality out-of-school time programs to increase the number of children who have access to, and participate in, these critical learning opportunities. Proposals should focus on the expansion of direct services, provided by existing out-of-school time (OST) providers, to increase the number of children, ages 3 to 8, who have access to afterschool and summer enrichment opportunities.

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.

This RFP seeks projects that will increase the number of children, ages 3 to 8, in Philadelphia who participate in high-quality out-of-school time programs.

¹ [McCombs, Whitaker, & Yoo, \(2017\). *The Value of Out-of-School Time Programs*.](#)

Background

Decades of research demonstrate the value of out-of-school time (OST) for children's learning and development in school and in life.

Youth who participate in high-quality OST programs and activities demonstrate improved academic performance in reading and math, course grades, school attendance, and engagement in learning. These gains are even greater for youth who are most at risk.² However, many children do not have access to these critical learning opportunities. In Philadelphia, there is limited supply of high-quality out-of-school programming. Additionally, OST program costs can be prohibitive, and when basic needs like housing, transportation, and healthcare are at risk, OST participation is low.

Expanding the number of high-quality OST learning opportunities available to Philadelphia children and removing barriers to access (e.g., cost to participate, location of existing programs) will enable more children to participate in programs that expose them to new opportunities, ideas, and experiences.

One in two students who attended an afterschool program improved their math and reading grades.³

Research has found that every \$1 invested in Pennsylvania afterschool programs leads to a return on investment of approximately \$6.69.⁴



² [Afterschool Alliance, \(2017\). What does the research say about afterschool?](#)

³ [Afterschool Alliance, \(2020\). This is Afterschool.](#)

⁴ [Afterschool Alliance, \(2024\). This is Afterschool in Pennsylvania.](#)

Opportunity Overview

The Foundation seeks to support efforts that increase the number of children, ages 3 to 8, who have access to out-of-school time learning opportunities. Funding will be limited to projects that will positively impact young children, ages 3-8, living in specific neighborhoods in the City of Philadelphia.

An out-of-school time (OST) learning opportunity is defined by WPF as a supervised program that young people regularly attend when school is not in session. Examples of OST programming include academic programs (e.g., tutoring), multi-purpose (e.g., homework help, enrichment), and specialty programs (e.g., art, music, sports, STEM). Programming that takes place during the school day is not eligible for this RFP.

This RFP seeks to support the expansion of year-round (school year and summer) OST opportunities for children ages 3 to 8 (pre-K to grade 3). To be eligible for funding, organizations must have at least three years of experience providing OST programming and must provide continuous programming during the school year and summer. Programs that operate solely during the school year or summer are not eligible for funding under this RFP.

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.

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 **\$6 million available** to advance this objective through this RFP. There is no minimum or maximum amount of funding that organizations may request. The grant amount requested should be commensurate with the contribution that the project will make to the overall objective.

Organizations that are interested in operating in School District of Philadelphia school buildings but do not have an established partnership with a school can contact the School District of Philadelphia's Office of Strategic Partnerships at partnerships@philasd.org.

The Office of Strategic Partnerships can help OST organizations identify and connect with schools that are interested in partnering.

Please note: the School District of Philadelphia will not be involved in the proposal review or selection process.

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.

Organizations are eligible to apply for funding for up to three distinct program sites. Proposed projects must occur in select zip codes (see page 8) in Philadelphia and serve Philadelphia children ages 3 to 8.

Existing grantees currently receiving funding to advance this objective cannot request additional funds for their current projects.

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.

Does your proposed program:		YES	NO
Serve children between the ages of 3 to 8?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Take place in one of the zip codes listed on page 8?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide a child with year-round OST learning opportunities?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Come at no cost to families?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have at least a three-year track record of providing high-quality programming to children?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have a plan to enroll more children if awarded WPF grant funds?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

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 conveys no meaningful connection to the objective.	Project would make a marginal and/or uncertain contribution to advancing the objective.	Project would make a clear contribution to advancing the objective.	Project would make a clear and significant contribution to advancing the objective.
Developing or Strong Required			
Program Design and Feasibility			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
Proposal does not provide a clear approach to the work. Anticipated outcomes and success are not well-defined.	Proposal describes an approach to the work, but some aspects are vague, difficult to understand or seem unrealistic. Anticipated outcomes are defined, but are of uncertain achievability, based on the details provided.	Proposal provides a clear approach but could be more specific. Anticipated outcomes require further clarification to assess feasibility.	Proposal provides a clear and feasible plan to implement the work and includes a solid justification for anticipated outcomes.
Developing or Strong Required			
Partnerships and Collaboration			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
No potential partners or plans for collaboration.	Potential partners relevant to the project are identified but there are no clear commitments.	Some committed partnerships relevant to the project, a plan to build any necessary new partnerships, and a description of each partner's role.	Sufficient committed partnerships relevant to the project, a description of each partner's role, and a track record of successful collaboration.
Developing or Strong Required			
Organizational Experience			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
No implementation experience and no track record of success.	Less than three years of experience with advancing the specified objective and a limited track record of success.	Three to five years of experience advancing the specified objective and success in Philadelphia or other relevant cities or regions.	More than five years of experience advancing the specified objective and an extensive track record of success in Philadelphia and/or Pennsylvania.
Developing or Strong Required			
Community Knowledge and Engagement			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
No evidence of familiarity with the intended beneficiaries of the proposed project and no plan for future engagement.	Minimal evidence of familiarity with intended beneficiaries of the proposed project, but there is a commitment to develop a stakeholder engagement plan during implementation.	Evidence of familiarity with the intended beneficiaries of the proposed project 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 project and there is a plan for ongoing engagement during implementation.
Developing or Strong Required			

Additional expectations:

Program Operation	Program must provide school year and summer programming. During the school year, program must operate for a minimum of 12 hours per week; five days per week. During the summer, program must operate for a minimum of six hours per day, five days per week, for six weeks.
Priority Zip Codes	All program sites proposed for funding must operate in one of the following zip codes: 19120, 19124, 19132, 19134, 19138, 19139, 19141, 19144.
Cost to Families	All aspects of programming (e.g., activities, registration fees, equipment, meals, field trips, etc.) are provided at no-cost to families.
Staffing	Clear description of existing or new staff members who have the necessary qualifications to effectively implement the program. Organization adequately compensates staff.
Recruitment of Youth	Strong track record of youth recruitment and retention. Proposal describes a strong plan for how additional youth will be recruited.
Defined Youth Outcomes	Clear definition of the learning goals the program is trying to advance (e.g., science, social-emotional, art) and the rationale for how the program advances children's learning and development.
Program Design and Development	Experience implementing high-quality research-based activities that help children ages 3 to 8 develop academic, social, emotional, and/or physical skills.
High-Quality Programming	Program activities are engaging, fun, content-rich, socially interactive, and relevant to children's everyday lives. Students are able to choose among some activities.
Accessibility	Program takes place in accessible locations, during convenient times.
Budget	The requested budget is reasonable for the proposed activities and the stated results.
Site Documentation	If a program site is not owned by the applying organization, the strongest applications will submit written permission from the site owner to use the space for programming including approval to expand program services.

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, September 17, 2025 at 1:00PM ET.**

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

Budget

Project budgets should cover up to three years of funding and may include up to four months for planning, including hiring of staff and student recruitment. Organizations are required to build on their existing programs, using WPF funding to expand the number of children ages 3 to 8 their programs can serve.

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.

WPF funding can be used to support the expansion of OST seats available to children ages 3 to 8 as well as all associated programming costs including staffing, community engagement, materials, professional development, enrichment activities, field trips, and meals/snacks.

WPF funding cannot be used for capital projects including the buying and/or renovating of buildings or program space.

Application Process

If you answered “yes” to all of the questions in the eligibility section above and meet the stated criteria, the application process begins by completing a proposal on our online system at <https://wpf.my.site.com/grantee>.

Submit your application by 5:00PM ET on **October 23, 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](#).**

Applicants are **also required to provide the following information about their program operation**. Applicants should complete the [program information attachment](#) for each site proposed for funding and upload it as an attachment in the grant portal.

- Site(s) information including name, location (e.g., school, rec center, etc.), neighborhood, address, and zip code.
- Days and hours of operation (school year and summer, if different).
- Total number of students served currently (school year and summer, if different).
- Total number of *additional* students organization is proposing to serve if awarded WPF funds.

Organizations are eligible to apply for funding for up to three sites. Organizations do not need to submit separate applications for each site. However, a separate program information attachment should be completed for each site proposed for funding.

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

September 10, 2025

Proposal submission period opens.

September 17, 2025

Informational Webinar (see page 9)

October 23, 2025

Proposals due by 5:00PM ET

November 7-10, 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.

November 10-December 10, 2025

Site visits conducted by WPF staff with selected applicants.

February 6, 2026

WPF Board review selected proposals.

February 9, 2026

Project implementation can begin.