William Penn Foundation

Request for Proposals

Increasing Access to Out-of-School Learning Opportunities

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Photo credit: Ed Snider Youth Hockey & Education

Purpose of this Request for Proposals

The William Penn Foundation (WPF) has a long history of investing in efforts to improve quality of life for residents of the Philadelphia region. The Foundation's Children and Families program seeks 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 goals, 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:

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

Why is WPF prioritizing this objective?

Photo: Parent Infant Center programming



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.[1] However, many children do not have access to these critical learning opportunities.

In Philadelphia, there is limited supply of out-of-school programming.[2] 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) will enable more children to participate in programs that expose them to new opportunities, ideas, and experiences.

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.

What types of projects will get funded?

WPF seeks to increase the number of children ages 3 to 8 (pre-K to grade 3) who have access to, and participate in, year-round (school year and summer) OST opportunities.

An 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, science). Programming that takes place during the school day is not eligible for this RFP.

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.

Organizations can request to expand the number of children served at a current OST site and/or propose opening a new program location. Organizations are eligible to apply for funding for up to three distinct

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[1] Afterschool Alliance, (2017). *What does the research say about afterschool?*
[2] Pileggi, M., Hartmann, T. A., LaParo, K., Redican, E., Keener, A., & Zurinsky, S. (2026, September). *Every child, every neighborhood: Out-of-school time access in Philadelphia*. Research for Action.

program sites. Funding will be limited to projects that will positively impact young children, ages 3-8, living in specific neighborhoods in the city of Philadelphia. Please see additional requirements on page 8 for a list of priority zip codes.

The priority zip codes were identified from a new report published by Research for Action (funded by WPF) which looked at where OST programs exist for children from pre-K through grade 8 in Philadelphia and where gaps in access exist. The report found that OST shortages are citywide, but certain neighborhoods are missing many more seats than others. "The study ranks zip codes on two criteria: the size of their OST access gap, and whether that gap overlaps with communities facing added barriers—high poverty, a large share of English Language Learners, or a large share of system-involved youth (three 'equity factors' in all)." The priority zip codes listed on page 8 have large gaps in afterschool programming for youth in grades K to 3 and at least one equity factor.

What has to be in my proposal?

We are requesting proposals for **up to 36 months of funding**. Organizations that propose projects in partnership with other applicants will be considered on their individual merits. However, the Foundation recognizes that the work necessary to make significant progress on the objective will be complex and encourages organizations to include partnerships that leverage complementary strengths, resources, and expertise.

All proposals that meet the criteria described on pages 6-8 are encouraged. After reviewing proposals, WPF will conduct site visits and gather additional information from a limited number of organizations.

Organizations that do not have an established partnership with a school and are interested in operating in buildings operated by the School District of Philadelphia 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.*

Quick Check: Is This Opportunity a Good Fit?

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
1. Does your proposed program serve children between the ages of 3 and 8?	☐	☐
2. Does your proposed program take place in one of the zip codes listed on page 8?	☐	☐
3. Does your proposed program provide a child with year-round OST learning opportunities?	☐	☐
4. Does your proposed program come at no cost to families?	☐	☐
5. Does your organization have a track record of at least three years providing high-quality OST programming to children?	☐	☐
6. Does your proposed program have a plan to serve more children if awarded WPF grant funds?	☐	☐

! Also review **all** the criteria on the following pages to make sure your program aligns with those before you apply.

What types of organizations are eligible for funding?

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.

Existing grantees currently receiving funding to advance this objective cannot request additional funds for their current projects (e.g., OST sites that already receive WPF funding).

Proposal Review

! Applicants must address these criteria in their responses within the Project Narrative section of the application. Proposals will be judged on the criteria and additional expectations below.

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	

What else will be expected in my proposal?

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: 19111, 19120, 19124, 19131, 19134, 19135, 19137, 19140, 19143, 19145, 19149, 19152.
Demand	Demonstrate demand for the proposed services (e.g., waitlists, feedback from students, families, and/or school leadership, survey results, etc.).
Recruitment of Youth	Strong track record of youth recruitment and retention. Proposal describes a strong plan for how additional youth will be recruited.
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.
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.
Staffing	Clear description of existing or new staff members who have the necessary qualifications to effectively implement the program. Organization adequately compensates staff.
Cost to Families	All aspects of programming (e.g., activities, registration fees, equipment, meals, field trips, etc.) are provided at no cost to families.
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.

Budget

How much money is available?

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. WPF has allocated $4.5 million to advance this objective through this RFP.

What should I include in my proposed budget?

Project budgets should cover up to 36 months of funding. Project budgets should be all-inclusive, including any regrants to partner organizations or fees to 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 (e.g., enrichment activities, supplies, field trips, meals/snacks) are eligible for funding. WPF funding cannot be used for capital projects including the buying and/or renovating of buildings or program space.

Anything else I should know?

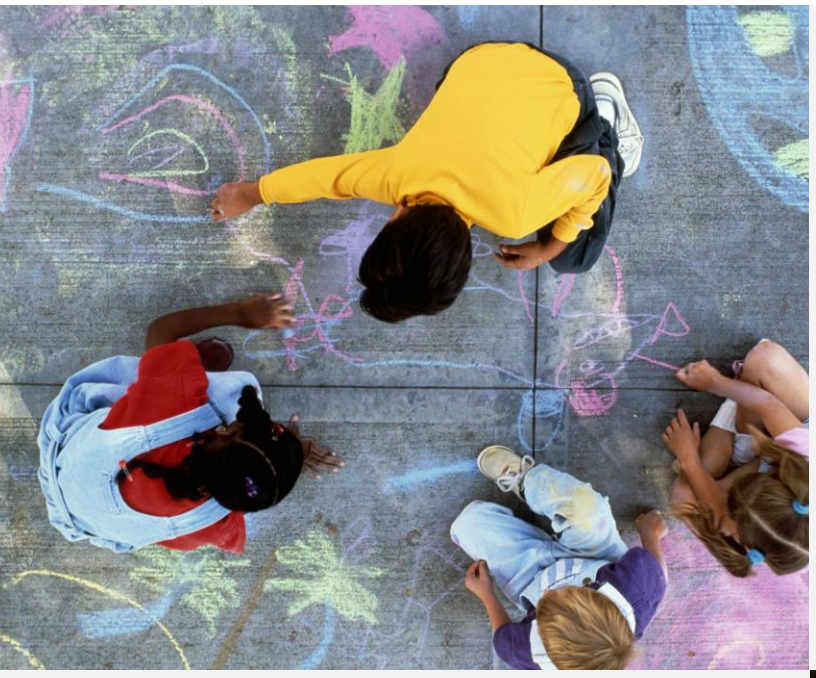
Applicants are required to provide the following information about their program operation. Applicants should complete the program information attachment for each site proposed for funding and upload it as an attachment in the grant portal.

- Site(s) information including name, location (e.g., school, rec center, etc.), neighborhood, address, 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

If you are awarded funding, you will be expected to complete a brief written report each year describing how you have made progress toward the objective above and what you have learned during the year.

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.

If awarded funding through a WPF grant, an organization agrees to not unlawfully discriminate in their employment practices, volunteer opportunities, or programs and services based on any characteristic or class that is protected by law.



Learning Communities

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.

Proposed Budgets

Project budgets should cover up to 36 months of funding. Project budgets should be all-inclusive, including any regrants to partner organizations or fees to consultants.



How to Apply

If you answered "yes" to all the questions in the "Quick Check" on page 5 and meet all the review criteria on pages 6–8, the application process begins by completing a proposal on our online submission system at https://wpf.my.site.com/grantee.

Submit your application by **5:00 PM ET on Thursday, January 21, 2027**. 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 us 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.

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 **Senior Program Officer Amanda Charles at acharles@williampennfoundation.org.**

Webinar

Interested organizations are invited to participate in an optional informational webinar on **Thursday, December 3, 2026, at 11:00AM ET.**

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

Timeline

November 18, 2026

Proposal submission period opens.

December 3, 2026

Informational Webinar (see bottom of this page)

January 21, 2027

Proposals due by 5:00PM ET

February 12-17, 2027

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 16-March 15, 2027

Site visits conducted by WPF staff with selected applicants.

April 30, 2027

WPF Board review selected proposals.

May 2027

Project implementation can begin.