

Education Strategy

Request for Proposal

United Way of the Dutchess-Orange Region (UWDOR) issues this Request for Proposal as a part of our commitment to improving the education of our neighbors facing poverty and limited resources. UWDOR targets our education investment through strategies that aim to improve the academic achievement of our community’s youth and workforce development opportunities for adults. Our goal is to maximize educational outcomes for children and adults living in Dutchess and Orange counties so that they can forge a path toward lifelong learning and success.

The goals outlined in this RFP represent a multi-faceted plan developed in partnership with community leaders defining government, businesses, non-profits, medical practitioners, educators, students, parents and the larger community. Through this RFP process, UWDOR seeks partnerships with nonprofit organizations during the period **of July 2021 to June 2022**. Our intention is to invest sufficient funding to achieve significant results. United Way’s Community Fund is divided into two funding categories:

- **For previously funded programs**, please indicate the amount you are requesting (maximum request of \$50,000).
- **For programs not previously funded**, United Way has allotted funding in increments up to \$10,000 for these requests. Please indicate your request here (maximum of \$10,000). *If your program is selected for funding, you may be eligible for additional future funding. This is contingent that your organization remains in good standing with regards to all United Way contract requirements. Future additional funding is not guaranteed.*

Key Dates

| Activity | Date |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| RFP Released | February 8 th , 2021 |
| Questions & Answers | Please submit questions to: ci-inbox@uwdor.org Responses will be issued within 48 business hours |
| Technical Guidance “How to Apply” | Video/Written statement |
| Application Due Date | March 19 th , 2021 by 5pm |
| Anticipated Award Notifications | June, 2021 |

Core Funding Criteria

In partnership with our community, United Way utilizes a cohesive strategy to address the needs of children, families and individuals with limited income in Dutchess and Orange counties. This

RFP is designed to establish a foundation for the educational success of local students and adults seeking workforce development opportunities, and, in some cases, may involve innovative initiatives that have the potential to be expanded upon with future funding. UWDOR is seeking to support partners who share our commitment to the following:

- A commitment to **community-level outcomes** focused on demographics and geographic locations with the greatest need;
- A commitment to cross-agency and cross-community **collaboration** in developing effective strategies; and
- A commitment to strategies that demonstrate success using **evidence-based or evidence-informed models**.

Community-Level Outcomes

United Way conducts extensive research and holds community forums to address the goals and indicators that determine community success. Together, we have identified and are working towards key indicators of success. We hold our partners and ourselves accountable to achieving success by using concrete metrics based on local, state, and federal data to measure our progress:

| Annual Goals | Community-Level Outcomes |
|--|--|
| Increase opportunities for positive youth development and literacy services. | Youth will enroll in programs that develop positive behaviors and/or read proficiently at grade level. |
| Develop opportunities for lifelong learning to increase skill-based development. | Increase families' access to education and workforce training programs. |

Collaboration

Strong collaboration among all partners is necessary for our community to realize outcomes that will demonstrate lasting and meaningful change for our region's children. Nonprofit partners are strongly encouraged to incorporate collaborative opportunities into their proposal.

***Programs that rely on outside organizations to accomplish stated goals (i.e. school districts) are required to provide letters of commitment that demonstrate support from the outside organization.**

Evidence-Based or Evidence-Informed Models

United Way is committed to changing our community in a positive and meaningful way. In order to do so, we seek to partner with programs that are either evidence-based or evidence-informed, meaning they have been proven successful in the past.

From the Child Welfare Information Gateway:

Evidence-based practices are approaches to prevention or treatment that are validated by some form of documented scientific evidence. This includes findings established through controlled clinical studies, but other methods of establishing evidence are also valid.

Evidence-based programs use a defined curriculum or a set of services which, when implemented with fidelity as a whole, have been validated by some form of scientific evidence.

Evidence-informed practices use the best available research and practice knowledge to guide program design and implementation. These informed practices allow for innovation while incorporating the lessons learned from existing research literature.¹ For your convenience, the evaluation tool is as follows:

Application Evaluation Scoring Rubric

United Way evaluates applications based upon the following criterion:

- Program Design (50 Points)
 - Application should demonstrate the ability to achieve identified community-level outcomes;
 - Application should demonstrate evidence of active collaboration;
 - Application should identify and explain implementation of evidence based/informed models.
- Justification of Need (20 Points) – Application should articulate - through data - the need for this program and value added to our community.
- Organizational Infrastructure (30 Points) – Application must effectively demonstrate that the organization has the capacity to implement program design and collaboration.

Our Community's Challenge

Part One:

Across our nation, 66% of children are read to daily, but that percentage plummets to 34% for families whose incomes are below 100% of the federal poverty level.² When children are not read to at home, they enter school lacking vital language skills and are more likely to fall behind their peer group. In addition, food-insecure children have a harder time learning. Amount, availability, and quality of food all affect children's health, as well as their brain development. Children facing these barriers are often not reading proficiently by third grade-- a pivotal benchmark wherein students shift from "learning to read" to "reading to learn." If the fundamental reading and comprehension skills are lacking at that point, subsequent academic

¹ "Evidence-Based Practice Definitions and Glossaries." Child Welfare Information Gateway. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/management/practice-improvement/evidence/ebp/definitions/>

² Data Research Center for Child and Adolescent Health, 2011/12, National Survey of Children's Health. Available at: <http://childhealthdata.org/browse/survey/results?q=2285&r=34&g=458>. Accessed 1/12/16

performance falls. Reading interventions implemented after the third grade are seldom as effective as those in the early years.³

Children who encounter additional challenges, such as a language barrier, are especially susceptible to falling behind their classmates with regards to their language comprehension skills. In 2017, just 14% of English as a New Language students read at grade level.⁴

Children need high-quality early education programs to achieve appropriate developmental milestones. Early grade-level support prepares children for academic success. Students who received early childhood educational interventions improved their educational outcomes early on, increasing their likelihood of graduating.⁵

Expanded learning opportunities, such as those found in afterschool, summer learning, and extended day programs, demonstrate improved academic achievement. Research completed by the Afterschool Alliance in 2018 suggests that regular participation in high-quality afterschool programs correlates with improvement in test scores, study habits, and school attendance. Similarly, summer learning programs can prevent loss of knowledge that can occur when school is not in session, known as the “summer slide.”

Positive Youth Development, a strength-based approach, refers to services in the community, such as after-school programs or in school prevention programs. The Federal Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs describes PYD as:

*An intentional, pro-social approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes, and enhances youths’ strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths.*⁶

Specifically, the hours between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. when students are out of school and parents are not yet home from work are the times when most dangerous and risky behaviors take place. A positive afterschool environment for students can have marked effects. Many studies have found that students participating in positive afterschool programs are less likely to take part in risky and criminal behavior than students who were not in these programs. A 2014 report found that children at the school of study were 30% less likely to participate in criminal activities than their peers who did not attend an afterschool program.⁷ Students enrolled in programs fostering positive youth

³ Annie Casey Foundation, “Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation” 2011

⁴ Proficiency on Educational Assessments. US Dept. of Education, 2019. Retrieved December 31, 2019. <https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/el-outcomes/index.html>

⁶ Moore K. “Why Positive Youth Development Works.” Child Trends. <https://www.childtrends.org/why-positive-youth-development-works> Retrieved January 11, 2019

⁷ Afterschool Alliance. “Keeping Kids Safe and Supported in the Hours After School.” Issue Brief #65. May 2014. Retrieved January 11, 2019. http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/issue_briefs/issue_KeepingKidsSafe_65.pdf
Afterschool Alliance. “Keeping Kids Safe and Supported in the Hours After School.”

development are less likely to abuse substances, get involved in violent activities, and are far more likely to graduate. They also have an increased sense of well-being, displaying more positive physical and mental health factors.

Studies show that community protective factors such as literacy services, positive youth engagement, and substance abuse prevention programs, can decrease adolescent risk behaviors (Afterschool Alliance, 2014). We aim to bring nonprofit service providers together to address issues in a collective effort to educate today's youth, while providing positive youth development practices both inside and outside of the classroom. Programs are encouraged to apply that provide a safe space for children and increase their academic outcomes while reducing risk factors like substance abuse or violent activity.

Goal: Increase opportunities for positive youth development and literacy services.

Indicator: Youth will enroll in programs that develop positive behaviors and/or read proficiently at grade level.

Part Two:

There is a distinct need for alternate paths to financial stability in our community, with graduation rates as low as 55%, and only 32% possessing a bachelor's degree regionally. (Mid_Hudson Community Profiles, 2018). Without a high school diploma, employment options are extremely limited. In fact, the earning potential of someone lacking a high school diploma is \$550,000 less over their lifetime compared to someone who has one (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). Workforce development programming provides an option for those pursuing greater financial stability.

Skill-based learning programs are useful for adults throughout the spectrum of their life, whether they are about to leave high school or an older adult seeking employment re-training services.

The challenge remains even for students with high school diplomas. As higher education costs increase, 28% of young adults are choosing to enter the workforce immediately after high school. Skill-based employment training programs provide a viable option over low wage jobs that do not provide long-term opportunities for growth. Young adults are especially prone to poverty (20% nationally), and programs such as these enable them to become financially stable.

Additionally, older adults are especially influenced by changes in the economy. Unfortunately, as technology changes, careers can become obsolete in the span of just a few years. Older adults often are in need of skills-based training services as they make an unexpected career trajectory changes. It is predicted that 40% of existing careers will disappear or vastly shrink within the next decade (McKinsey, 2020).

While there are certification programs in the community, even the modest amounts these programs cost are untenable for those experiencing poverty. Programs that engage hard to reach populations who are looking to make a long-term commitment to their future are encouraged to apply. United Way seeks to partner with organizations that can provide workforce development training opportunities that lead to careers and contribute to individuals and families long term financial stability.

Goal: Develop opportunities for increased access to skill-based learning programs.

Indicator: Increase our community's access to education and workforce training programs.

COVID-19 Impact

The pandemic has brought attention to many inequities evident in our nation and our local community. As education and learning opportunities became mostly virtual almost overnight, caregivers were suddenly charged with being their children's teachers and keeping them accountable to access their online learning. Many caregivers chose not to return to work or to reduce their hours in an effort to better provide care to their children, leading to further decreased financial stability.

However, many families were in a more precarious position, lacking access to internet/broadband or technology for their children to effectively learn. Many families juggled work and school among multiple household members with limited access to high speed internet or limited computer/technical devices. The local digital divide was evident prior to the pandemic (Ali, 2019).⁸

While NYS plans to ensure universal broadband access in the future and provide high speed internet to low-income families at an affordable cost, we are acutely aware that the barriers to access exist presently. As a result, programs that are applying under the education category are encouraged to demonstrate how they might complement their program with increased access to technology for their participants and their families. Presently, we understand this to be a time sensitive and temporary issue, so we will not be committing limited resources to programs entirely focused on this issue. Rather, we will use this as an opportunity to enhance educational programming while increasing digital access in our community.⁹

Selection Process

The United Way Community Impact Committee and supporting Councils review all applications. Additionally, community leaders have been invited to serve as proposal evaluators. Applications will be scored based on the set criteria (see page 3). The Community Impact Committee reserves the right to take into consideration previous granting history and to request additional information during this process.

⁸ Ali, S. "How Dutchess County is Working to Close the Digital Divide." Poughkeepsie Journal. <https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/story/news/local/2019/11/13/how-dutchess-county-working-close-digital-divide/3946239002/> Retrieved January 22, 2021

⁹ NYS Governor's Office. "Governor Cuomo Announces States Largest Single Investment to Bridge the Digital Divide in New York's History." Accessed 1/22/21