



## **Early Success Grants FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

- **Can one organization submit proposals for multiple programs?**

Yes. Early Success grants will be awarded to programs, rather than to organizations. If a single organization has more than one program that meets the goals of the RFP, multiple proposals will be considered. However, it is unusual for more than one proposal from a single organization to be awarded funding in a single grant process.

- **My program currently receives a United Way Early Success grant expiring in 2023. Should I submit a proposal to this RFP?**

Yes. This is a new RFP and current partners will need to apply to be eligible. This RFP is for programs that provide direct education or childcare or provide access to such programs through tuition stipends/support. Programs should serve children ages birth-kindergarten (approximately 5-years-old.)

- **My program already receives United Way funding through a different funding area. Can I submit a proposal to this RFP as well?**

Yes. Programs are not barred from receiving United Way support through more than one funding area. However, United Way of Olmsted County seeks to address a broad array of community needs across our funding portfolio. Only in rare circumstances would a single program receive multiple awards concurrently.

- **Will you accept joint proposals?**

Yes. United Way will consider joint proposals from multiple agencies when programs are being jointly delivered and where there is a need for shared program planning, administration, and reporting. In practical terms, that requires all organizations to be serving the same individual participants toward a single, shared outcome over a sustained period. If your program contracts with another agency to provide a specific service within your program operations, this likely does not require a joint proposal. Please reach out to United Way staff if you believe your program would be best served by a joint proposal.

- **I represent a faith-based organization / community group / government agency. Is my organization eligible?**

Faith-based organizations are eligible, provided they can demonstrate that no religious participation is required in the program and that there are no discriminatory restrictions on service recipients.

Community organizations without 501c3 status, provided they can document their relationship with a [fiscal sponsor](#) with 501c3 status.

Government agencies/units are eligible.

Individuals, for-profit entities, and 501c4s are **not** eligible to receive United Way funding.

- **How can I make sure my proposal is as strong as possible?**

Please carefully review the eligibility and review criteria outlined in the [Request for Proposals](#). We also make available our [evaluation rubric](#) and a [sample application](#) to help potential applicants understand what a strong proposal could look like. If you have questions about whether a particular proposal idea aligns with these criteria, United Way staff will be happy to consult with you on this RFP and your program plans.

Certain agencies may also request additional support from a Grant Guide. Agencies are eligible to work with a Grant Guide if they have annual revenues under \$1 million and do not employ a full-time grant writer. For full details, visit our website ([Grant Guides: Technical Assistance](#)).

- **How will you evaluate my proposal?**

United Way works with volunteers to review grant proposals based on eligibility, impact, equity, and budget.

Proposals are evaluated according to our [evaluation rubric](#), which explains the review criteria in detail. We strongly encourage you to review the evaluation rubric to better understand what we are looking for.

- **Is there a minimum or maximum award amount? How much funding should I request?**

There is no minimum or maximum award amount. In recent years, the average annual program award has been approximately \$35,000. We expect to distribute approximately \$175,000 annually across 4-6 Early Success grantees.

You should submit a request that reflects your program's needs. United Way strives to award grants at the full amount requested whenever possible.

United Way encourages programs to pursue diverse revenue streams. Program awards typically constitute less than 1/3 of the overall program budget, although this is not always the case.

- **What is an acceptable amount of administrative or “overhead” costs to include in my budget?**

United Way knows that people and operational costs are mission critical. All programs require foundational support for administrative and fundraising functions. We do not use overhead costs to prioritize proposals. Administrative costs, fundraising expenses, and any capacity-building (such as program evaluation systems, equipment, or training) needed to enact or sustain the program should be reflected in the program budget.

- **What can Early Success grant funds be used for?**

Early Success grants are intended to support program operations that provide direct education or childcare or provide access to such programs through tuition stipends or scholarships. Grant funds are not restricted to any particular line item within the program budget and can be used for such expenses as staff salaries, professional development and training, evaluation and data management, program supplies, participant engagement activities, space and technology costs, or other expenses necessary to operate the program as described during the proposal process.

Funds cannot be used for operations outside Olmsted County, for the organization's general operating expenses beyond the program being funded, for lobbying or partisan political activities, or for activities that include theological functions or require religious participation.

- **This is a three-year grant. What happens if my program plans or budget change during the grant period?**

We understand that the best programs adjust in response to changes in community and operational needs. When such changes are warranted, we ask our grantees to share significant program changes with United Way staff. This helps us better understand the needs of your program and the people you serve. Because Early Success grants are not restricted to any particular line item within the program budget, grantees have the flexibility to use funds in the way that best meets their program needs in accordance with the goals and activities outlined in the proposal process.

- **Can I save and edit my progress on the online proposal?**

Yes. Our online [grants portal](#) requires a login to be created, which allows you to create, save, edit, and submit your proposal online. Please note that the grants portal works best in Google Chrome.

- **When can I expect to hear back from you?**

You should expect to receive an automated notification that your proposal has been received shortly after submitting it. If you believe you've successfully submitted your proposal, but you haven't received an acknowledgement, please contact Zeni Aly ([ZeniA@uwolmsted.org](mailto:ZeniA@uwolmsted.org) or 507-287-7877) for assistance.

After submission, you should anticipate hearing about the progress of your proposal by November 4, 2022. We anticipate notifying final awardees around February 24, 2023.