



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Join us in addressing child poverty rates by increasing the earnings of families, promoting activities that integrate financial planning, and incorporating neighborhood-level strategies.



INTRODUCTION

As *Protecting Stark's Future: A Call to Coordinate Child Poverty Strategies* states, transformation is underway in our community. The *Strengthening Stark* report articulated a framework to achieve economic transformation focused on job creation, job preparation, and job access. The report was the catalyst for renewed energy and activity to coordinate economic development efforts.

Over the past several years, the Stark County community aligned our economic development efforts and we are beginning to see improvement. New partnerships have developed, new tools to connect employers and job seekers are being implemented, and we are leveraging technology to drill down into data and target efforts. As we respond to the economic fallout from the novel coronavirus pandemic, these changes will serve us well.

Yet the economy is only one facet of a vibrant community. The social fabric is equally important. Communities are made up of people, and too many people in Stark County are struggling. This is holding us all back.

As we expanded our examination beyond economic factors to include indicators of quality of life, we noticed that every single issue of concern was related to poverty in some way.

Strengthening Stark warned of a future where our community would be “smaller, older, and poorer.” We are calling for the development and implementation of plans to reduce child poverty, which meets the needs of our struggling neighbors while setting Stark up for a brighter future.

When successful, Stark County will become healthier, wealthier, and more equitable.

THE OPPORTUNITY

One way in which the philanthropic sector is made aware of challenges and issues in our community is through discretionary grantmaking. At the same time, it is also important we consider community research so that we identify areas where data clearly tells us more work needs to be done. Child poverty levels are demanding our attention. We cannot tackle this issue alone and we encourage our community to participate in civic engagement in helping to inform the public decisions that directly impact lives.

We recognize that to achieve progress, collaboration is critical. This is evident when examining successful community efforts, including in recent efforts with The Future of Food Security initiative. Organizations in this realm came together leading with the interest of their missions and are now positioned to address these needs better than ever before.

Through this request for proposals (RFP) process, we hope to solicit the **best ideas** from nonprofits, public agencies, and community organizations serving Stark County, and to partner together on imaginative solutions to address child poverty.

While we recognize and will continue to support immediate needs as they relate to child poverty, the focus of this RFP is to specifically address child poverty rates through efforts that increase the earnings of families and promote activities that integrate financial planning, and incorporate neighborhood-level strategies.

All communities in Stark County are invited to participate in this conversation. We invite you to apply.

GRANT APPLICATION DEADLINE

Grant applications must be submitted through Stark Community Foundation's online application system by 11:59 p.m. on April 1, 2021.

PROGRAM GOAL

We are interested in investing in projects at the neighborhood level. We are not looking to fund individual organizations working in isolation.

Desired projects will noticeably strive to improve a specific neighborhood in terms of addressing child poverty. These projects will clearly outline its goals and objectives and demonstrate the ability to increase community impact with a one-year planning grant or an implementation grant.

Projects must produce significant impact in addressing the following areas:

1. increasing the earnings of families
2. promote activities that integrate financial planning

And, all projects must incorporate neighborhood-level strategies.

GRANT CATEGORIES

Planning Grants

One-year planning grants up to a maximum of \$15,000 per project (note: receiving a planning grant is not a guarantee of future funding for an implementation grant). Planning grant funds can be used for staff planning time, consultants, market research – including research that explores replicating a program that has seen success in another geographic area, economic analyses, communication channels, etc.

One-year planning grants will be considered for projects that demonstrate further opportunity, but need additional research and planning to be ready for a more significant investment. Planning processes must reflect collaborative/multi-organization efforts with one lead organization designated to apply for funds.

Implementation Grants

Implementation grants may be one-to-three years with a maximum award of \$100,000 per project. Multi-year implementation grants will be considered for projects that are poised to expand capacity in the community. Implementation projects must reflect collaborative/multi-organization efforts with one lead organization designated to apply for SCF funds.

These grant dollars remain competitive in order to encourage collaboration amongst organizations.



Please note that project proposals may be shared to reflect our value of sharing community knowledge and encourage learning amongst our donors, grantees, future applicants, and the community-at-large.

One-year Planning Grants

Applications will open February 1, 2021. Applications will close at 11:59 p.m. on April 1, 2021.

The application covers the following:

- Project contact person;
- Summary of the lead organization, its purpose, history, and major programs and activities;
- List of partner organizations that will participate in this planning process;
- Project description (including goals, objectives, and outcomes);
- A timeline highlighting monthly project objectives and the overall goal for the project throughout the planning year; and
- Project budget, including other funding sources and how these funds would be used.

Implementation Grants

Applications will open February 1, 2021. Applications will close at 11:59 p.m. on April 1, 2021.

The application covers the following:

- List of project partners and what roles and commitments they bring to the project;
- Key staff qualifications;
- Project contact person;
- Summary of the lead organization, its purpose, history, and major programs and activities;
- Explanation of how the project relates to our interest in addressing child poverty;
- Beginning date of project;
- Length of project;
- Description of community need and benefit;
- Project description (including goals, objectives, and outcomes);
- Areas your project serves and/or takes place in;
- Detailed project budget, including amount received or committed thus far; and
- Financial history.

Note: If requesting multi-year funding, the project budget must include projected revenue and expenses covering all potential grant years, **plus one additional year post funding.**

If you need assistance with the online grant application process, please contact SCF's grants administrator at djohnson@starkcf.org or call 330-454-3426.

PROJECT STRENGTHS

Strong proposals will include:

- a case that an investment at this time will bring a successfully developed project to its next level of impact in addressing child poverty in specific neighborhoods in Stark County;
- clearly presented proposed project and plan for achieving intended results, including specific strategies and objectives;
- ability to use grant funds to leverage additional project funding;
- sustainable funding plans post investment; and
- multi-sector collaboration and multiple stakeholders, while connecting to specific neighborhoods.

BEFORE YOU APPLY:

1. Review reference materials, including [Protecting Stark's Future: A Call to Coordinate Child Poverty Strategies](#).
2. Review or have participated in the overview webinar that outlines highlights of *Protecting Stark's Future: A Call to Coordinate Child Poverty Strategies*. A recording is available at www.starkcf.org/child-poverty.

CONCERNS CENTRAL TO SCF'S EVALUATION OF PROPOSED PROJECTS

Our goal is to invest in strategies that address child poverty rates through efforts that increase the earnings of families and promote activities that integrate financial planning, and incorporate neighborhood-level strategies. Ideally, we are looking for projects with specific measurable outcomes with an approach informed by data.

All proposals must specify which recommendations, as outlined in *Protecting Stark's Future*, the proposal considers and provide detail.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Organizations should coordinate the planning and implementation of well-defined projects and activities toward a comprehensive child poverty reduction plan for Stark County with a specific neighborhood-level approach.
2. Child poverty reduction plans for Stark County should consider addressing immediate needs, look more heavily toward breaking the cycles of poverty by increasing the earnings of families and promoting activities that integrate financial planning, and incorporate neighborhood-level strategies.
3. Efforts to address child poverty must include work with both children and their families, promote household stability, focus on reducing disparities, and recognize that where you live matters.
4. The Stark County community should invest more resources into child poverty reduction and leverage public dollars.
5. Economic development strategies should be targeted to enhance the ability of workers to earn family-sustaining wages regardless of where they live and close gender and race wage gaps.
6. Existing best in class programs and agencies should be supported and strengthened to achieve their impact potential while encouraged to explore new partnerships through collaborative efforts, especially with agencies that are already embedded in communities and neighborhoods.
7. All organizations and institutions that care about the future of Stark County need to identify how they will help support and sustain the implementation of a child poverty reduction plan for our community.

Proposals should consider well-thought-out communication channels to reach intended audiences.

To ensure that available resources are being maximized, funders may also consider investments in additional research activities to determine best practices to meet identified needs.

KEY DATES

February 1, 2021 – Application process opens

April 1, 2021 – Proposal submission deadline

June 2021 – Announcement of grant awards

PROPOSAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Organizations must serve Stark County and must specify a neighborhood focus area.
- Organizations eligible to apply for funding include: tax-exempt private agencies, 501(c)(3) organizations (that are recognized as public charities), and government entities located within Stark County or directly benefiting Stark County.
- Organizations with religious affiliations will be considered for funding only if the project for which they seek support addresses the needs of the wider community without regard to religious beliefs.

PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

Grants will be awarded on a competitive basis. Successful proposals will need to meet the eligibility criteria and provide a clear and compelling narrative about how the proposed project will advance program goals.

Proposals will also be evaluated using the following criteria:

- Clarity of project description and strategies/activities to be implemented to reach desired outcomes
- Relevant and measurable outcomes and indicators of success
- Strategies that are based on well-tested models
- Achievable timeline that corresponds to the key activities
- Organizational capacity to implement project including: staffing, leadership, and operational and fiscal management
- Established track record of work related to proposed project or likelihood of success with a new project
- Ability to leverage financial, human, and technical resources from other partners leading to greater impact
- Ability to contribute successes and lessons learned

REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Applicants will have the opportunity to present and discuss in depth their project with interested funders.

Applicants will be informed of grant decisions in June 2021.

EVALUATION, MONITORING AND GRANTEE LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Grantees will be expected to meet reporting and evaluation requirements as well as be willing and available to talk with staff, donors, and partner funders if requested. Grantees will also be asked to participate in periodic meetings to share information on project successes, challenges, and lessons learned to further the overall program goals of this initiative.

**Thank you for your interest in responding to this RFP
and in joining us in addressing child poverty.**