

Lead Agency RFP Document

Request for Proposals: Community Parenting Support Saturation Pilot

July 8, 2019

Background

In Spring 2017, a small group of foundations that share an interest in family engagement

strategies and early childhood development met to explore the following hypothesis: *Is it possible to significantly and measurably increase the number and percentage of children who successfully arrive at kindergarten fully ready to thrive by more effectively engaging and supporting primary caregivers in their parenting efforts and activities?*

This group's interest focuses narrowly on developing a community's ecosystem of systems, strategies and interventions that effectively strengthen parenting skills in a way that ultimately results in

improved child outcomes. *Note: this group uses the term **parent** in a general sense to capture the role of a child's primary caretakers.*

Through discussion, this group developed a few **core beliefs and values**, including:

- Parents, families and communities want the best for their young children.
- Parenting is challenging.
- Parents, families and communities have a significant impact on their children's health, emotional and behavioral well-being, education and long-term success.
- The best thing we can do for children is to support their parents to become the best parents they can be.
- Recent findings from behavioral and brain science provide important insights into child development.
- We, as a funding community, are interested in supporting parents, families and communities to use this new knowledge.
- We believe in the importance of community leadership, innovation, continuous improvement, collaboration and evaluation.

Based on these core beliefs and values, the group launched a planning process in Summer 2018 with the Ounce of Prevention Fund, Family Focus, Inc. and Logan Square Neighborhood Association to explore the feasibility of **saturating** a community in a way that bolsters families' capacity to maximize their parenting activities, thus impacting the learning potential of their infant, toddler or preschooler. Through this planning process, we learned that this work was not only feasible, it was something that communities across Illinois were interested in pursuing. *See the Appendices for key learnings from this planning process.*



We refer to **saturation** as an array of interventions that collectively address multiple levels of parenting needs and is available to all parents of young children (ages birth to 5) in a community. Such interventions might range from higher touch approaches (e.g., home visiting), to lower touch strategies (e.g., public awareness campaigns).

We are now looking to launch and support a *pilot* initiative to (1) demonstrate what a saturated approach within a community or network of communities might look like and (2) test whether this approach truly leads to measurable changes in parenting beliefs and skills as well as improved child educational outcomes in the form of kindergarten readiness. This funding group is prepared to provide a reasonable level of incremental resources over the next three years to support work in at least two communities (one inside Chicago and one outside) who have prioritized parenting skill-building and have some level of leadership, interventions and possibly even cross-discipline collaborations in place. Communities participating in the pilot will be supported by a coordinating infrastructure to enable the opportunity for cross-community communications, networking and learnings. This RFP seeks to identify the organization that will coordinate and lead the pilot initiatives in each community and oversee the implementation of the saturation activities.

As your organization considers this opportunity, please reflect on whether you have in place or can adopt some of the promising strategies and approaches for coordinating a multi-level and community-wide parenting effort that will saturate the identified communities with parenting supports. The following key concepts were recommended as the result of our planning process:

Leading with an outcomes-driven approach and program evaluation. As holistic kindergarten readiness serves as a long-term goal of this work, it is critical to develop a theory of change that leads to demonstrable changes in kindergarten readiness. While short- and medium-term outcomes may vary by community, an independent mixed-methods evaluation is necessary to measure the impact of parenting supports interventions on children, parents and the community. Evaluation should:

- Assess the utilization of multiple levels of parenting support;
- Assess changes in parenting behaviors;
- Assess changes in the relationships between children and their primary caregivers as a result of interaction with the parenting supports;
- Assess children's social emotional, behavioral and academic functioning; and
- Be an iterative process with frequent sharing of data to inform program development, implementation and quality assurance.

Importance of Networking and Communications. There is great value in piloting an approach that works to saturate multiple communities at once. Beyond creating opportunities for peer-learning and problem-solving, a networked and coordinated effort can bring efficiencies of scale to support individual community-level efforts (e.g., technical assistance, evaluation, fiscal and project management, etc.). Additionally, this pilot has the potential to make a significant contribution to the existing evidence base of parenting supports interventions and initiatives. As such, strong documentation and communications are required to share detailed learnings about the process and outcomes of this work.

Model for Implementation. This work will be set-up for success if it is coordinated by an organization who can champion the vision for this work. As described in the bullet below, roles and responsibilities within the model may be filled internally or via external partners. However, formal evaluation will be conducted by an external, independent partner. Participating communities will be identified through a competitive process (RFP) conducted by the lead organization. Each community

can then identify a multi-tiered parenting support strategy and will select interventions that are appropriate to that unique community.

Roles and Responsibilities to Support Implementation. Roles related to leadership and operations, technical expertise and community expertise are key to the success of this work. It is critical to recognize where core roles and responsibilities fit within the model selected. The roles and responsibilities that may be necessary for this work include:

- Leadership and Operations: project management and direction, communications and marketing, budget and fiscal management, participation in the independent evaluation, cross-community coordination and networking, reporting to funders, etc.
- Technical Expertise: technical assistance, evaluation, knowledge of evidence-based parenting models, ability to conduct and interpret a community needs assessment, ability to issue and evaluate an RFP process to identify communities to participate, etc.
- Expertise of the Community Context: knowledge of community strengths and assets, facilitation of community partnerships, engagement with community leadership, etc.
- Implementation: the capacity to effectively support communities in selecting and implementing various interventions that include multiple levels of parenting supports.

Priority Communities

Two initial communities – one within the city of Chicago and outside of the city – will be selected for participation in the pilot through a competitive process. The communities should have some level of early childhood collaboration in place, though it may not be formalized. Priority will be placed on communities who:

- Have historically experienced challenges around kindergarten readiness and limited access to the resources needed to support kindergarten readiness;
- Have foundational elements of parenting support interventions in place, or have a plan to develop them;
- Have a history or compelling vision for:
 - Promoting parenting on behalf of early childhood development;
 - Establishing partnerships among community providers related to supporting parenting activities;
 - Reaching and engaging parents in difficult circumstances as a strategy for addressing inequities;
 - Supporting parenting outside of typical home visiting and center-based programs; and
 - Investing and partnering in evaluation and continuous quality improvement.

Please note that this RFP is to select a lead organization to guide, shape and coordinate this pilot; we expect the lead organization to subsequently work collaboratively with the group of participating foundations to design and release an RFP, score responses and select the communities for participation.

Request for Proposals

If your organization is interested in pursuing this opportunity, please provide responses to questions below. Please keep a complete set of responses for questions 1– 9 to ten pages in length.

1. **Background and Expertise.** What is your organization’s background, expertise and project leadership experience relevant to interventions designed to increase the skills and confidence of parents of young children, ages birth to 5?
2. **Defining Success.** How will you know if you have successfully saturated a community with an array of interventions in a way that bolsters families’ capacity to maximize their parenting activities, thus impacting the learning potential of their infant, toddler or preschooler? What will be your interim measures of success?
3. **Defining the Approach.** Describe your process for assisting the selected communities in identifying and implementing interventions at the universal, mid-level and the intensive parenting supports levels. Include a description of how you might leverage local and administrative data to help you in the community selection and planning process.
4. **Partnerships.** Describe community and system partnerships – with direct service providers, advocates, education system, health system (e.g. primary care providers, mental health agencies), parent support groups, media, etc. – that you believe will be critical to this work and your vision for their involvement and leadership in a parenting saturation project.
5. **Evaluation.** Discuss your experience with and capacity to participate in an independent evaluation. Include ideas about outcomes from the interventions that you would like to measure at each level (e.g., universal, mid-level and intensive parenting supports).
6. **Communications.** Discuss your initial thoughts on a cross-community communication strategy regarding parenting support interventions for the purposes of (a) cross-community learning and networking, (b) participation in sector-wide conversations around related policies and initiatives and (c) broader thought capital for the field.
7. **Sustainability.** Discuss your initial thoughts on how you would sustain this work in terms of funding (e.g., philanthropy, local investments, public support), policies, partnerships, etc.
8. **Staffing Structure.** Describe the staffing structures that will support this work:
 - a. What will the overall leadership model for this multi-community effort look like?
 - b. What staffing model will you use at your organization to design and implement this work? What staff credentials will be required
9. **Governance Structure.** What representatives do you recommend participate on a governance committee (e.g., from partner organizations, public systems, the community, local parents, elected officials, funders, etc.)?
10. **Proposed budget (as Attachment A).** Propose a three-year budget (up to \$1M/year) for this work that includes any necessary planning and phase-in, training, community and capacity building, public communications, process documentation, implementation, and any other key components of your proposed approach. Please estimate costs to your organization (the lead organization) as 15-20% of the overall budget, with the remainder of the budget supporting implementation of parenting supports interventions by selected community partners.
11. **Letters of Recommendation (as Attachment B).** Provide up to three letters of recommendation from partners with whom you have worked to coordinate strategic initiatives within child and family serving systems.

Timeline

| <i>When</i> | <i>What</i> | <i>Who</i> |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| July 8, 2019 | RFP is issued | Invite organizations |
| September 27, 2019 | Deadline: responses requested | Interested organizations |
| October 11, 2019 | Notification: interviews | Selected candidate(s) |
| October – November 2019 | Interviews conducted | |
| December 2019 | Final candidate(s) decided upon | Selected organizations notified |

Many thanks for considering this opportunity – we are excited to hear from you!

Crown Family Philanthropies

Illinois Children's Healthcare Foundation

J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation

Robert R. McCormick Foundation

Steans Family Foundation