

## Education Strategy

### Request for Proposal

United Way of the Dutchess-Orange Region (UWDOR) issues this Request for Proposal (RFP) 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 support workforce development opportunities for adults. Our goal is to maximize educational outcomes for children and adults living in Dutchess and Orange counties so they can forge a path toward lifelong learning and success.

The goals outlined in this RFP constitute a multi-faceted plan developed in partnership with community leaders representing government, businesses, non-profits, educators, students, parents and the larger community. Through this RFP process, UWDOR seeks partnerships with nonprofit organizations during the period of **July 2025 to June 2026**. Our intent 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 \$20,000, with awards typically about \$10,000).
- **For programs not previously funded**, you may apply for up to \$10,000. *If your program is selected for funding, you may be eligible for additional future funding. This is contingent on your organization remaining in good standing with respect to all United Way contract requirements. Future additional funding is not guaranteed.*

### Key Dates

Activity	Date
RFP Released	February 3, 2025
Questions & Answers	Please submit questions to: <a href="mailto:ci-inbox@uwdor.org">ci-inbox@uwdor.org</a> Responses will be issued within 48 business hours
Technical Guidance “How to Apply”	Video/Written statement
Application Due Date	March 14, 2025 by 5pm
Anticipated Award Notifications	June, 2025

### 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 toward 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:

<b>Annual Goals</b>	<b>Community-Level Outcomes</b>
Increase opportunities for positive youth development and literacy services.	Youth will enroll in programs that develop positive behaviors and/or result in reading 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 and adults. 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(s).**

**Please note that only year round programs (not seasonal) will be considered for community investment.**

### **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.<sup>1</sup> For your convenience, the evaluation tool is as follows:

### **Application Evaluation Scoring Rubric**

United Way evaluates applications based upon the following criteria:

- 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, 37% of children are read to daily, with a significantly lower reading aloud rate among families whose incomes are below 100% of the federal poverty level.<sup>2</sup> 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 performance falls. Reading interventions implemented after the third grade are seldom as effective as those in the early year, according to the Institute for Multi-Sensory Education.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "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/>

<https://www.scholastic.com/readingreport/rise-of-read-aloud.html>

<sup>2</sup> Scholastic. Kid & Family Reading Report: The Rise of Read-Aloud. Accessed December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2-24

<https://www.scholastic.com/readingreport/rise-of-read-aloud.html>

<sup>3</sup> Institute for Multi-Sensory Education, "Enabling the Shift from Learning to Read to Reading to Learn" 2023

Children who encounter additional challenges, such as a language barrier, are especially susceptible to falling behind their classmates with regard to their language comprehension skills. In 2022, just 10% of English as a New Language students read at grade level.<sup>4</sup>

Children need high-quality early education programs in order 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.<sup>5</sup>

Expanded learning opportunities, such as those found in afterschool and extended day programs, demonstrate improved academic achievement. Research completed by the Afterschool Alliance in 2022 suggests that regular participation in high-quality afterschool programs correlates with improvement in test scores, study habits, and school attendance.

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.*<sup>6</sup>

Specifically, the hours between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. when students are out of school and caregivers are not yet home from work are the times when most dangerous and risky behaviors may take place. A positive after school environment for students can have marked effects. Many studies have found that students participating in positive after school programs are less likely to take part in risky behavior than students who were not in these programs. A 2022 report found that parents of children in after school programs found that participation reduced their child's risk of partaking in risky/unhealthy behaviors by 90%.<sup>7</sup> Students enrolled in programs fostering positive youth development are less likely to use 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 protective mental health factors. Studies show that community protective

<sup>4</sup> The Nation's Report Card. National Achievement-Level Results. Retrieved December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading/nation/achievement/?grade=4>

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<sup>6</sup> Strategic Prevention Framework. "Effectiveness of Positive Youth Development." Youth.gov. 2023

<sup>7</sup> Afterschool Alliance. "America After 3pm: Demand Grows, Opportunity Shrinks." 2022. Retrieved December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
<https://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/AA3PM/AA3PM-Healthy-Futures-Report-2022.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Afterschool Alliance. "America After 3pm: Demand Grows, Opportunity Shrinks." 2022. Retrieved December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
<https://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/AA3PM/AA3PM-Healthy-Futures-Report-2022.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Deparle, J. "Disadvantaged Students More Likely to Be Learning Remotely, Study Finds." NY Times. Retrieved December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/24/us/remote-learning-student-income.html>

<sup>9</sup> US Bureau of Labor Statistics. Education Pays, 2022. Retrieved on December 27<sup>th</sup> 2024.  
<https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2023/data-on-display/education-pays.htm>

<sup>10</sup> McKinsey Global Institute. "The Future of Work in America: People and Places, Today and Tomorrow." 2023 Accessed December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
<https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/the-future-of-work-in-america-people-and-places-today-and-tomorrow>

factors such as literacy services, positive youth engagement, and substance abuse prevention programs can decrease adolescent risk behaviors (Afterschool Alliance, 2022). 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 use 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 result in reading 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 58% and only 31% possessing a bachelor's degree regionally (Mid Hudson Community Profiles, 2022). 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, 2022).<sup>9</sup> 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 are an older adult seeking employment retraining 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 particularly 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 unexpected career changes. It is predicted that 40% of existing careers will disappear or vastly shrink within the next decade (McKinsey, 2023).<sup>10</sup>

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

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

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

### **Post 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 becoming 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.

Additionally, it is evident that remote learning loss has led to drastic inequities in learning access. Metro/low income communities have been especially affected. As a result, the education gap continues to widen. According to the NY Times, “About 58 percent of nonwhite students attended schools that relied heavily on remote learning, compared to 36 percent of white students.”<sup>8</sup> Students who learn remotely may have lower rates of participation and higher rates of failure. Out-of-school learning opportunities have never been more critical to provide important social/emotional/academic supports for children. Not only do these programs provide additional, much needed academic support, they offer mentorship and positive youth development experiences that students may not be receiving in their household.

Social/emotional learning supports continue to be effective in helping students cope with the mental health barriers that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. Children’s anxiety and depression rates have significantly increased, making additional supports tremendously important to community wellbeing. According to the U.S. Surgeon General’s warning, “The pandemic’s negative impacts most heavily affected those who were vulnerable to begin with, such as youth with disabilities, racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ youth, low-income youth, youth in rural areas, youth in immigrant households, youth involved with the child welfare or juvenile justice systems, and homeless youth.”<sup>9</sup> Prior to the pandemic suicidal ideation and generalized anxiety had increased over the preceding decade by 40%. Last year, 1 in 6 youth ages 12-17 reported experiencing a major depressive episode, an increase from the previous year, and are the age group most likely to experience symptoms of anxiety and depression (Mental Health America, 2022).<sup>11</sup> Therefore, mental health and social/emotional learning serve as protective factors for youth and should be considered in educational programming.

### **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 to ensure a diverse representation of our community serves to further this crucial process. 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.

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<sup>85</sup>Strategic Prevention Framework. “Effectiveness of Positive Youth Development.” Youth.gov. 2023

<sup>11</sup>Mental Health America. Youth Data 2022. Accessed December 27<sup>th</sup> 2024.  
<https://www.mhanational.org/issues/2022/mental-health-america-youth-data#two>