



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.



BACKGROUND

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 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 COVID-19 pandemic, these changes will serve us well.

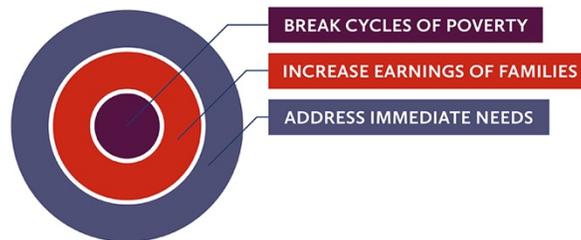
Yet the economy is only one facet of a vibrant community. The social fabric is equally important. Communities are made up of people, and too many people in Stark County are struggling. This is holding us all back.

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.

TARGETS FOR A CHILD POVERTY REDUCTION PLAN



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 for Protecting Stark's Future, now approaching its second year. This is evident when examining successful community efforts, including in our 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 for Protecting Stark's Future, we hope to continue to solicit the **best ideas** from nonprofits, public agencies, and community organizations. We look to partner on imaginative neighborhood-level solutions and strategies to address child poverty.

While we recognize and will continue to support immediate needs as they relate to child poverty, the primary focus of this RFP is to specifically address child poverty rates through efforts that break the cycle of poverty. Strategies include improving educational outcomes and increasing the earnings of families through livable wage jobs, strategies that would improve the economic well-being and resiliency of individuals, families, and neighborhoods.

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 July 1, 2022.

PROGRAM GOAL

We are interested in investing in projects that are 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 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 through livable wage jobs.
2. improving educational outcomes.

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 a full project). Planning grant funds can be used for staff planning time, consultants, pilot projects, 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 programs and activities that have evidence-based strategies designed to address the root causes of child poverty and 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 support 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.

PROJECT STRENGTHS AND 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.

Strong proposals will include:

- Clearly presented proposed project and plan for achieving intended results, including specific strategies and objectives aimed at breaking the cycle of poverty, not solely addressing immediate needs, with relevant and measurable outcomes and indicators of success.
- Strategies that are based on evidence and/or well-tested models.
- Multi-sector collaboration and multiple stakeholders, while connecting to specific neighborhoods.
- For implementation grants, 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.
- Organizational capacity of lead and partners to implement project (staffing, leadership, and operational and fiscal management).
- Evidence of organizations' ability to use grant funds to leverage additional project funding.
- Sustainable funding plans post-investment.
- Ability to contribute successes and lessons learned.

BEFORE YOU APPLY

Review reference materials, including [Protecting Stark's Future: A Call to Coordinate Child Poverty Strategies.](#)

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 improve educational outcomes and incorporate neighborhood-level strategies. Ideally, we are looking for projects with specific measurable outcomes with an approach informed by data.

All proposals must reference the recommendations, as outlined in the *Protecting Stark's Future* report. See recommendation highlights below:

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 improve educational outcomes, including financial literacy, 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

- June 1, 2022 – Application process opens
- July 1, 2022 – Proposal submission deadline
- August 2022 – 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.

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 August 2022.

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.**