Early Childhood Success RFP

Children are born learning. During the first few years of life, brain development is rapid – millions of connections are made in the brain every minute. United Way has long supported early childhood development, knowing that the earliest years are critical building blocks for later success in school and life.

Social, emotional, and cognitive development are inextricably linked. According to Virginia Department of Education, "school readiness" describes the capabilities of children, families, schools, and communities to promote student success in kindergarten and beyond.[1] A "ready child" is prepared socially, emotionally, physically, and intellectually. In addition to early academic skills, young children need to feel secure and valued in relationships, express emotions, show self-control, and cooperate with others. This social-emotional learning (SEL) and the accompanying executive functioning skills that support SEL are foundational to our Early Childhood Success framework.

In recent years, there has been abundant research documenting the significant impact of chronic stress on the developing brain. Young children who are continuously exposed to major adversity or trauma, such as extreme poverty, abuse, or neglect, may have lasting impacts on their development and could lead to physical and mental health issues later in life. In Virginia, one in five children have experienced two or more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).[2] Fortunately, it has also been proven that "providing stable, responsive, nurturing relationships in the earliest years of life can prevent or even reverse the damaging effects of early life stress, with lifelong benefits for learning, behavior, and health."[3] Focusing on parents and caregivers' strengths and fostering their confidence builds engagement and a nurturing environment that promotes resiliency and literacy in young children.

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[1] http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/early_childhood/school_readiness/va_school_readiness_definition.pdf
[2] https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/health-of-women-and-children/measure/ACEs/state/VA?edition-year=2018 . For more information: https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2018/09/17/648710859/childhood-trauma-and-its-lifelong-health-effects-more-prevalent-among-minorities
[3] https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-the-impact-of-early-adversity-on-childrens-development/

Another factor that impacts early childhood development is the financial stability of the household in which they reside. In Virginia, approximately 15% of families with a child under the age of five live in poverty[4]. In addition to chronic stress and a number of other factors, this correlation is related to the cost of high-quality child care. In 2015, the average monthly cost of child care for a family with one infant and one preschool aged child in Virginia ranged from $1,204 (home-based care) to $1,459 (licensed child care center).[5] For ALICE families, this child care cost for two children represents a quarter or more of their budget – the largest expense. This can lead families to choose substandard care to meet the budget or force a parent to not work, both options working against the upward mobility of the family. Providing evidence-based child development opportunities to children living in families who are financially unstable, especially those that allow parents to work or increase education, is vital for promoting young children's future success.

Early learning is important for the development of the whole child, whether in traditional preschool settings or in the home. Teaching early literacy skills helps children understand the world around them. Through learning about letters, words, and books, children begin to connect printed words, talking, and real-life experiences. This enables a child to successfully communicate, which is critical for school success.[6] Programs that use evidence-based or evidence-informed practices have been shown to increase first grade word reading, phonemic awareness, and overall future academic success.

Developmental, learning, and social-emotional delays are more prevalent than some may realize as one in six children are affected[7]. Unfortunately, since many of these delays are subtle, 70% of children who would benefit from extra support or services during early childhood are not identified until they are in school. Intervention prior to kindergarten can lead to better outcomes, including participation in mainstream classrooms, increased school success, and higher likelihood of graduating from high school, living independently, and holding jobs. Screening young children is an efficient and effective way for professionals to gauge children's progress, celebrating milestones with caregivers and determining when extra support is needed.

Program Investments Strategies

This funding opportunity aims to invest in programs that support the success of children ages prenatal to five by:

1. Improving the quality of and access to early childhood development programs and services (Early Education).

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[4] ACS (2016). Poverty status in the last 12 months of families.
[5] ALICE Virginia (2017): http://frontroyalunitedway.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/VA-ALICE-Report-2017.pdf
[6] http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/early_childhood/school_readiness/va_school_readiness_definition.pdf
[7] https://agesandstages.com/research-results/why-screening-matters/

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2. Strengthening the confidence and knowledge of caregivers to promote child development and wellbeing (Parent and Caregiver Support).

3. Ensuring that all children are screened and supported with achieving developmentally appropriate milestones and growth using the online Ages & Stages Questionnaire® (Developmental Screenings).

Embedded within these, we encourage a focus on literacy, social-emotional learning and/or addressing systems issues that prevent or limit early childhood success.

Depending on the fit for your organization's programs, applicants may choose to apply under a single strategy or multiple strategies.

IMPORTANT NOTE: All grantees in Early Childhood will be required to participate in Strategy 3: Developmental Screenings. Any applicant to strategy 1 (Early Education) and/or strategy 2 (Parent and Caregiver Support) will automatically be prompted to complete application questions for strategy 3 (Developmental Screenings) since participation is required. Participation involves screening participants with the Ages & Stages Questionnaire® (ASQ®) online (versions ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE) through United Way's ASQ® Enterprise Account or HUB (see descriptions below). Alternatively, some applicants may choose to only apply for strategy 3. United Way will invest in the materials, equipment, and training necessary to ensure success across all partners participating in this strategy. This requirement to adopt the ASQ® online is part of early childhood systems change.

- ***About the ASQ®*** - This tool is a reliable and accurate developmental and social-emotional early childhood screening. When completed online, the scoring is automated for accuracy and efficiency. Professionals view and interpret the results for follow-up action if necessary, which may include identifying areas for targeted instruction in a child or referring a child for early intervention services. More information can be found at: https://agesandstages.com

- ***Online System Options:*** There are two connection options for fulfilling strategy 3 (Developmental Screenings):

  1. ***United Way's ASQ® Enterprise:*** This option is a shared, online system for tracking *ASQ®* data across multiple organizations and programs. United Way of South Hampton Roads will act as the Enterprise System Administrator and will have access to child-level *ASQ®* results for the programs that choose to connect through the United Way's *ASQ®* Enterprise. United Way will execute data sharing agreements with each participating program and will assume responsibility for keeping data private. This option is both HIPPA and FERPA compliant. This Enterprise Account allows for United Way to pay for screenings in bulk, lowering the total costs of achieving this strategy.

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2. ***United Way's ASQ® HUB:*** United Way will connect to organizations that choose to have their own ASQ® Enterprise account (for multi-site programs) or ASQ® Pro account (for single site programs) by using an ASQ® HUB account. The annual cost of having a separate ASQ® Enterprise account ($500) or ASQ® Pro account ($150) would be the responsibility of each organization choosing this option. United Way will hold the ASQ® HUB account and will only be able to access de-identified, aggregate reports for the ASQ® Enterprise accounts connected to it. There are additional costs associated with this option, such as the one-time connection fee ($500) per Enterprise Account, the HUB annual fee, and additional fees per screen above the bulk rate that may be subtracted from organizations' gross annual awards who choose this option (in order to offset extra costs).

Eligibility

✓ Strategies 1 & 2 are only open to United Way certified agencies.

✓ Strategy 3 is open to all providers operating programs that use or could use the ASQ screening tool.

✓ Applicants must serve the population focus described above, including both geographic service area and income.

Grantee Expectations

Early Childhood Success Grantee Engagement

Grantees agree to participate in convenings and activities that explore best practices, facilitate learning, solve problems, and establish shared measures. This could also include professional development for direct service staff and supervisors provided through United Way on relevant early childhood topics. For this RFP, we anticipate that engagement and training will primarily focus on topics related to the ASQ®.

Unite Us Option

To make measurable progress across the investments in Early Childhood Success, Youth Success, and Thriving Families RFPs, every organization will have to play their part. Families typically have multiple pillars of the Bridge to Self-Sufficiency on which they need to focus, often requiring support from multiple organizations. Organizations applying for funding through United Way have the opportunity to opt-in to using the Unite Us software (see the "Our Tools" section from the Introduction, p. 4). The cost of user licenses and training will be covered by United Way during the grant period if the organization elects to become a Unite Us partner. Organizations that are interested in opting-in are encouraged to reach out for technical assistance

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so that the United Way staff can help determine organizational fit. The opportunity to use Unite Us will be ongoing.

Performance Accountability

United Way will be using the Results-based Accountability (RBA) approach to measure the contributions of our work across all investments. Grantees will be responsible for bi-annual (twice per year) quantitative and qualitative reporting.

RBA is made up of two interrelated parts:

> <u>Population Accountability</u> is about the well-being of <u>whole populations</u>.
> [For neighborhoods, communities, cities, counties, states, nations]
>
> <u>Performance Accountability</u> is about the well-being of <u>client populations</u>.
> [For programs, agencies, and service systems]

Performance accountability measures are broken down into four quadrants (although example measures for each quadrant are given below, other measures may be chosen based on the program's activities and expected results):

	Quantity	Quality
Effort	**How much did we do?** # of activities (by type) # of people served	**How well did we do it?** Response time (of screenings and referrals) Participant/parent satisfaction % of children screened
Effect	**Is anyone better off?**	
	# of children ready for kindergarten # of parents/caregivers who remain or become employed due to access to childcare	% of children ready for kindergarten % of parents/caregivers who remain or become employed due to access to childcare

Campaign Participation

Grantees are expected to run a United Way campaign at their organization, although there is no expectation for the amount that needs to be raised or the percent of individual participation.

Application and Review Process

Blackbaud Grantmaking Application Portal

United Way has transitioned to a new grant management software, Blackbaud Grantmaking. All applications will be submitted electronically through the online application portal. Please follow instructions for logging in and completing the application, which can be referenced in the recorded training that will be available on the [Agency Resources webpage](#) by January 3, 2019.

Application

In order to be considered for the Early Childhood Success funding, your organization will complete the application specific to this RFP. The application link will be available on the [Agency Resources webpage](#). To help with planning, please see a list of questions for the Early Childhood Success Application on pages 9-13.

<u>Multiple Programs</u>

It is likely that some organizations will have multiple programs applying for United Way funding through the Early Childhood Success, Youth Success, and Thriving Families RFPs. We typically recommend that organizations complete separate applications for each program within the RFP that best fits that program. However, depending on how the organization's programs are defined and structured, in some instances it may be best to write a single RFP application for multiple programs. Technical assistance for support in determining the best way to apply for multiple programs is encouraged; see technical assistance options below.

<u>Collaborative Applications</u>

Collaboration between multiple organizations when responding to United Way RFPs is also likely for some projects or initiatives. Organizations submitting a collaborative application for the Early Childhood Success RFP must choose a lead organization that is a United Way Certified Agency to submit the application and be the fiscal agent if the grant is awarded. Roles, responsibilities, and budgets of the collaborating organizations will need to be articulated clearly in the application. Other organizations collaborating with the lead agency do not need to be United Way Certified Agencies. We strongly recommend signing up for a technical assistance appointment if submitting a collaborative application.

Submission Deadline & Technical Assistance

All Early Childhood Success applications need to be submitted electronically by **February 22, 2019** (see important dates outlined below). The application will open on or before **January 7, 2019**.

Technical assistance will be provided by United Way staff through the day prior to the application deadline (**February 21**) in an effort to prevent last minute issues when United Way staff may not be available. Technical assistance will be done by email, phone, and appointment, depending on the type and complexity of the assistance requested. Please find contact information and a link for scheduling an appointment on our Agency Resources webpage.

Early Childhood Success RFP	
Application Opens	January 7
Technical Assistance Ends	February 21
Submission Deadline	February 22
Agency Interviews	March 22

Review Process

Each year, community volunteers play a leadership role in the review process for United Way certification and funding. This year, funding review panels of approximately 9-12 volunteers each will be split according to the RFPs in order to keep similar applications together. A portion of the panel volunteers will have subject matter expertise in the strategies of the RFP they are reviewing.

Panel volunteers will read all applications assigned to their panel in full, so there is no need to repeat responses in the application; you may refer to an answer on another question if applicable. Agency representatives for programs applying under the Early Childhood Success RFP will then meet the Funding Review Panel during the in-person Agency Interviews at United Way on **March 22, 2019**. These short interviews will be discussion-based and will allow for the Panelists to ask specific questions to the agency representatives based on their proposals. Each applicant will be assigned an interview time shortly after the submission deadline.

Panel volunteers will score both the applications and interviews based on selection criteria outlined below. Panelists will then deliberate and make recommendations to United Way's Community Investments Committee, which make final recommendations to the United Way Board of Directors for approval.

Awards will be made no later than May 31, 2019, with the grant period starting July 1, 2019.

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Selection Criteria

Both the application and interviews will be evaluated based on strength across the selection criteria.

1. <u>Clarity and Completion</u>: All questions on the program application are answered adequately and accurately. The content and presentation of information in the application and interview is easily understood and provides a level of depth that is sufficient for the reviewer to understand the program's purpose, goals, approaches, and results.

2. <u>Program Purpose & Implementation</u>: Clear program goals that align with organizational mission. Thoroughly describes strategic alignment to chosen United Way strategy. Core activities are detailed and appropriate based on program goals and results, and other evidence that indicates program is implemented with attention to detail, results, and participant experience.

3. <u>Program Budget</u>: Budget is complete, accurate, and clearly depicts the income supporting the program and the expenses required to operate it. Expenses are realistic and reasonable to sufficiently perform the activities described in the application and there are no unexplained concerns based on the information provided. The budget and funding strategy have enough diversity and/or security to assure the organization has the financial means to continue sustaining the program.

4. <u>Collaboration</u>: A commitment to authentic collaboration is visible within organizational values, existing plans and activities, and through successful relationships with other nonprofits, educational and health institutions, businesses, and government. Results of collaborative efforts are demonstrable. Depending on the depth and intensity, they will vary from coordination of referrals and information sharing to systems change.

5. <u>Culture of Learning</u>: A strong commitment to continuous learning and improvement as evidenced through the ability to adapt based on issues identified through data monitoring and feedback loops, and the promotion of a culture that shares information openly, tests new ideas, and learns from mistakes in order improve results and participant experience.

6. <u>Capacity to Track & Use Data</u>: Utilization of effective measurement tools, ability to collect, organize, and use both formal and informal sources of data, and the existence of effective technology infrastructure and management systems that are systematically used to track, analyze, and report on robust program and participant data.

7. <u>Informed by Evidence</u>: Relevant, recent research from multiple sources inform the program's existence, design, and implementation practices, including best practices that are evidence-based or evidence-informed and are customized for the local context to ensure that services have the greatest impact potential.

8. <u>Program Results</u>: Reported results are appropriately defined and measured in the context of the program's goals and intensity. Strong evidence demonstrates that participants are better off and/or that design and implementation are high-quality and effective.

9. <u>Participant Voice, Choice, & Dignity</u>: Participants are directly involved in feedback and decision making. Program design elements are strength-based, inclusive, individualized, and informed by participants. High levels of trust exist between participants and staff/volunteers.

10. <u>Targeting Program Resources</u>: Agency demonstrates the ability and willingness to effectively target existing program resources to neighborhoods and/or populations with high levels of risk or vulnerability, and/or to focus program's resources on a specific demographic to maximize impact potential. Directing resources requires disciplined attention to addressing barriers that prevent participation and other equity-related issues.

Early Childhood Success Application Questions

The following list reflects the questions for the Early Childhood Success Application. As we build out the applications in the online portal, there may be minor adjustments to these questions.

Questions for Strategies 1 & 2

<u>Program Overview</u>

1. Program Name

2. Provide an executive summary for your program. [This may be used for promotional purposes.] (Word count = 250)

3. Define your program's target or service population using the lists below.

4. Which strategy is your program applying under as your primary strategy? [The primary strategy chosen should be the MOST aligned with this program's core activities. Note: Since Developmental Screenings is a required strategy for organizations applying to the strategy 1 or 2 in the Early Childhood Success RFP, it is not included in the primary strategy options. See Agency Resource webpage if you are only applying for Developmental Screenings.]

    a. Improving the quality of and access to early childhood development programs and services (Early Education).
    b. Strengthening the confidence and knowledge of caregivers to promote child development and wellbeing (Parent and Caregiver Support).

5. Is there any other strategy (or strategies) that could be considered this program's secondary strategy (or strategies)? [The secondary strategies chosen should be VERY closely aligned with this program's core activities. Do not choose strategies that are aligned with other programs at your organization, only those that align with the program applying for funding.]

Program Narrative and Strategic Alignment

6. Describe the program for which you are seeking funding. You may choose to include your theory of change, the goals and objectives, core activities, implementation details such as how staff and/or volunteers are utilized and trained, and any other relevant details. Be sure to include how this program aligns with your chosen primary strategy. [Use this section to cover what is not prompted in other questions.]

7. If this is a collaborative proposal, identify if this is a new partnership and discuss the reasons why you are working collaboratively. Identify your key partners and describe the roles and responsibilities of each partner. If this is not a collaborative proposal, discuss what you have learned about collaboration in the context of your program or organization. Provide at least one lesson learned with an accompanying example from the past two years. [See page 6 of the RFP on collaborative applications.]

8. Describe the program's target or service population, based on verifiable data that your organization collects. Describe unique challenges in working with this population and how your organization has addressed these challenges in the past. Include the average number of participants served by this program annually.

9. Discuss whether membership or participant fees are used for your programs or services. What fee structure is used? What specific criteria or qualifications are used to assess eligibility for your programs and services? What accommodations are made if individuals or families are unable to pay the fee?

10. What challenges does your program face in providing access to quality early childhood development services? If possible, provide examples such as issues of access or ability to provide quality programming. If this is a new program, what challenges do you foresee in implementing your proposed approach and how do you plan to combat those challenges?

Data-Driven Decision Making

11. Describe how your program (or the approach/technique(s) used in your program) is either evidence-based or evidence-informed. Examples of research and/or best practices, and how they relate to program implementation are highly encouraged. [See RFP Glossary for definition of evidence-based and evidence-informed.]

12. Describe a recent situation (within the past three years) in which data was used to inform a change in programming with the goal of improving results. The description could include: the problem that was identified, key data points that led to a decision, the change that was made, and/or comparison data from before and after the change was made.

Measuring Impact

13. What are your program's key results (i.e. key outcomes or performance measures)? Include specific measurements and targets for your program. Describe the successes and

challenges in achieving these key results. What evidence do you have that demonstrates whether program participants are better off?

14. Discuss the types of data collection methods you use to monitor program quality and measure results. [Methods could include: surveys, assessments, interviews, observations, tracking program activities or attendance, etc.]

15. Upload important measurement tools used to track results (e.g. surveys, assessments, etc.).

Budget

16. Total program budget: ___(number)

17. Total requested amount: ____(number)

18. Upload program budget using template with line item explanations

19. Budget narrative (overall) - Provide any additional explanation or clarification about your program budget, such as any major changes projected for next fiscal year or anticipated increases or decreases in expenses or revenue for the upcoming year. If collaborating on this proposal, be sure to explain any complexities that may not be clear to the reviewers within the budget template, such as how funds would be distributed to sub-grantees.

Questions for Strategy 3 (Developmental Screenings)

1. Are you currently administering the Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) in your organization?
   a. No
   b. Yes, using paper-based screenings
   c. Yes, online using an ASQ Pro Account
   d. Yes, online using an ASQ Enterprise Account
   e. Yes, online using an ASQ Hub Account

2. If currently using the ASQ, for how many years has it been administered?

3. If currently using the ASQ, which types of screenings are you using?
   a. ASQ-3
   b. ASQ:SE-2
   c. Both the ASQ-3 and ASQ:SE-2

Based on your current use of ASQ and your responses above, consider the resources you will need in order to administer ASQ screenings online to all children (ages 0-5) served by your organization beginning July 1, 2019.

4. Which online systems option is your organization planning to choose?

[Please reference the Early Childhood Success RFP "Online System Options" on pages 3-4 when selecting an option for your organization.]
   a. Join United Way's ASQ Enterprise
   b. Have your own ASQ Enterprise or Pro Account connected to the United Way's Hub Account

5. What training needs do you foresee as critical for successful implementation of the ASQ within your organization and the broader RFP strategy?

6. Provide an estimate for the number of screenings your organization will need over the course of one year based on the number of children you serve and your program design. [Depending on a child's age, it is recommended that each child be screened between one and three times per year. Screening frequency is typically highest for the youngest children.]

7. How many kits does your organization need to administer the screenings? Please explain. [Kits provide a full set of materials needed for administering the ASQ. It is recommended that each program site have one kit. Kits are available in multiple languages, so indicate whether you will need additional kits in Spanish, Vietnamese, French, or Arabic.]

8. Please explain what equipment needs your organization has, including whether access to the internet exists in the locations where screenings are administered and an exact number for any specific equipment requested. [Electronics devices such as laptops or tablets are necessary to administer the screenings online. If your organization has limited or no access to this type of equipment, consider how many you would need across all program sites to enable teachers or providers to have sufficient access. We expect organizations to put in place a secure checkout/sharing process for utilizing equipment efficiently in order to be diligent with resources.]

Questions for Unite Us Opt-in Opportunity

1. What partners do you work with most frequently when sending or accepting referrals for services? List 3 to 5 partners.
2. Which best describes your organization?

   a. My organization already has Unite Us licensed users and we don't need any more licenses at this time.
   b. My organization already has Unite Us users and wants to add additional licenses.
   c. My organization does not currently use Unite Us and we want to become a partner.
   d. My organization does not currently use Unite Us and we are not interested at this time.

     e. My organization does not currently use Unite Us and we are unsure about whether to become a partner at this time.

3. If selecting to add additional users or to become a Unite Us partner for the first time, who should we contact to follow up? Provide name, title, and email for one or more contacts.

IMPORTANT REMINDER:

Please refer to the RFP Glossary & Appendices document on the [Agency Resources webpage](#) for definitions of key terms and the Appendices referenced in this document. Information for requesting technical assistance is also available on this page.