



## **FIRST THOUSAND DAYS GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

### **What is the background and focus of the First Thousand Days grant program?**

More than ever before, early childhood education is understood as an essential element for our children, families, and communities to thrive. Yet, the United States currently invests about one ninth as much per child per year on care and education in the first five years of life as in each of the next 13.<sup>1</sup> The St. Croix Valley Foundation's First Thousand Days Fund was established by a generous donor in 2022 to support the physical, mental, emotional, and social development of children during the critical "first thousand days of life" (roughly the first three years). In 2023, the earnings from this endowed fund will be used to launch The First Thousand Days grant program, funding organizations and programs that prepare children to succeed when they enter school.

This new grant program acknowledges that there are several domains of early childhood development including: Physical, Cognitive, Communicative, Social and Emotional, and Adaptive<sup>2</sup>.

- Physical: The development of the senses as well as gross and fine motor skills.
- Cognitive: The ability to mentally process information.
- Communicative: The ability to comprehend, utilize, and manipulate language.
- Socioemotional: "The process of developing the self-awareness, self-control, and interpersonal skills that are vital for school, work, and life success."<sup>3</sup>
- Adaptive: Self-care (eating, drinking, getting dressed, etc.).

The program also recognizes that "there is considerable overlap across these domains and competencies"<sup>4</sup> and therefore intends to fund programs and organizations that foster children's development and learning in multiple domains. Examples of programs and organizations likely to be a good fit for this grant opportunity include:

- Training, enrichment, workshops and seminars for parents/caregivers, teachers, and other adults working with young children.
- Efforts to increase knowledge of child/brain development and the lasting impact of high-quality early childhood education.
- Programming that supports communication and deepening relationships between caregivers and young children.

### **How may the grant funding be used?**

The grant request must be focused on at least one of the above domains of early childhood development; the funding may be used to develop, enhance, or expand programs/services or organizational capacity. Eligible expenses may include staffing, training, services and programs, and operational costs related to enhancing or adding capacity or infrastructure to organizations, programs, or services.

### **What is the grant range?**

Grants will range from a minimum of \$1,000 (expanding current services and programs) to a maximum of \$25,000 (development and deployment of new services and programs).

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<sup>1</sup> RAPID Survey Blog, Aaron Sojourner, PhD, May 24, 2023. Found here: <https://rapidsurveyproject.com/our-research/young-children-families-and-our-economy-gain-when-we-invest-in-early-childhood>

<sup>2</sup> Expert Community Care Management, <https://www.eccm.org/>

<sup>3</sup> Committee for Children, <https://www.cfchildren.org/what-is-social-emotional-learning/>

<sup>4</sup> National Association for the Education of Young Children, <https://www.naeyc.org/>

### What organizations are eligible to apply for funding?

- Applicant must provide programming/services within the six county SCVF service area (Chisago and Washington counties in MN; Burnett, Polk, St. Croix, and Pierce counties in WI).
- Applicant must be a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization; a governmental entity, tribal entity, educational or religious organization defined as tax exempt; or partner with an eligible fiscal agent.

### What types of requests are ineligible?

- Requests from individuals (individuals may not apply for funding/scholarships to attend training, etc.).
- Requests for programs/initiatives serving older children (ages three and up).
- Requests from for-profit businesses, including for-profit childcare facilities.

### What activities are required of grant recipients?

- Grant recipients are asked to accept and comply with the stated terms and conditions of the grant.
- In lieu of a final report, grant recipients are asked to share the details of the grant activities and outcomes via a convening. This convening (SCVF's program formally known as *Conversations of the Valley*) is intended to raise awareness of the need, present compelling evidence and best practices, raise awareness of the recipient organizations, and connect the organizations with other individuals and nonprofits.

### What criteria are used to assess applications?

- Early childhood education is at the core of the mission of the applicant organization.
- The organization demonstrates a long-term commitment to early childhood education.
- The organization is equipped to deliver early childhood programming.
- There is a strong rationale for the proposed programming; the applicant referenced evidence/research that informs and supports the work.
- The scope of the proposed work is appropriate, and the details are thorough.
- The applicant presents a compelling case for how the proposed activities will benefit participants and produce intended outcomes.

### How does an organization apply?

- To access the application visit: [SCVF's Online Application Portal](#)
- Tips:
  - For editing ease, the narrative section *maximum character count* is substantial; however, the review panel appreciates **concise** applications.
  - Applicants may begin the application process, save their work, and login to their account later to complete and submit the application.
  - Following submission, the applicant may download a copy of the completed application.

### What is the application timeline?

- Application Live: **October 9, 2023**
- Application Due: **November 17, 2023** (11:59 pm)
- Notifications: Mid-December
- Grant funds must be expended within one year from the date of the award.

### Who should we contact with additional questions?

- All questions related to the First Thousand Days grant program should be directed to [Angie Pilgrim](#), Director of Community Impact, at [apilgrim@scvfoundation.org](mailto:apilgrim@scvfoundation.org) or 715-386-9490.