



## **Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation (WRF)**

### ***Request for Proposal* for Community Based Organizations to Support Families in Pulaski County**

Collaboratively, the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation (WRF), the Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS), and Public Knowledge (PK) (the sponsor groups) are seeking proposals from community groups in Pulaski County to serve parents, children, and youth who might be investigated and possibly separated through the child welfare system without needed supports. Funding will be provided to the community groups directly by the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, and both PK and DCFS will participate in making funding decisions and providing input into the work of the community groups.

**Background:** In the Fall of 2021, the Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Children and Family Services, contracted with PK to provide intensive technical support to stabilize Pulaski County and to begin transforming the existing child welfare system from one which admits an increasingly high number of children into foster care, often without needed supportive services, to a system that provides community-based supports to help families remain safely together.

During the past two years, the number of children in foster care in Pulaski County has nearly doubled and the turnover of staff working with families has exceeded 100 percent. In particular, the number of Black children in foster care is double the overall representation of Black children in the general Pulaski County population. Additionally, services and supports to Spanish-speaking families is a particular need in the Southwest portion of the county.

As part of PK's contract, we are assisting the state and county in re-configuring the "front end" of the child welfare system in Pulaski County, i.e., making reports of child abuse and neglect, responding to those reports, and linking families with appropriate supports and services. State and federal laws require certain professionals who come into contact with children to report suspected child



abuse and neglect to the public child protection agency for investigation (DCFS). Currently, many reports are made where abuse and neglect are not the primary issues but, rather, out of concern for a family and child's well-being, come into the reporting hotline often because reporters do not know of or have access to other means of helping a family get what it needs. For example, some reports concern children coming to school dirty or improperly clothed for the weather, older children in the family tending to younger siblings while a parent works, or unclean/cramped living quarters, etc. Parents who have either had direct experience with the child welfare system, and/or are intimately familiar with the needs of families in their communities, have spoken clearly about the effects of poverty on the well-being of children, youth, and families in their communities. They have identified poverty as a major contributor to child welfare involvement and also for youth finding themselves in challenging situations that threaten their long-term health and wellness. They have identified needs for community groups, particularly those that can directly engage with families and youth, to provide needed supports within the context of families' culture and backgrounds in preventative ways.

While a family may need assistance, there has not always been willful neglect or abuse of the child when DCFS becomes involved. In many situations, reports to the hotline are not based on actual concerns of actual immediate danger, abuse, or willful neglect, but instead are calls seeking assistance and resources for families in need of basic requirements, such as food and shelter. This RFP seeks to identify community-based groups who can provide an alternate option and resources for helping families in such circumstances in their own communities (to reduce unqualified reporting to the child abuse and neglect hotline).

Overall, the sponsor groups in this RFP are interested in contracting with up to three community-based entities to do the following:

1. Identify a support or supports within the community that could help to strengthen the ability of families within the community to remain safely together and have their essential needs met, based on input about needs from the community itself;



2. Develop (if not already in place), enhance (if already in place), and/or partner with other groups to make more readily accessible the service or supports needed;
3. Initiate outreach to families within the community to make them aware of the supports available and to facilitate the opportunities for engagement; and
4. Put into place or strengthen advocacy efforts on behalf of vulnerable children and families in support of community-based resources.

**Characteristics of Entities to be Funded:** The RFP seeks community-based entities that represent any of the following: faith-based and church-related groups/organizations, school and education-based programs that serve entire families, community and civic-oriented groups, health-care providers, and other interested non-governmental organizations. Organizations must be nonprofits with 501(c)3 designations or provide a 501(c)3 fiscal agent.

Given the overrepresentation of Black children in foster care in Pulaski County, and a growing Latino population, we are seeking groups that are known and trusted by communities of color. This RFP is prioritizing North Little Rock as one of the areas in need of this support due to its history of being disadvantaged and underserved.

**Activities to be Carried Out:** At a minimum, community groups selected must be prepared to carry out a set of specific activities within the served community, including the following:

- Help create a Pulaski County network of family supports that meets periodically to share information on needs, services/supports, and progress in supporting families. Funded groups will be asked to be members of a community-based implementation team in support of helping families thrive and stay together.
- Ensure that supports developed/enhanced reflect the needs of the community as identified by parents and youth from the communities, ideally including those with lived experience in the child welfare system.



- Provide outreach to the served community, including families and other organizations, particularly those who employ staff who are legally mandated to report suspected child abuse and neglect to DCFS, letting them know about the availability and types of supports that families might receive through the selected community group.
- *Advocate* on behalf of families in need of support without which could lead to more intensive and intrusive interventions, such as through the child welfare system.

**Examples of Activities to be Funded:** Community groups submitting proposals should determine what supports would be most helpful to families in their communities. However, we offer here some suggestions about possible activities to consider:

- Peer support in areas such as parenting, teen parenting, fatherhood, substance misuse, immigration concerns, educational advocacy/support, and others;
- Information and referral for services and supports;
- Community events that bring families together for mutual support and strengthening community connections;
- Assistance in applying for state, local and federal economic benefits;
- Mentoring for children, youth and parents;
- Spanish-language supports for families; and
- Community advocacy for supportive services to families.



**Amount of Funding for the Contracts:** The sponsor groups will identify up to three community groups to receive funding for a two-year period of time. Funds will be distributed in April 2023. The anticipated funding will be as follows:

- \$40,000 each to the selected community groups for the activities identified above in the first year, and
- \$40,000 each to the selected community groups for the activities identified above in the second year.
  - From the awarded funds, selected community groups should account for a modest stipend for parent and youth participation in their quarterly and/or community meetings. The budget that is submitted with the proposal should show and account for stipends to those with lived expertise in the child welfare system.
- The sponsor groups may be able to support the selected community groups with meeting space for quarterly meetings.
- The sponsor groups may be able to provide marketing and communications support to help publicize community-based implementation initiatives.

If there are not sufficient responses to this RFP to identify three community groups with the capacity to carry out the described activities, the sponsor groups will determine if a smaller number of community groups can be selected and adjust the funding accordingly.

**Reporting:** The Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation will ask the selected community groups to participate in a mid-point review and provide a final report. These activities can be completed by submitting written information or by participating in an in-person or virtual interview.

**Submission Deadline:** By **February 17, 2023** (by midnight ET), submit a written or video proposal identifying the community group, contact information, and the detailed information in response to this request. Submissions, including a cover



letter, should be sent to: Christie Matlock, [cmatlock@pubknow.com](mailto:cmatlock@pubknow.com). If submissions need to be made via Dropbox, due to file size, please share the link to the uploaded information by the deadline.

**Respond to the RFP:** Interested community groups should use the following guidelines to submit a response to this RFP:

**Written Submissions** should include the following:

- Cover letter that includes:
  - Name and purpose of the organization
  - Address, phone number, website
  - Main point-of-contact
  - Abstract of proposal
  - Partners for the work associated with the RFP, if any
- Description of the intent of the community group, if funded, to provide for the activities described in this RFP, and other activities it plans to provide.
- Description of the process by which the group will identify and implement needed supports that it intends to develop/enhance and the group's ability to implement.
- Description of advocacy efforts and approaches needed in support of family strengthening interventions in the community.
- Budget
- A W9 or 990 Form
- Proof of 501(c)3 status. If a community group is not a 501(c)3, they will need to have a fiscal agent sponsor them.

**Video Submissions** should include the following recorded and written information:

- Recorded content with video and audio that describes the intent of the group, if funded, to provide for the activities described in this RFP, and other activities it plans to provide. Please send standard, easily accessible video file types.
- Recorded content with video and audio that describes the process by which the group will identify and implement needed supports that it intends to



develop/enhance and the group's ability to implement. Please send standard, easily accessible video file types.

- Recorded content with video and audio that describes strategies around needed advocacy efforts and approaches in support of family strengthening interventions in the community.
- Written cover letter that includes:
  - Name and purpose of the organization
  - Address, phone number, website
  - Main point-of-contact
  - Abstract of proposal
  - Partners for the work associated with the RFP, if any
- Written budget
- Written proof of 501(c)3 status. If a community group is not a 501(c)3, they will need to have a fiscal agent sponsor them.
- A W9 or 990 Form

**Q&A Informational Call:** The sponsor groups hold a Q&A informational call for interested community groups. The informational call will be held on **January 18, 2023, 3pm ET**. If interested in attending, please contact Christie Matlock, [cmatlock@pubknow.com](mailto:cmatlock@pubknow.com) and/or 667-262-9430.