

United Way of Steele County

Request for Proposal (RFP) – Youth Opportunity

Funding Period: January 1, 2027 – December 31, 2028

Overview

United Way of Steele County (UWSC) mission is to unite our communities to address critical needs, foster equity, and empower individuals for lasting change. Our vision is that Steele County will be a thriving community where every individual is empowered to succeed, supported by a culture of engagement, collaboration, equity, and compassion.

UWSC is seeking proposals from nonprofit organizations that serve Steele County and are committed to improving youth opportunity outcomes. This competitive grant opportunity supports initiatives that align with our 2025 Measurable Outcomes in the Youth Community impact area.

In Steele County, 24% of households are classified as ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed), and an additional 8% live below the federal poverty line. United Way of Steele County prioritizes funding initiatives that directly serve these populations, recognizing their unique challenges in accessing high-quality early childhood education programs, affordable quality childcare, mentorship programs, academic support, and career planning resources.

Impact Area: Youth Opportunity

Target Outcomes:

1. (Focus: Early Childhood) Child Development and Care Improvement: Increase the number of children enrolled in high-quality early childhood education programs and enhance access to affordable quality childcare.

2. (Focus: Middle School) Mentorship Programs: Expand the number of youths participating in mentorship and leadership development programs.
3. (Focus: High School) Youth Success and Employment Enhancement: Increase high school graduation rates and the percentage of youth engaged in employment or vocational training or post-secondary programs.

Funding Details

Grant Term: 2 years (2027–2028)

Grant Type: Competitive

Reporting: Requirements are tiered based on grant size:

- Small grants (<\$10,000): Annual report
- Medium grants (\$10,000–\$50,000): Mid-year check-in + annual report
- Large grants (>\$50,000): Semi-annual reports

Voluntary check-ins are available for new grantees or those facing challenges.

Funding Amount: Based on proposal strength and available funds

Collaboration: The United Way of Steele County encourages proposals that demonstrate meaningful collaboration among organizations, agencies, or community partners. Proposals that reflect a coordinated approach to addressing community needs—through shared resources, joint programming, or strategic partnerships—will be given elevated consideration during the review process.

Note: Submission does not guarantee funding. UWSC reserves the right to request additional information. Both formal and informal collaborations are welcome.

Applicants should describe partner roles, shared goals, joint activities or referrals, and how collaboration enhances outcomes. Brief examples or stories are encouraged.

Eligibility Criteria

- Must be a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization or have a fiscal sponsor. Other exemptions considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Must serve residents of Steele County
- Must align with one or more of the stated outcomes in the Youth Opportunity impact area
- Must demonstrate capacity to track and report measurable outcomes

Proposal Requirements

Applicants must submit a complete proposal including:

1. Cover Letter
 - Brief summary of the organization and proposed project
2. Program Narrative
 - Description of the program and how it addresses the stated outcomes
 - Target population and geographic area served
 - Evidence of need and anticipated community impact
 - Description of collaborative partnerships (if applicable)
 - Implementation timeline
3. Measurable Outcomes & Evaluation Plan
 - Specific outcomes the program will achieve
 - Metrics and methods for tracking progress
 - Plan for data collection and quarterly reporting
4. Organizational Capacity
 - Brief history and mission of the organization
 - Key staff and qualifications
 - Past success in similar initiatives
5. Budget and Budget Narrative
 - Detailed line-item budget for the 2-year period
 - Explanation of how funds will be used

- Other sources of funding (secured or pending)

6. Required Attachments

- IRS 501(c)(3) determination letter, organizations may also utilize a fiscal agent for this purpose. Other exceptions are considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Most recent financial statements audited or IRS Form 990
- Board of Directors list
- Letters of support or Memoranda of Understanding (if applicable)

Submission Instructions:

Deadline: March 16, 2026

Submission Method: www.unitedwaysteelecounty.org/UWSC_RFP

- A downloadable template and checklist will be provided to ensure consistency and completeness.

Questions: Contact Neil Lyons at 507-455-1180 or

neil.lyons@unitedwaysteelecounty.org

Reporting

In addition to progress and financial reports as outlined, funded organizations will have the opportunity to participate in verbal report presentations to the Community Investments Committee to share updates on proposed program. These conversations will be partnership-based, focusing on collaborative learning and continuous improvement.

Proposal Format Options:

Applicants must complete the online application. Videos may be utilized to supplement the written proposal to help convey program impact and community engagement; however, are optional.

Timeline and Registration

A detailed timeline document outlining key dates for registration, proposal submission, review, award announcements, and reporting deadlines will be provided with the RFP materials.

Measurable Outcomes Requirement

All proposals must clearly define measurable outcomes aligned with the Youth Opportunity impact area. Organizations must demonstrate capacity to collect, analyze, and report data related to these outcomes.

Outreach & Support:

UWSC will promote the RFP through its website, newsletters, social media, and grant directories such as the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits. Calendar invites and automated reminders will be provided. Office hours will be available during the submission window.

Support and Technical Assistance

UWSC will offer informational webinars to guide applicants through the RFP process. Technical assistance and mentorship opportunities will be available to support proposal development and program implementation.