

SchoolSmartKC – COVID-19 Funding Program

Supporting Early Learners and Reading

Background

SchoolSmartKC (SSKC) is a 501(c)3 non-profit that supports students, families, educators, and school and district/charter leaders in Kansas City, Missouri towards educational excellence. Specifically, SSKC's mission is to support students and schools towards closing the achievement gaps between Kansas City and the state of Missouri and nationally. Our specific target area is comprised of nearly 30,000 students across 70 school buildings, of which 85%+ are free/reduced lunch (low-income), 50% are Black, 25% are Latino/Hispanic, 20% are English Language Learner), and 12% are students with disabilities.

Supporting Schools and Students During and After COVID-19

SSKC has been committed to supporting local students and schools through and after the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically focusing on funding that addresses student learning and student needs. In the Spring of 2019, SSKC funded significant grants to schools and nonprofits towards a variety of "COVID relief" needs, including but not limited to technology (e.g., Wifi and devices), social-emotional and behavior support, community support, and the like. Additionally, in the Fall of 2019, SSKC coordinated funding from an array of funders for technology needs, with a consortium of funders who support Kansas City.

Supporting Early Learners and Reading

As we look forward to a hopeful return to in-person learning, SSKC has spent the past six months engaging with school leaders, community stakeholders, administrators, and school staff to understand their current needs that may require funding. A critical area that arose during these discussions was our need to focus-in on and support our early learners – grades PK – 1st, as many of these students have had inconsistent, unusual, or unreliable distance learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been particularly challenging for our youngest learners.

The most critical need that has arisen from the conversations with school leaders, and due to the age and educational development of our youngest learners, is support in reading development as the foundational building block for all future academic success. SSKC thus seeks responses from qualified consultants, nonprofits, and other agencies that can support these early grade learners, focused on literacy support.

Scope of Work

SSKC seeks responses to support school-based interventions to address reading gaps in Kansas City's youngest students. Specifically, the selected consultant/organization will need to:

1. Provide a research-based reading development or intervention program that is built upon the five components of reading as determined by the National Reading Panel: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary.
2. Support schools through staffing (volunteer or paid tutors), programming, curriculum, and progress monitoring based on identified students/grades needed for intervention.
 - a. The intervention program utilized by the selected consultant/organization should have a research-based assessment/progress monitoring tool readily available and in use, if the school does not already have one in place.
 - b. Intervention times (including frequency and duration) will be determined by the school/classroom teacher in partnership with tutors and be least disruptive to the schools' instructional schedule, whether remote, hybrid, or fully in person.
 - c. Individuals working with students will pass a background check and received training to meet the needs of school or district-based volunteer protocols.
3. The deliverable for this work should include, at a minimum:
 - a. 1:1 or small group (2-3 students/group) intervention times with Kdg. up to 3rd grade students at a minimum of 3x/week for at least 20-30 minutes.
 - b. A determination of students' baseline performance in literacy and evidence of progress towards established end-of-grade literacy goals for all supported students.
 - c. Literacy support to classroom teachers' instruction and co-training with those teachers on the schools' language arts curriculum resource and strategies.

Timeline

SSKC anticipates that this work with schools will begin prior to Summer 2021 and will continue over the summer and potentially into the Fall of 2021, pending progress and ability to drive in-person work in a COVID environment. Flexibility of staff and teams will be critical, as we are still in the COVID world and ability to be virtual or in-person (or hybrid) could always change.

Responses

Qualified consultants, nonprofits, and other agencies should submit responses to Angelique Nedved, Director of School Quality, at anedved@schoolsmartkc.org no later than April 19, 2021. Additionally, if there are questions regarding this RFP, please submit those no later than April 12, 2021, to the same address. References should be provided in the response that specifically show previous work in and expertise with reading programs and partnerships with schools. The total response should include a cost estimate and not exceed 5 pages.