

SIF NOFA OVERVIEW WEBINAR #3 – GRANTEE PERSPECTIVE

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Summary of Discussion by

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United Way for Southeastern Michigan

The **United Way for Southeastern Michigan (UWSEM)** brings together public, private and nonprofit partners across the Detroit region to tackle problems collaboratively. They along with their partners have over 300 program sites that serve the community every day.

Our SIF Project

Our SIF project has built on the expertise of our partnering organizations to facilitate the development of a portfolio of kindergarten readiness initiatives in 10 communities in the Metro Detroit area, which includes Wayne, Oakland, and Maycomb counties. We have received federal wards totaling \$6 million over five years.

What We've Gained

- **Next-level capacity and recognition.** Applying for a SIF project gave our project a “funding kick” and has served as a “seal of approval” to a variety of stakeholders.
- **Personalized, ongoing support.** Our SIF program officer has offered invaluable support in managing our SIF program, from fulfilling compliance requirements to developing all aspects of our program through regular check-in calls and other monitoring activities.
- **Networking.** Once awarded, we became a part of the informal SIF network, connecting with SIF staff and grantees at SIF convenings and other events.

Practical Considerations

1. **The nature of the SIF-intermediary relationship can be intense.** The SIF, and by extension the Corporation for National and Community Service, will work closely with you and will monitor your progress in every area of your project every step of the way. With such a large grant from a federal entity comes

unprecedented transparency and reporting to ensure the proper use of public funds.

2. **The evaluation will be rigorous.** While evaluation of your programs may so far have been an afterthought or less, evaluation is a key component of your entire SIF project and should be an ongoing concern when you determine your budgets. Its cost can easily be in the millions of dollars depending on the evaluation. For example, about 15% of UWSEM's entire budget (federal award + UWSEM match + subgrantee match) goes towards evaluation activities.
3. **Match dollar requirements will create internal funding competition.** The 100% intermediary *and* subgrantee matches can easily dwarf past match requirements you have dealt with, and depending on your funding sources can cause challenges in balancing SIF funding needs with those of your and your subgrantees' other programs. This can mean sacrificing additional funding for non-SIF programs to ensure that funders are willing to invest enough in your SIF project. Additionally, your subgrantees may be seeking match funding from the same sources.
4. **Staffing needs will be more than you expect.** Managing your program, among other things, will involve managing several individual subgrantee organizations, who may be using different benchmarks and staffing models, and will require unique implementation considerations. Basically, this cannot be a one-person job. At the outset of UWSEM's SIF project in 2011, SIF activities were done by existing staff. A fulltime SIF manager was hired in 2012, and currently the UWSEM SIF program is staffed by five fulltime positions: the SIF manager, two specialists, and two associates.
5. **Communicating about your SIF project can be a challenge.** The SIF is tricky to talk about, which means that deliberate and effective communications activities will be needed to give funders, local legislators, and even internal/in-network staff a strong enough understanding of the program in order to effectively contribute.