

<p><i>United Way for Southeastern Michigan</i></p> <p><i>660 Woodward, Suite 300</i></p> <p><i>Detroit, Michigan</i></p>	<p><b>Application ID: 11SI127084</b></p>
<p><b>Please find below comments from five Program Reviewers and two Evaluation Reviewers of your application. Reviewers were not required to reach consensus regarding their comments for this review; therefore, there may be disparate views between Reviewers on the quality of your proposal.</b></p>	
<p><b>PROGRAM REVIEW</b></p>	
<p><b>I. Program Reviewer 1</b></p>	
<p><b>COMMENTS:</b> The applicant outlines a range of statistical information in the target communities, which highlight the need for the proposed project. The region's poverty rate (16.7%) and the percentage of children living in poverty (24.1%) are both in excess of the national rates and justify the need for the proposed program. The applicant outlines a reasonable strategy for a competitive subgranting process that includes criteria and categories for selection and a targeted number of grants with commensurate funding ranges (e.g. they intend to make approximately 15-20 subgrants averaging \$150,000 to \$200,000 annually). The applicant has adequately demonstrated the effectiveness of their past investment approaches in the early childhood field. For example, with a group of partners, they supported the expansion and replication of the Early Learning Communities program, which began in 2008 with three nonprofit organizations and has expanded to nine organizations "delivering services at twenty-nine locations, serving 4,800 caregivers and benefitting an estimated 12,000 children."</p>	
<p><b>II. Program Reviewer 2</b></p>	
<p><b>COMMENTS:</b> The applicant has persuasive evidence, outlined through statistics, of the need in the identified communities. As stated explicitly, the overall community cited has a poverty rate of 16.7% and a child poverty rate of 24.1%, both higher than the national average. The applicant then draws the data down more specifically, for example, looking at the Pontiac community, where the poverty rate is 45.5% for children. The applicant does not provide a compelling plan for technical assistance as outlined. In the bottom paragraph, the applicant outlines two forms of capacity building and technical assistance activities: network-wide assistance and individual based. In each example, the grantee only provides minimal information on how these two areas will be carried out. The applicant has a lengthy record of administering federal grants, including HHS, DOJ, DOE and USBA. This record of administering grants and receiving an unqualified A-133 audit in its most recent audit shows that it meets and exceeds financial expectations.</p>	
<p><b>III. Program Reviewer 3</b></p>	
<p><b>COMMENTS:</b> The proposal adequately spells out a theory of change that intervention (to build skills, knowledge and values among caregivers of young children) will have a positive impact on graduation and employment rates among these children when they mature. However, the proposal does not provide clear data to support the theory of change. The proposal identified good quality measures that will be covered in their longitudinal study. These measures focus on the caregivers, and will "measure the extent to which the intervention with parents/caregivers improves knowledge and practice of both positive caregiver/child relationships and school readiness practices, as well as children's development of skills that contribute to school readiness." The</p>	

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<p>proposal does not provide real baseline data on caregiver capacity, even from existing hub programs. Given that these programs are already in place for two years, the applicant does not provide additional baseline data. The applicant clearly seems to already know the community of potential grantees reasonably well, since they are already working with nine Early Learning Community hubs.</p> <p>While the proposal identifies 3 types of possible subgrantees, the strength of existing relationships with the nine Early Learning Community hubs may indicate a bias in their favor, whereas the SIF NOFO specifically states that subgrantees should not be pre-selected. The proposal reports that they have now positively affected 12,000 children in their target area, through caregivers. This is 37.5% of their 32,000 target. The applicant appears to have experience with subgranting and Technical Assistance. They have an annual grant budget of \$31.1M, and, since 2008, have provided multi-year grants to over 100 “outcomes-driven non-profit organizations.” The proposed costs seem reasonable. There is ample budget provided for Evaluation and Technical Assistance. For 15-20 subgrantees, the average is \$20K per subgrantee. This is consistent with the proposal’s emphasis on both increasing the volume of activity (through the subgrants) and increasing the quality of evidence (through the evaluation and technical assistance).</p>	
<p><b>IV. Program Reviewer 4</b></p> <p><b>COMMENTS:</b> The applicant cites national evidence that children born in poverty enter school less ready to learn and therefore more likely to underachieve, although it states that “Currently there is no community-level data to assess school readiness rates.” The applicant provided a clear plan for a competitive subgrant process with a series of stages including workshops to orient potential subgrantees to the requirements and expectations of participation. The applicant laid out a plan to provide technical assistance and support for the subgrantee portfolio both by helping individual subgrantees and by building network capacity.</p> <p>While the applicant cited the breadth of its investments, the application was not clear on how this investment approach had so far delivered impact in the community. The application shows a range of non-Federal resources to support the program, including the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, the Max M. and Marjorie S. Fisher Foundation, the Kresge Foundation and the Skillman Foundation, and states that it will aim to raise more matching than Federal funds.</p>	
<p><b>V. Program Reviewer 5</b></p> <p><b>COMMENTS:</b> The targeted area faces economic and education challenges. It has a population of approximately 3.9 million residents; the region has a poverty rate of 16.7% compared to national rate of 14.3%, with 24.1% of children under 18 living in poverty compared to national rate of 20% (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2009). The unemployment rates in the three counties are well in excess of the national rate of 9.3%, at 16.2%, 12.9% and 15.9%, respectively (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009). Other current and relevant statistical data from the Center for Educational Performance and Information and from John Hopkins University underscore the acute educational needs of the proposed target areas. The applicant has 107.5 FTE staff members divided among its various departments. Many of these staff members appear to be well qualified. However, except for the Director of the Early Childhood Initiative, few of the ones listed appear to be fully engaged in this initiative. In fact, it appears that The Fund will be primarily managed by one new position, Manager of Early Childhood Initiatives, who will be responsible for providing oversight and support to all subgrantees and contractors. This staffing pattern seems inadequate for the scope of the application. Although some of their funding demonstrates diverse, non-Federal resources for</p>	

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<p>program implementation and sustainability sources of commitments or cash on hand at time of application include such as General Motors Foundation (\$425,000), the Kellogg Foundation (\$750,000), and the Fisher Foundation (\$50,000); these only total \$1.2 Million. The sources of the remaining match funds are not identified, making it difficult to determine if the applicant possesses the needed diverse, non-Federal resources necessary for program implementation and sustainability.</p>	
<p><b>EVALUATION REVIEW</b></p>	
<p><b>VI. Evaluation Reviewer 1</b></p> <p><b>COMMENTS:</b> Overall, the applicant demonstrates a clear plan to evaluate impact to achieve at least moderate levels of evidence, based on a measurable goal of early youth development. Subgrantees would also be provided with significant support to evaluate program impact. The applicant would partner with outside experts to gather data and evaluate impact (ArdenCause, Wayne State University, UCLA, and High/Scope Educational Research Foundation). The applicant has partnered with these or similar organizations in the past to develop program and impact evaluations. Subgrantees would receive “evaluation technical assistance to increase the strength of evidence of program effectiveness” as well as assistance with data collection. However, the nature of the assistance and the standards for evidence are largely unspecified. The applicant cites a four-year longitudinal study to evaluate programs that were aimed at school readiness. The first two years of evaluations show preliminary evidence of impact. Future studies are intended to measure the impact of outcomes, and may achieve at least moderate levels of evidence. The applicant cites another program evaluation that is still on the early stages of evaluation (School Performance), which could yield at least moderate evidence in the future. These evaluations show significant promise, but are not yet completed. The applicant presents a clear plan to conduct regional impact evaluation to measure outcomes, based on the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment measure. This measure will track outcomes, and could be used to generate moderate levels of evidence.</p>	
<p><b>VII. Evaluation Reviewer 2</b></p> <p><b>COMMENTS:</b> The proposal by the United Way for Southeastern Michigan (UWSEM) has a number of strengths in the evaluation area. The applicant has been working intensively in the field of early childhood education, well-documents the need for highly focused services in this area for the Detroit region, and has a clear sense of the indicators of the attainment of its overarching goal. The applicant is linked to a rich network of expertise in early childhood education and, in its proposal, documents what appears to be a fine track record in growing, replicating and expanding successful programs. The applicant has significant experience in commissioning evaluations from diverse institutions and well-managing the process. However, the elaborate structure that the applicant has conceived for the Greater Detroit Early Childhood Innovation Fund with multiple organizations and consultants to provide varied forms of assistance to subgrantees, may bring with it challenges to the functioning of the subgrantees and their ability to successfully navigate the system and provide optimal services. The organizational complexity subgrantees will</p>	

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<p>have to juggle in implementing their programs which may well cause difficulties for them in developing clear and effective evaluation strategies. According to the proposal, the applicant will have ArdentCause provide data collection services to grantees, Grassroots Solutions provide capacity building in community engagement, and evaluation assistance through Associate Professor Ty Partridge of Wayne State University. Given the complex configuration of the program delivery system, the proposal underestimates the time commitment required by staff and consultants to successfully execute their functions, particularly those focusing on evaluation. The evaluation assistance support to the subgrantees that Professor Partridge is asked to provide, given his existing teaching and administrative responsibilities, appears unrealistic. The proposal, calls for evaluations to be conducted at several levels: the subgrantee program/organizational level, the network level and the regional level. What would be crucial in these evaluations, and is not spelled out in the proposal, is the capturing of the impact of diverse mixes of services and interventions on outcomes. The proposal does not set forth any presentation of the strategies these levels of evaluation could pursue through a comparative effectiveness approach, looking at the impact/effectiveness of different services and supports in working with children, parents, extended families, and neighbors in different ethnic and racial communities.</p>	