



## **Request for Proposals: Funder Affinity Group Facilitation**

### **Overview**

ACT for Alexandria, in partnership with the Frank and Betty Wright Foundation, seeks to engage foundations and donors to create an affinity group committed to the success of every child in Alexandria. This project will define the scope and focus of the affinity group, the structure, the learning agenda and other elements that support funder learning and collaboration.

This funder affinity group is a related effort to the Youth Support Network that has been created in partnership with ACT, the Frank and Betty Wright Foundation, the City of Alexandria, Alexandria Public Schools and nonprofit youth program providers. The purpose of the Youth Support Network is to create a high-quality system of supports for young people in the City of Alexandria and nurture a more equitable future for all children and youth.

The development of the funder affinity group will be preceded by a landscape scan that documents who is investing in youth programs and services and at what scale, the potential opportunities for alignment or coordinated funding, and the gaps in funding that may inhibit the accessibility, quality and development of youth programming. The Youth Support Network is also updating the 2017 Community Report on out-of-school-time offerings; the report will outline existing programs, program locations, funding sources, families' assessments of programming, and data detailing the number of students enrolled in programs.

The funder affinity group facilitation is one of two projects that will explore how the philanthropic community might support youth programming in Alexandria. The second project is a philanthropic landscape scan which will begin before affinity group facilitation. One objective of the landscape scan is to inform the planning and design of the affinity group.

We are embarking on this work with the following assumptions:

- We are working towards systems change
- We will bring a racial equity and justice lens
- We will center family and youth voice in our research and discussions
- We will generate data and information that will be valuable to other funders and nonprofits in our community and thus we will share what we learn broadly
- We will focus on shared learning as we engage peer funders, providers and other partners
- Local, regional and national funders will find value in the effort, including but not limited to learning about opportunities in Alexandria, and learning from another funder-collaborative model for increased strategic and equitable impact
- While we will strive to find points of alignment and opportunity for collaboration, laying the groundwork for a potential funder collaborative in the future

## **Project Scope**

The scope of this project is to provide necessary backbone and coordination support as we focus on the preliminary stages of the Affinity Group, including recommendations for its design and structure. This role has the potential to evolve into a long-term consulting role, once the ongoing coordination and staffing needs for the Affinity Group are determined after the group's design and structure are established.

The Affinity Group Facilitation Consultant will build off the philanthropic landscape scan and a list of foundations and individuals to include in the Affinity Group planning. The consultant will conduct preliminary conversations with funders, providers and other partners about the proposed Affinity Group to identify and prioritize issues related to purpose, structure and a collective learning agenda. Through these conversations, we seek to better understanding the stakeholders' funding priorities, concerns, vision, etc. In addition, these conversations will build trust across and among potential Affinity Group members.

The consultant will also explore ways to structure an Affinity Group that proactively addresses the power dynamic that exists between funders and providers. We will consider how the Affinity Group might relate to the Youth Support Network Steering Committee and the role that providers, City officials and others might play in the Affinity Group.

Based on these insights, ACT and the consultant will host a learning and brainstorming "session" with funders. The session may be one day or span multiple days. The learning session may include site visits, conversations with youth and families, and conversations with providers, in addition to reviewing the research from the landscape analysis. This session will utilize principles of design thinking to surface insights and new understanding and offer creative ways to garner insights and information through exercises that include interviews, observation and co-creation. When engaging program providers, the consultant will make sure that there is bidirectional benefit – the nonprofit participants have something to gain from the experience as well as the participating funders.

An implementation plan for the Affinity Group will be developed, including a plan for on-going facilitation and support.

### **Deliverables:**

- Baseline Learning Agenda
- Facilitated Learning Session
- Recommendations for next steps regarding the Affinity Group, including:
  - Potential structure
  - Learning agenda
  - Timeline/meeting cadence

### **Roles:**

The project will be overseen by ACT's President & CEO, Heather Peeler. Ms. Peeler will play an active role in relationship building, attending meetings and conducting personal outreach as needed. ACT's Chief Development Officer, Tricia Ritchie, and Chief Program Officer, Brandi Yee, will support the work as needed. We will also ensure alignment and coordination with the Youth Support Network Manager.

ACT's President & CEO and the project consultants will meet regularly with the Frank and Betty Wright Foundation to update the Foundation on progress, secure input on issues/decisions, etc.

Representatives from the Frank and Betty Wright Foundation may be asked to engage peers and attend meetings as needed.

**Requirements:**

The consultant will be a skilled facilitator with experience planning and implementing collaboratives and affinity groups. They will have a strong working knowledge of philanthropy, preferably the philanthropic community in the Greater Washington region. The consultant will also share ACT's [commitment to racial equity](#) and have the expertise and experience to bring a racial equity analysis to this project.

**Project budget:**

\$38,400

**Project Timeline**

January 1 – June 31, 2022

Proposals are due to Heather Peeler at [heather.peeler@actforalexandria.org](mailto:heather.peeler@actforalexandria.org) by 5pm Friday, October 22, 2021. Proposals can include a combined response to the landscape scan RFP in addition to this RFP for the funder affinity group. Additional information can be found on our [website](#).

For additional information about ACT for Alexandria and the Youth Support Network, please visit [www.actforalexandria.org](http://www.actforalexandria.org)