

FINAL DRAFT

Project Name*

Name of Program/Project/Initiative.

Bedtime in a Box Partnership with Belle Grove Judy Center and Ferndale Early Education Center

Amount Requested*

Grants awarded will range from \$25,000 to \$50,000

\$31,200

Boxes (340) = \$30,600

Packing & Distribution = \$600 (\$100 miles, \$500 staff time)

Impact Area*

Select the area(s) of need you will be addressing through this program/project initiative, as it pertains to promoting healthy, thriving, and successful children in Anne Arundel County:

Child care

Food insecurity

Transportation

Youth activities/job training/mentoring

Education

Access to physical, mental and behavioral health treatment, including substance abuse and prevention

Geographic Area(s)*

Select the geographic area(s) that will be served by this program/project/initiative:

Countywide

North County

South County

East County

West County

Annapolis Only

FINAL DRAFT

Purpose of Grant*

Please describe in detail the program/project/initiative for which you are seeking funding. Explain how you identified the need for this program/project/initiative, who you will serve, the impact you expect to have on the people served, your organization's expertise in this impact area, any partner organizations that will be involved in providing this service, and any other information you feel is vital to our understanding of your request. Please avoid using industry-specific abbreviations or acronyms. **5,000 characters left of 5,000 (includes spaces) 4,064**

In Anne Arundel County, 52% of children are not demonstrating readiness for school at the start of Kindergarten (Maryland State Department of Education Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, 2019). In Brooklyn Park and Ferndale, this percentage is even higher; 66% of students at Ferndale Early Education Center (Ferndale) and 56% at Belle Grove Elementary (Brooklyn Park) are not adequately prepared for school when they enter Kindergarten. While there is no singular cause for this learning gap, parents face a number of contributing factors including scarcity of quality, affordable Pre-K programming, a lack of parenting practices to support their child's healthy growth, and limited financial and physical resources for learning at home.

More than half of families enrolled in these two schools are considered low-income based on their Free And Reduced Meal (FARMS) eligibility, a widely accepted indicator of low-income status. In addition to struggling when they enter school, children from low-income households are more likely to need interventions or additional supports to be successful in school than their mid- to high-income peers (Maryland State Department of Education Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, 2019). Achieving reading proficiency by 3rd Grade is crucial to the future success of a student's academic career, as students who fail to master reading by the end of 3rd Grade are four times more likely to drop out of school before earning a high school diploma (Campaign for Grade Level Reading, 2012).

We see bedtime as a perfect opportunity to make a positive impact on this learning gap. Bedtime is an often-overlooked time of day for many families, but provides a powerful opportunity for young children to learn and grow. Bedtime can be so much more than just a time to get ready for sleep, it's a time to talk, laugh, play, learn, and imagine. It's a time to discuss the day and share stories. A recent study demonstrated that children in households with regular and comprehensive bedtime routines were more prepared for school than their peers without bedtime routines (BioMedCentral Public Health, 2018).

Bedtime in a Box is a creative but simple intervention to activate families to spend more time reading at home each night through a consistent and healthy bedtime routine. Each Box contains five age-appropriate books; bath wash, a towel, and bath toys; a toothbrush and toothpaste; pajamas; a stuffed animal; an alarm clock; a Teach My Learning Kit; and a kid-friendly routine log. Together, these items encourage parents and caregivers to participate in a nightly routine that goes beyond just reading. In order to ensure that children have age-appropriate materials for their bedtime routine, we've developed four different level Boxes to meet the needs of a growing child: Infant, Toddler, Preschool, and Kindergarten. The products and books differ slightly in each Box to match the age and development of the child. We include books with bright, colorful, interesting illustrations that encourage discussions about the characters and story. These books also help parents who struggle to read themselves, allowing them to interact with their child through conversations about the pictures and interactive components. Every item in a Box is brand-new; we do not accept or utilize used items. We learned early on from families that new items provide an important sense of self-worth and encourage greater use. This was a value proposition we created with families to show them that they deserve the best

FINAL DRAFT

With a \$31,200 grant from the Fund for Anne Arundel, we could serve 340 low-income Anne Arundel County families through partnerships with the Belle Grove Judy Center and Ferndale Early Education Center. 340 Boxes equates to 1,700 books and 3,740 additional bedtime items with an estimated retail value of \$51,000. By giving parents and caregivers, especially those in low-income households, the tools to nurture their children, we can develop habits that will last a lifetime, improve early literacy outcomes, and support the link between home and school.

Mission Fit*

Please describe how this program/project/initiative fits within the overall mission of your organization. Is this a new initiative or ongoing? If new, why is it being launched now? If ongoing, how long has the program/project/initiative been underway and how has it been funded previously?

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Bedtime in a Box is a program of Improving Education. Improving Education's mission is to harness the creative power of individuals to develop, test, and implement innovative and efficient solutions to complex problems in early childhood literacy. Our organization has three core programs:

- an 11-school Networked Improvement Community,
- our Teacher Innovation Fellowship,
- and Bedtime in a Box.

Through our work in schools, we saw first hand that too many Pre-K and Kindergarten students did not have resources for at-home learning and were consistently entering school unprepared to learn in a classroom setting. Bedtime in a Box was created to reverse these trends and help low-income families quickly and easily establish bedtime routines to improve nightly reading, build connections within families, and create healthy, thriving children who are ready for school.

One night, while reading to his son at bedtime, our founder Jarrod Bolte had the idea of helping families with young children read more at home through an easily accessible bedtime routine. By providing families with the materials, tools, and training they need to enact a comprehensive bedtime routine, we could empower parents and caregivers to support the health and educational development of their children prior to entering school. He spoke with parents and caregivers about what barriers they faced in implementing a healthy and consistent bedtime routine for their child. After conducting further research and testing bags and boxes of items in households, he developed prototypes that ultimately evolved into Bedtime in a Box.

We completed our first distribution of Boxes at the Arundel Judy Center in Baltimore City in December of 2015. Since then, we have distributed over 7,300 Boxes to children and families around the country and we are on track to distribute our 8,500th Box by June 30, 2020. 7,300 Boxes include 36,500 books and 80,300 additional bedtime supplies with a retail value of more than \$1,050,000. We are well-established in both Baltimore City and on Maryland's lower Eastern Shore, with a wide variety of partners in both areas. Over the past year, we've developed new partnerships with the Anne Arundel County Judy Centers and the Anne Arundel County Library System, directing our focus to serving low-income families in Anne Arundel County.

During the 2019-20 School year, thanks to a grant from the Chaney Enterprises Foundation, we were able to distribute 100 Boxes to the Judy Centers at Belle Grove and Hilltop Elementary Schools. Unfortunately, at the end of the 2019-20 school year, the Hilltop Judy Center will be closing, and its

FINAL DRAFT

Pre-K population will be rezoned to Ferndale Early Education Center. We are working in close partnership with the AAA Reading Teacher at the Ferndale Early Education Center in order to provide a continuum of care to families who received services through the Hilltop Judy Center. Attached you will find letters of support from Belle Grove Judy Center, the Ferndale Early Education Center, and the Maryland State Department of Education. A grant from the Fund for Anne Arundel would help us further solidify these relationships with Anne Arundel County Judy Centers and Title I Elementary Schools.

Our Bedtime in a Box program is funded by foundation and corporate grants (45%), individual donations (35%), and Box sales (20%). Every Box we distribute has an approximate retail value of \$150. Over the past four years, we've developed relationships with wholesale vendors to reduce our cost per Box to \$90. We ensure that our Boxes are provided to low-income families free of charge by securing funding for distributions on behalf of our partners, or in tandem with our partners. Through grant opportunities such as this one, we can provide fully-funded Boxes to programs directly supporting low-income families in Anne Arundel County.

Who and where served?*

Please list/describe the areas of Anne Arundel County served, and approximately how many people will be served by this program/initiative.

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Our Boxes were designed to be integrated into existing structures or programs working with children and families. They can be used as a stand-alone intervention, or they can be used as a supplement to programs enhancing both parent education and reinforcing the importance of at-home learning. We've distributed Boxes at parent-child playgroups, to entire classes of students in schools, during after-school parent education sessions, and well-child visits at hospitals and clinics. Programs may also use our Boxes as incentive for participation or attendance.

Judy Centers provide central locations for early childhood education and support services for children birth through Kindergarten and their families who reside in specific Title I school districts across the state. Title I schools are those serving large concentrations of low-income students. Judy Centers promote school readiness through collaboration with local businesses, community-based agencies, non-profit organizations, such as Improving Education and its Bedtime in a Box program. This integrated approach promotes service delivery that is conveniently located in or near Title I schools, ensuring that young children who may begin school at a deficit are given opportunities to start their formal education on a level playing field with their peers.

The 340 Boxes funded through this proposal would be distributed to approximately 151 families enrolled in programming at the Judy Center at Belle Grove Elementary School (56 Infants/Toddlers, 36 Pre-K students, 59 Kindergarteners) and 186 students who will be enrolled at Ferndale Elementary School (48 Infants/Toddler through the school's Early Childhood Intervention services and 138 Pre-K students).

Timeline*

Please describe the implementation timeline for the program/project/initiative.

FINAL DRAFT

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If awarded funding, we anticipate distributing all 340 Boxes funded by this grant opportunity at the start of the 2020-21 school year. Infant and Toddler Boxes for Belle Grove will be distributed through Play and Learn playgroups. Preschool and Kindergarten Boxes will be distributed at Back to School Night/Literacy Night events. Ferndale Early Education Center will distribute all of their Boxes at a Back to School event.

Credibility in the chosen impact area*

Please share stor(ies) of current success in the delivery of the services relative to the chosen impact area(s).

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Bedtime in a Box has been highly successful in improving early indicators of success for children. We use pre- and post-surveys given prior to distribution and approximately 90 days after distribution to evaluate our Bedtime in a Box program. We look specifically at the impact we have on nightly reading and the consistency of a bedtime routine, which is a predictor of success in young children. Based on pre- and post-survey data, we've seen families reading significantly more with their children each week. We've also seen the number of families implementing a consistent bedtime routine nearly double.

Pre- and post-survey data from our first distribution to the Belle Grove Judy Center were very encouraging. 100% of families that completed both pre- and post-surveys said that Bedtime in a Box improved their bedtime routines and that they would recommend Bedtime in a Box to other families; one parent included feedback that Bedtime in a Box is "the best program." Additionally, these families increased in the number of nights read and the total minutes reading per week. Furthermore, children were going to bed earlier and getting more sleep. We saw the average bedtime decrease from 9pm to 8pm, providing an extra hour of sleep per night. Each of these indicators shows a movement in a positive direction and is a predictor of future success in school and life.

Organizational Governance; indicate the leadership type that fits your organization.*

Please upload a file listing the following:

1. Board of Directors
2. Board of Trustees
3. Board of Advisors

FINAL DRAFT

Please describe the level of time, talent and treasure donated by your volunteers and Board members.

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Paid staff and/or program volunteers*

Please upload a file listing the executive program and staff names and roles. Please include any volunteers that play a key role in program delivery.

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Partnerships

If applicable, list any organizations with whom you will collaborate on the creation and/or delivery of this program/project/initiative. Describe how you will collaborate.

Include one letter of support with an original signature from the partnering organization.

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We have established partnerships with the Belle Grove Judy Center (Brooklyn Park) and the Hilltop Judy Center (Glen Burnie). Unfortunately, at the end of the 2019-20 school year, the Hilltop Judy Center will be closing, and its Pre-K population will be rezoned to Ferndale Early Education Center (Ferndale). We are working in close partnership with the AAA Reading Teacher at the Ferndale Early Education Center in order to provide a continuum of care to families who received services through the Hilltop Judy Center. Attached you will find letters of support from Belle Grove Judy Center, the Ferndale Early Education Center, and the Maryland State Department of Education.

Annual Operating Budget*

Please upload a copy of your current operating budget that includes both revenue and expenses. In the text area, please explain your major sources of annual income and the major categories of operating expenses, with emphasis on sources of earned income, if any. Explain how this grant

FINAL DRAFT

would fit within your overall budgeting strategy. Please avoid using industry-specific acronyms and abbreviations.

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Sustainability*

If your program/initiative was awarded this grant, will this program/initiative be sustained beyond the use of this grant funding? Is this program a model that can be replicated?

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Our program model relies on a combination of fundraising through foundations, individual and corporate grants and donations, as well as direct contributions from programs, as a fee for service, using local dollars. In Fiscal Year 2018 (July 1, 2017 - June 30, 2018), we raised \$174,802.99 to support our Bedtime in a Box program through contributions from programs, grant revenue, and donations. In Fiscal Year 2019 (July 1, 2018 - June 30, 2019), we secured over \$134,000 in contributions from programs alone. This increase has enabled us to be less dependent on foundation and corporate grant support, as individual programs and schools utilize existing dollars to receive Boxes. In FY18, we raised just under \$70,000 in grants, compared to \$81,000 in FY19. We also distributed three times more Boxes in FY19 than in FY18. While grant funding is crucially important when entering a new market or geographical area, partners who receive grant-funded Boxes typically will write us into their organizational budgets for the following year. This is how we've grown so dramatically in Baltimore City and on Maryland's Eastern Shore over the past three years. We anticipate this trend to continue as more and more schools and organizations utilize existing funding to provide Bedtime in a Box to more children and families.

Ideal Outcome*

Please describe what you would consider an ideal outcome upon the implementation of this program/initiative. How would you define success? Please include any metrics you would use to measure success.

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Our goal is to improve access to materials and resources to support at-home learning and healthy routines that prepare children for school and their future. With the uncertainty created by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is more critical than ever that we support children and families

FINAL DRAFT

with materials and resources as well as create a sense of normalcy in the home through routines. Ideally, parents would have the resources they need to support learning that prepares children for school and improves the learning, health and quality time spent together. We will collect data through pre- and post surveys measuring the change in number of minutes read each day, consistency of bedtime routine, and the change in bedtime and sleep. We will also collect qualitative data on the effects of the Box in the home and information from teachers about the change in student behavior, engagement and learning. Through this grant, we hope to create a sustainable relationship with the schools and develop long term funding strategies to provide Bedtime in a Box to many more children and families each year.

Additional information

Please provide any additional information that you feel is important for our understanding of your request that you have not provided elsewhere in this application. Please include any Memos of Understanding or similar agreements with other non-profits with which you collaborate or cooperate in the delivery of services and programs.

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In addition to the data presented above in the "Credibility in the chosen impact area" section, testimonials we receive from recipient families reinforce the importance of our work. The Judy Center Coordinator at Belle Grove Elementary School offered this testimonial on behalf of Bedtime in a Box: "Families from Pre-K, Kindergarten, and Play and Learn group with children with IEPs and IFSPs were selected to receive the Boxes to promote routines at night including educational materials. Families, such as the Sears family shared that the Box is being used for her Pre-K student who has an IFSP but also used for her youngest daughter who is 2 years old. Mom shared that her children love the Box and look forward to the Box every night. Not only has mom shared the improvements in nighttime routine but the teacher has seen a huge difference in the Pre-K student's confidence level. Another parent from our Play and Learn group shared her 3-year-old son is "in love" with the Box. Her child is more focused on the books during reading at night and looks forward to the routine at night. The parents are so happy with the product and share nothing but positive things with Judy Center staff.... If only all children 5 years old and younger could have access to this wonderful magical experience.