THE RAPIDES FOUNDATION

Healthy Communities Initiative
Reconnecting Cenla Program Grant

Letter of Intent Deadline: Tuesday, August 9, 2022; 1:00 p.m. CT
Full Proposal Deadline: Friday, January 13, 2023; 1:00 p.m. CT

I. Introduction

The mission of The Rapides Foundation is to improve the health status of Central Louisiana. The Rapides Foundation focuses its work in three strategic areas:

- Healthy People, to improve access to healthcare and promote healthy behaviors;
- Education, to increase the level of educational attainment and achievement as the primary path to improved economic, social and health status; and
- Healthy Communities, to improve economic opportunity and family income, and enhance civic and community opportunities for more effective leaders and organizations.

In 2019, the Foundation expanded the scope of its programs to address Disconnected Youth in Central Louisiana. Disconnected Youth (also referred to as Opportunity Youth) are young adults ages 16 to 24 who are neither in school nor working. Through this Request for Proposals (RFP), The Rapides Foundation seeks to fund eligible organizations to create or expand programs and partnerships for reconnecting disconnected youth and young adults to education and employment opportunities across the nine-parish service area: Allen, Avoyelles, Catahoula, Grant, LaSalle, Natchitoches, Rapides, Vernon, and Winn. Grants will be awarded up to $300,000 for up to a three-year period.

The goal of this funding opportunity is to support a mix of urban and rural community anchor organizations throughout the Foundation's nine-parish service area to develop local coordinated systems to recruit and navigate disconnected youth to education and/or employment opportunities.

II. Background

Healthy economies with low unemployment rates and higher wage jobs provide people with the means to purchase medical insurance, make better healthcare choices and live healthier lifestyles. The Rapides Foundation's Economic Development Initiative makes the link between healthy economies and healthy people. The goal of the initiative is to raise the standard of living in Central Louisiana by improving the region's capacity to produce higher-wage jobs for all income levels and generate more wealth in its communities.

The ability of skilled workforce - talent - is the most critical location factor for most industries that pay sufficiently high wages to drive wealth creation. For communities and regions competing for jobs and private investment, talent availability is a differentiator that carries significant weight. Workforce availability and talent is also a key factor in retention and expansion efforts of existing businesses. The fuel for most job creation and wealth building that occurs in an economy usually requires hiring additional workforce in order to expand. If growing companies in a community or region cannot find the additional workers they need, they may choose to expand elsewhere.

The Foundation's service area has close to 230,000 adults who are in their primary working years and potentially willing to participate in the workforce. However, there are vulnerable populations that never

enter or drop out of the workforce. In Central Louisiana an estimated 10,900 young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 are neither working nor in school. According to the social science research group, Measure of America, these individuals are cut off from the people, institutions, and experiences that would otherwise help them develop the knowledge, skills, maturity, and sense of purpose required to live rewarding and productive lives as adults.

In a report on youth disconnection in The Rapides Foundation's Service Area, Measure of America states that the rate of disconnection is almost 9% higher among youth in the rural parishes of Central Louisiana than the parishes with higher populations. Additionally, the report finds that 64% of disconnected youth live below 200% of the federal poverty level, 29% do not have a high school diploma, 53% have only a high school degree or equivalent, and 52% have not worked in more than five years or have never worked.

These youth face a multitude of barriers when seeking education and work opportunities. Subsequently, existing service providers struggle to create a coordinated system to address all of these barriers. Successful models for reconnection focus on building community capacity, require collaboration among partners, and support local innovation. Research shows that community-led action and proven, place-based strategies that leverage existing community assets can help ensure well-being for all.

The negative effects of youth disconnection ricochet across the economy, the social sector, the criminal justice system, and the political landscape. Finding ways to connect youth and young adults to opportunities to engage in education and/or employment activities is vital to decreasing the number of disconnected youth and young adults, and raising the standard of living in Central Louisiana.

III. Purpose for Request for Proposals (RFP)

The Reconnecting Cenla Program Grant aims to support local anchor organizations with the creation of community-based systems to recruit and navigate Opportunity Youth to education and/or employment opportunities. As highlighted above, there are disparities within disconnection rates for rural youth, youth with differing socio-economic backgrounds, and youth with different levels of educational attainment. Additionally, each community has an individual set of available assets and organizations that can be leveraged to identify, recruit and reconnect youth.

In recognizing that there is no "one size fits all" approach, the Foundation will rely on funded anchor organizations to build their local community-based system. Anchor Organizations are nonprofit, faith-based, governmental, or postsecondary organizations that have a significant presence, reputation and history within their community and the organizational capacity to implement community-wide partnerships. These systems will also heavily rely on partner organizations to address specific barriers that disconnected youth face when reengaging to education and/or employment services. Each anchor organization will be responsible for the following activities:

1) Identifying a minimum of **three** community partner organizations (including, but not limited to, community-based, faith-based, social service providers and governmental organizations) to assist with identifying, recruiting and navigating disconnected youth and young adults to education and/or employment services.
2) Coordinate the local system activities to reengage youth and young adults to education and employment opportunities.
3) Tracking outcomes for individuals served.
4) Participating in the regional youth network.
5) Accepting technical assistance from consultants provided by the Foundation.

At a regional level, the Foundation will establish a network to coordinate efforts across Central Louisiana and to serve as a learning group to share best practices and lessons learned. Organizations providing education and employment services on a region-wide level will also be invited to participate to provide support for anchor organizations.

Grant-funded activities should directly support recruiting and navigating disconnected youth and young adults to education and/or employment services. For the purpose of this RFP, education and employment services are defined as:

Education:
1) Local public-school districts.
2) HiSet test providers approved by the Louisiana Department of Education.
3) Alternative education programs approved by the Louisiana Department of Education.
4) Credit or noncredit programs provided by an accredited, nonprofit postsecondary institution.
5) Programs provided by nonprofit organizations resulting in a nationally recognized industry-based credential.

Employment:
1) Direct placement with an employer.
2) Enrollment to local American Job Center site services.
3) Enlistment to local military recruitment office.

Outcomes for participants should include, but are not limited to: earning a high school diploma or equivalent; earning relevant industry-based credentials; enrollment into a postsecondary institution or training program; and/or placement with a local employer.

IV. Eligibility Requirements

Eligible anchor organizations for this funding opportunity may include, but are not limited to, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, not-for-profit postsecondary institutions, and governmental organizations.

Primary applicants (anchor organization or grant fiscal agent) must meet all of the following requirements:
- Classified as a Section 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization under the Internal Revenue Code, or a government entity.
- Cannot be a private foundation under Section 509(a).
- Must be an organization within The Rapides Foundation Service Area or seeking funding support for projects restricted to the Foundation's nine parishes.

V. Funding Guidelines and Grant Terms

Up to $300,000 for up to a three-year period is available. The Foundation will consider only one application per organization. An agency may be listed as a partner organization in multiple applications, but may only submit one application as an anchor organization. Grant funding must align with project needs and may be used to support staff time, recruitment activities, coaching/counseling/mentoring activities, educational activities, career awareness and exploration activities, project-related supplies,

participant tracking software, communications and marketing, and consulting support. Additionally, up to 10% of grant funds may be used for participant support services. Assistance must be directed to service providers and cannot be given directly to individuals. Assistance funds must be clearly explained and may include, but are not limited to:

- Assistance with transportation
- Assistance with childcare or dependent care
- Assistance with necessary work-related attire/tools
- Tuition and fees to training organizations
- Required books and other academic supplies
- Links to social supports
- Tests and certification fees

Applicants are encouraged, but not required, to secure matching funds and/or in-kind support.

Grant funds may not be used for:
- Lobbying or political programs or events.
- Activities, projects, or programs exclusively benefitting members of sectarian or religious organizations.
- Funding that supplants existing sources of support.
- Social events or similar fundraising efforts or telethons.
- Projects outside of the Foundation's service area.
- Direct funding for medical or social services already funded through existing third-party reimbursement sources.
- Operating expenses not used for significantly expanding the services of ongoing organizations.
- Vans or other vehicles.
- Building purchase or renovation.

Grant funds should directly support recruitment and navigation of disconnected youth and young adults to education and employment opportunities. These funding opportunities are limited and offered on a competitive basis; therefore, it is possible not all applicants will receive funding. Competitive proposals will be evidence-supported, community-driven and budgets will be appropriate to the size of the population impacted. We reserve the right to award less than the amount requested.

VI. Timeline for Submission

This is a two-stage process consisting of a Letter of Intent and Full Proposal. All applications should be submitted using The Rapides Foundation's online application process. The online application is located on the Foundation's website at www.rapidesfoundation.org under the "Grants" tab.

A Letter of Intent (LOI) should be submitted to The Rapides Foundation describing the applicant's proposed project. The LOI will be used as a screening device to determine whether the applicant is proposing a project that has a reasonable chance to be implemented in an effective manner and whether the project meets the general program interests of The Rapides Foundation. Upon approval of the LOI, applicants will be invited to submit a Full Proposal.

LOIs are due August 9, 2022, and will be considered at the September 2022 Budget & Grants Committee meeting. Notification to submit a Full Proposal will be released September 30, 2022. Full Proposals are due January 13, 2023, and grants will be awarded at the February 2023 Board meeting.

Online deadline submission is no later than 1:00 p.m. CT on the dates listed above. In fairness to all applicants, late or incomplete submissions are not considered. *Please note, the Letter of Intent and/or Full Proposal must be fully submitted by the deadline; therefore, you must begin uploading documents prior to 1:00 p.m. CT on the day of the deadline. We suggest you allow a minimum of three hours for the upload process.*

Program Grant Cycle

Letter of Intent due	August 9, 2022
LOI Notification of Selection	September 30, 2022
Full Proposal due	January 13, 2023
Notification of Selection	March 3, 2023
Grant Start Date	April 1, 2023

Pre-submission Consultation
Prospective applicants are encouraged to schedule a call or a meeting with the Healthy Communities Program Officer to discuss alignment and feasibility of their Full Proposal before submission. Contact Matt LaBorde, at matt@rapidesfoundation.org or 318.443.3394 to request a meeting. Please schedule the meeting at least two weeks before the submission deadline.

LOI/Full Proposal Deadline
Letters of Intent and Full Proposals are accepted using the Foundation's online application process only. The application is located on the Foundation's website at www.rapidesfoundation.org under the "Grants" tab. Online deadline submission is no later than 1:00 p.m. CT on the dates listed above. In fairness to all applicants, late or incomplete submissions are not considered. *Please note, all proposals must be fully submitted by the deadline; therefore, you must begin uploading documents prior to 1:00 p.m. CT on the day of the deadline. We suggest you allow a minimum of three hours for the upload process.*

VII. Letter of Intent Requirements
All applicants are required to submit a Letter of Intent, in 11-point Calibri font with 1.5 line spacing and page numbers in the bottom right corner. Limit seven pages.

1. **Cover page – completed online, a separate sheet is not required and is not included in page count**
   a. Applicant organization information (name, address, phone number, email, etc.).
   b. Name, title, phone number and email address of the proposed project coordinator or key contact person from the applicant organization.
   c. Project title.
   d. Requested funding amount. Total Project amount.
   e. Intended project period starting no sooner than the dates listed above.
   f. Brief program summary.
2. **Project Description** – provide a brief overview of the community (e.g., municipality, parish, or region) that is the focus of your proposed efforts, including:
   a. Explain your project and how the project is consistent with the mission of your organization.
   b. What population will the proposed project target? Size of the population and other key demographics.

    c. How will you identify program participants? What is your value-proposition to them to participate?

    d. Does your organization currently have any programming connecting youth or young adults to education and/or work opportunities? If so, please describe.

    e. What geographic area will your program serve?

    f. Describe any partnerships – actual or potential – you are envisioning for this project.

    g. What methods will your program use to track referrals and outcomes of participants?

    h. Describe the proposed results of your project in the short term and long term in measurable terms. How will you collect and measure the impact?

    i. Describe how the project can be sustained both financially and organizationally, after the proposed Foundation funding concludes.

    j. Identify desired results by describing what your project is expected to achieve in the short and long term. Indicate how you will know if you are successful.

3. **Other Supporting Information**

    a. **A preliminary budget** using the worksheet form provided and a budget narrative. Ensure your budget is appropriate to the size of the impact of the project (not included in page count).

    b. A copy of applicant organization's **501(c)(3) designation letter** from the IRS (not included in page count).

    c. A copy of applicant organization's most recent **IRS 990** (nonprofit tax return) or most recent **audit** if governmental agency (not included in page count).

    d. A listing of applicant organization's board members (not included in page count).

Announcements of Letters of Intent accepted by the Foundation's Board of Trustees will September 30, 2022. Those applicants will be invited to submit a Full Proposal according to the submission deadlines in the table above. Full Proposals are accepted through our online application process only.

VIII. Full Proposal Requirements

ALL applicants must submit the following information in 11-point Calibri font with 1.5 line spacing, page numbers in the bottom right corner, and using templates provided (when referenced).

1. **Cover page – completed within the Foundation's online grant portal. Applicants will be asked to provide answers for 1. a-f within a form on the Foundation's online grant portal. A separate sheet is not required and is not included in page count**

    a. Applicant organization information (name, address, phone number, email, etc.).

    b. Name, title, phone number and email address of the proposed project coordinator or key contact person from the applicant organization.

    c. Project title.

    d. Requested funding amount. Total project amount.

    e. Proposed project period starting no sooner than the dates listed above.

    f. Brief program description.

2. **Project Description (up to 5 pages)**

    a. Provide a detailed narrative description of the proposed strategies and implementation plan.

       i What program(s) or activities are being created, added or expanded? Include description of services and key components.

       ii What geographic area (parish(es) and communities) will your project cover?

       iii List of committed partners including key personnel, the sector they represent (e.g., public health, law enforcement, education, church, etc.), and what they will contribute to the

project. ***Please attach any Memorandums of Understanding you have with committed partners.***

  iv How will these activities and partners directly result in disconnected youth and young adults becoming reconnected in education and/or employment opportunities?

  v How many individuals do you estimate your project will serve annually and through the grant term?

  vi How will you identify program participants? What is your value-proposition to them to participate?

b. Describe the community assets that are within your proposed service area that will be leveraged to provide positive outcomes for participants.

  i What community assets/local programs support youth at risk of becoming disconnected?

  ii What is the local economy like? Who are local employers? What do they do? What employment needs do they have?

  iii What is the local education system like? Are there any postsecondary opportunities within the community?

3. **Project Development and Support: (up to 3 pages)**

   a. Why, who, or what prompted your interest in applying for this funding opportunity? How does the project align with your organization's missions?

   b. Who is the proposed project coordinator? What skills or experiences will they bring to this role?

   c. What (if any) previous work have the applicant organization and partners done (individually or together) to address at-risk or disconnected youth?

   d. What experience does the applicant organization have in coordinating projects across multiple partners?

   e. Describe sustainability of the project. How will the project, its objectives, and proposed changes be sustained beyond the grant term?

4. **Work Plan: Please use charts, spreadsheets or other depictions.**

   a. Describe the activities and/or tasks to be performed, from implementation to project completion and person responsible for each task.

   b. List resources required to implement the project (staff, materials, equipment, financial, etc.).

   c. Provide a timeline for the project activities, deployment of resources and expected deliverables, milestones and outcomes (detailed for Year 1, high level for subsequent year(s)).

5. **Resource Adequacy: (Up to 2 pages)**

   a. Describe the current resources for your programs (funding currently available, include source, amount and duration of commitments).

   b. What additional resources are needed to achieve the project outcome and why are they a necessity?

   c. Describe your organization's plan to sustain the project upon conclusion of Foundation support. Can the program be self-sustaining?

6. **Evaluation Plan: (Up to 2 pages)**

   a. Describe the evaluation methods to be used to indicate project is on track.

   b. Describe the evaluation methods to be used to measure the proposal objectives and long-term impact on the number of individuals reengaging to education and employment opportunities.

    c. Name the evaluation resources and persons responsible for implementation.

7. **Budget Spreadsheet and Narrative:**
    a. A line item budget (annually for up to 3 years) using the downloadable template. Ensure your budget is appropriate to the population your project intends to serve.
    b. A budget narrative describing what you intend to purchase and how you propose to use the funds in each line item.
    c. A list of in-kind resources and/or support (if any) to be contributed by the applicant and/or partner organizations.

8. **Letter(s) of support from the community or MOUs** from core partners identifying their proposed roles and commitment to the project **(up to 1 page each; upload all letters as a single document).**
9. **Applicant organization's 501(c)(3) or government entity exemption determination letter.**
10. **Your organization's most current 990, annual audit or financial report.**
11. **A list of applicant organization's board members**. Include member name and address, professional/community affiliations and board tenure.

IX. Additional Considerations

The Foundation reserves the right to:
- Request additional information from any or all applicants.
- Meet with applicants to ensure full understanding of, and responsiveness to, the application requirements.
- Request modifications to a respondent's application prior to final award to ensure alignment of project elements with the core values, mission, and operating standards of the Foundation.
- Reject any or all applications submitted.

Funded organizations are required to submit a grant agreement (contract) and a board resolution affirming commitment to the grant-funded project by the board of directors.

For questions related to this funding opportunity:	For assistance with submitting the online proposal:
Matt LaBorde, Program Officer matt@rapidesfoundation.org Direct: 318.767.3003	Courtney Keys, Programs Assistant courtney@rapidesfoundation.org Direct: 318.767.3013 Main lines: 318.443.3394 or toll-free 800.994.3394

X. Resources

For more information on evidence-based and best/promising practices related to this funding opportunity, refer to the following resources. Please note this is intended to provide general guidance and does not serve as a comprehensive list.

General (including background information and evidence-based policies and programs):
- ASPEN Institute:
  https://aspencommunitysolutions.org/who-are-opportunity-youth/
- Jobs for the Future's Back on Track Model:
  https://www.jff.org/what-we-do/impact-stories/talent-for-the-future/
- Career 360: An Employer Approach To Bridging The Opportunity Divide:
  https://ssrc-static.s3.amazonaws.com/moa/Career%20360_An%20Employer-Led%20Approach%20to%20Bridging%20the%20Opportunity%20Divide.pdf

- Opportunity Works Implementation Report
  https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/95406/opportunity-works-implementation-report_0.pdf
- Recruitment Strategies and Practices for Disconnected Youth
  https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OASP/evaluation/pdf/UEDG-DOL-Recruitment-Engagement-Brief.pdf
- MDRC: Reconnecting Youth
  https://www.mdrc.org/project/reconnecting-youth#overview
- Designing For Success: Lessons Learned in Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund Sites:
  https://aspencommunitysolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Designing-for-Success-102615.pdf