

Greater Twin Cities United Way's 80x3: Resilient from the Start Early Childhood Sector Community of Practice & Leadership Residency Request for Proposals (RFP)

Summary

80x3: Resilient from the Start is a Greater Twin Cities United Way Innovation Initiative that seeks to transform the early childhood landscape to create a region of trauma-sensitive caregivers so all children can thrive.

This opportunity will support a cohort of nine Early Childhood direct service and training or technical assistance organizations to

- implement anti-bias & anti-racist organizational change. Transforming the organization's culture, policies, and practices to ensure equity and inclusion for the staff of the organization.
- increase their capacity to deliver trauma-sensitive and culturally responsive care to the Early Childhood field as defined by the [MN Knowledge Competency Framework](#)

We anticipate awarding a total of \$580,000 in grants, with each organization receiving \$65,000 to address the complex challenges within the early childhood system. Each nonprofit will also receive a comprehensive training and technical assistance package valued at \$25,000, which includes:

- Paid access to the Leadership Residency
- Asynchronous professional development
- In-person retreat through the Minnesota Association for Children's Mental Health
- A Transformative Healing Circle from mental health provider, Creative Kuponya

We welcome proposals that highlight community-driven approaches and a commitment to building a trauma-informed, anti-racist early childhood education system in Minnesota. This initiative seeks to enhance ongoing efforts and provide additional resources to strengthen the sector's capacity to deliver trauma-sensitive, culturally responsive care.

Applications are due by March 28, 2025, at 4pm in our grant portal. Please visit our website to begin your application.

Key Dates for Applicants

RFP Opens- registration required to apply (more information below)	Monday, March 3, 2025, at 9am
RFP Live Q & A	Tuesday, March 4 th 12-1 pm
RFP Closes	March 28, 2025, at 4pm
Notification of Round 2 Interview	Mid-April 2025
Round 2 Interview	Mid-April 2025
Applicants Notified of Grant Decisions	Week of May 19, 2025
Grant Term Begins	June 2025
Kickoff and Orientation	Thursday, June 26, 2025

For more information, contact: rfp@gtcuw.org

Background

Greater Twin Cities United Way exists to fuel lasting change toward a community where all people thrive regardless of income, race, or place. Our mission is to unite changemakers, advocate for social good, and develop solutions to address the challenges no one can solve alone. We focus on both urgent needs of people today and the systemic work required to create long-term change.

Innovation Initiatives

Disrupting inequities requires long-term, systemic change. One way we work toward that change is through our innovation initiatives. These initiatives identify urgent gaps in our community and co-create solutions that drive positive, lasting change. To do this, we collaborate with nonprofit partners, people with lived experience, government agencies and donors to create large-scale, time-bound initiatives that accelerate sustainable systems change in our region.

Community Input

80x3 created an Advisory Group to provide community insight, oversight, and input on the 80x3 initiative. This group meets monthly to provide valuable feedback, insight, and clarity, ensuring that our initiative remains responsive to the diverse needs and perspectives within our community. The Advisory Group includes Early Childhood Education providers, systems leaders and parents committed to a region of trauma-sensitive care where all children and their families thrive. The group is staffed by United Way's 80x3 Sr Program Officer, Jamie Bonczyk and Program Manager, Leo Howard III.

80x3 Advisory Group

Organization	Advisory Members	Role
Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis	Keith Kozerski	Chief Program Officer
Child Care Aware, Minnesota	Heather Charmoli	Professional Development Systems Coordinator
Development and Training, Inc	Betty Emarita	President
First Children's Finance	Lisa Bremer	Business Development Specialist
First Children's Finance	Tiffany Grant	Business Development Manager
Greater Twin Cities United Way	Krystal Shatek	Senior Manager, ELSA Scholarship Processing
Hennepin County	Ashley Gustner	Principal Planning Analyst
Northside Achievement Zone	Arielle Handevitd	Director of Early Childhood
Northside Achievement Zone	Danielle Buckner	Early Childhood Systems Coordinator
Minnesota Association for Children's Mental Health	Brandon Jones	Executive Director
Minnesota Association for Children's Mental Health	Lauren Moberg	Infant & Early Childhood Director
Minnesota Department of Education	Lucy Arias	Early Childhood Literacy Specialist

Think Small	Candace Yates	Vice President of Equity & Early Childhood Programs
Washburn Center for Children	Christine Smith	Equity and Inclusion Director
Way to Grow	Patricia Wilson	Director of Programs

80x3: Resilient from the Start

80x3: Resilient from the Start, is a region-wide initiative that began in 2022 to increase the capacity of the Early Childhood sector to deliver trauma-sensitive and culturally responsive care by increasing caregiver retention, providing sustainable caregiver training and support, and fostering expanded parent engagement and navigation.

With 80 percent of brain growth occurring before a child’s third birthday, our youngest neighbors and their caregivers are at a crucial time for positive brain development that can steer the trajectory of a life. Evidence shows that early childhood education is a critical solution to healthy brain, body, and social development for young children. However, a history of underfunding and lack of access to opportunity for growth has meant the field has little time, resources, and infrastructure to address and mitigate the effects of trauma in children and their families. Our public and private systems now recognize how important trauma-sensitive care is for young children but have not removed the systemic barriers necessary to make it happen. 80x3: Resilient from the Start aims to be the catalyst to disrupt the cycle of childhood trauma, creating lasting, positive impact for generations to come.

In its third year, 80x3 is seeking to continue advancing its mission by addressing the underlying conditions that perpetuate trauma in early childhood. We are expanding the reach of NEAR Science (Neurobiology, Epigenetics, ACES and Resiliency) knowledge through a partnership with FamilyWise, and co-creating new content for the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) field through our partnership with the Center for Inclusive Child Care, and working to influence policies and practices that support a trauma sensitive field. Additionally, we are inviting new partnerships through this RFP process.

The first two years of 80x3 had monumental success in increasing the capacity of the Early Childhood sector.

- **We advocated for adding the Trauma Informed Care Knowledge Competency Framework category to Parent Aware**, which helps early childhood educators integrate trauma-informed practices into their work, enhancing the quality of care and support for children and families. Learn more in the blog [Two Years of 80x3: The Progress We’ve Made Together](#).
- **We co-created the 80x3 implementation guide**, which provides a comprehensive roadmap for integrating trauma-informed care into early childhood education settings. Learn more by visiting our website www.80x3.org.
- **We developed trauma-informed learning modules for leaders**, designed to equip them with the knowledge and skills to support their teams in implementing trauma-informed practices. Learn more: [From Hurting to Healing: Creating Trauma-Sensitive and Healing-Centered Early Childhood Programs](#). If your organization does not plan to apply yet you would like access to this content at no cost, we encourage you to apply for a scholarship at: <https://80x3.org/funding/>.

- **We developed trauma-informed learning modules and resources for educators**, offering practical tools and strategies to create supportive and responsive learning environments. Learn more: [Trauma Responsive/Healing Centered Strategies Parts 1 & 2.](#)
- **We piloted a mental health support program for Early Childhood Educators (ECE)**, which has significantly improved the well-being and resilience of educators, enabling them to better support the children in their care. Learn More: [Addressing childhood trauma before it becomes adult trauma.](#)

Funding Opportunity Overview

This opportunity will bring together a cohort of direct service organizations and those that support Early Childhood direct service providers (e.g., teachers, childcare centers, preschools) with the goal of increasing the field's capacity to deliver trauma-sensitive and culturally responsive care. Eligible organizations must focus on providing Early Childhood direct service or higher education, training, and/or technical assistance for the Early Childhood field.

The cohort will participate in an 18-month program with Greater Twin Cities United Way and its partner, the national nonprofit Embracing Equity, to implement trauma informed, anti-bias, anti-racist organizational change. The program will begin in June 2025, leveraging the Embracing Equity Leadership Residency model, which involves individual coaching and a facilitated community of practice.

We are looking for teams committed to setting and implementing goals toward becoming organizations that center belonging, inclusion, and equity as part of becoming trauma-informed. This opportunity involves an 18-month journey toward these goals.

Organizations Best Positioned for Success:

- Have identified the need to create a trauma-informed and culturally responsive workplace
- Are working on or have prioritized these goals in their strategic plan
- *Currently* hold the organizational capacity and readiness to send a team of three leadership-level staff to participate in an 18-month leadership and organizational change cohort. Specifically, your organization is ready and willing to assess their culture, practices, and policies and commit to all aspects of the program.

Ideal Leadership-Level Team Leads:

- Hold positions that enable them to implement change
- Can align grant funds with necessary activities over the 18 months
- Are ready to become better leaders by understanding and building upon their strengths

Grant Activities

Funded partners will engage in the following activities over the grant period. A more detailed Evaluation and Learning plan will be shared with award details.

Responsible	Activities
<p>Team Leads: 3 individuals per organization</p>	<p>Strengths-Based Assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive strengths-based assessments for each participant leader to guide individual strengths for goal setting. • Individual and Team Coaching • Receive coaching to sustain organizational change at both individual and team levels. <p>Peer-to-Peer Mentorship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in facilitated bi-monthly office hours for peer-to-peer mentorship starting in December 2025. <p>Immersive Virtual Retreat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend a 3-day virtual retreat from September 23-25, 2025. <p>Quarterly Community of Practice Sessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in quarterly sessions to build a community of practice. <p>Professional Development Hours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete 12 Develop Approved Professional Development hours from Think Small. • Complete 25 Develop Approved Professional Development hours from Embracing Equity. <p>In-Person Retreats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend a two day in-person retreat, embedded into the 2025 and 2026 Minnesota Association for Children’s Mental Health November conference. Note: these retreats will be held on Sunday.
<p>Organizational: The organization has an internal system in place to support the 3 team leads in successfully accomplishing the listed activities.</p>	<p>Organizational Equity Audit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to conduct an organizational audit to assess team members' anti-racism competencies and practices, organizational culture and climate, and staff experiences with systems, structures, and policies within the organization. <p>Goal Setting and Implementation Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop unique organizational goals based on audit data. • Receive implementation support to foster growth as an equitable, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive organization. <p>Healing Circle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize a transformative Healing Circle for your staff in partnership with Creative Kuponya. <p>Staff Development</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Trauma-Informed Staff Development • Funded partners can select training that aligns with their organization’s goals. 80x3 recommends Trauma Responsive/Healing Centered Strategies from the Center for Inclusive Child Care or The Toolkit for Healing Centered Practice at the Minnesota Association for Children’s Mental Health. Funded partners may choose to provide live training. If grantees are Parent Aware Rated, all training must be Develop Approved.
<p>System: The organizations selected will work collaboratively towards statewide systems change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with 80x3 and its partners to work towards ensuring every child in our state experiences trauma-sensitive care in the critical first years of life.

Application Eligibility

To be eligible to receive funding under this RFP, organizations must meet the following criteria. Please check the boxes to certify that your organization meets the following:

- Your organization is a 501c3 nonprofit organization or has a fiscal sponsor who is a 501c3.
- Your organization is focused on higher education, training, and technical assistance for Minnesota’s early childhood sector and/or your organization designs and provides direct services specifically for early childhood education and care organizations, educators, and leaders.
- Your organization’s budget for the current fiscal year is \$250,000 or higher.
- Your program has not previously received 80x3 funding.

Important Note on Financial Review: Your organization must meet the financial standards for Greater Twin Cities United Way funded partners based on a review of financial documents such as your most recent financial statements, form 990, and audit (if your organization is required by law to complete an audit) in order to receive funding. **Organizations required to complete an audit MUST have a “clean” (unqualified) audit opinion to be eligible for funding under this RFP.** You will be asked to upload financial documents as part of the application. Please note that organizations are only eligible to receive a maximum grant size of up to 20% of their overall organizational budget.

For any special considerations related to these criteria, please contact us at rfp@gtcuw.org to determine your eligibility.

Funding Priorities

These criteria are not required, but your application will be scored based on how well it meets these criteria. Organizations that score highest will be most competitive for funding.

- Assess progress and adjust to enhance equity and inclusion.
- Ensure leaders actively promote trauma-sensitive and anti-racist practices.
- Develop solutions for trauma-sensitive, culturally responsive early childhood services.
- Expand trauma-sensitive and culturally responsive services.

- Ready to send three leadership staff to an 18-month change cohort, committed to assessing and improving culture, practices, and policies.
- Set goals and take action for system-level change, participate in coalitions and advocacy.
- Use information to understand impact, learn, and make internal changes; collaborate with peers and stakeholders for systemic change.

Utilization of Grant Funds for Project Outcomes and Impact

Grant funds can be utilized to achieve project outcomes and impact, covering expenses such as project implementation, personnel costs, equipment, training, local travel, evaluation, administration, collaboration, staff development, technical assistance, and contingency needs. In lieu of a budget, we will ask for a high-level overview of how grant funds were used over the grant to support learning, evaluation, and plan future grantmaking.

Learning and Evaluation

80x3: Resilient from the Start is an initiative committed to systemic change, learning, and continuous improvement. Funded partners will work with Greater Twin Cities United Way to understand the impact of 80x3 on the individuals they support, their organizations, and the early childhood system.

Greater Twin Cities United Way will build learning and evaluation plans in a way that minimizes the burden on organizations whenever possible and welcomes alternative ways of understanding the initiative's impact. To the extent feasible, evaluation activities will be embedded into program activities.

A more detailed Evaluation and Learning plan will be shared with funded organizations closer to the start of the grant period. In the meantime, grantees should expect to engage in the following evaluation activities over the course of the grant period:

Activity	Frequency	Grantee Engagement
Equity Audit	July 2025	Complete the equity audit survey (all organization's staff)
Leadership Residency Retreat and Community of Practice post-event surveys	Following each event	Complete post-event surveys (all Leadership Residency participants)
Healing Circle feedback survey	Following the Creative Kuponya Healing Circle	Complete a brief feedback survey (all Healing Circle participants)
Professional Development post-surveys	After completing professional development trainings	Complete post-training surveys (all Leadership Residency participants)
Individual leader assessment and coaching	August 2025	Complete the individual leader assessment. Allocate time for coaching sessions based on leadership assessment results.

Leadership Residency end of program survey	November 2026	Complete the end of program survey (all Leadership Residency participants)
Final grant report	December 2026	Submit a written report describing how the Leadership Residency contributed to change within the organization, a summary of staff professional development, and a high-level overview of how grant funds were used (one per organization.) Service data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership Residency participant and organization staff demographics • Number of children and families served (if applicable) • Number of people/orgs supported

Application Process

How To Apply

Organizations who wish to apply for this opportunity must submit an online application by March 28, 2025, at 4pm.

Important: Greater Twin Cities United Way has recently changed its funding portal to the software system Andar. To access this funding opportunity (and subsequent GTCUW funding opportunities), you will first need to register for a Grants Portal account linked to GTCUW, which you can do by following this [link](#) to the portal registration form. Once you have submitted this registration form, you will receive an email within three business days directing you to log in to your new Grants Portal account, where you will complete the full application. If you have already submitted this form and completed your account registration, you can follow this [link](#) to access your account and the full application. Please refer to [this one-pager](#) for further details on how to register for your Andar account and navigate the portal.

The application process consists of two phases:

1. *Written Application:* Organizations will submit a written application. Applications will be scored by a team of Greater Twin Cities United Way staff and community reviewers with knowledge of Early Childhood Education against an evaluation rubric.

Area of Assessment	% of Total Score
Organizational Capacity	30%
Using Data for Impact	30%
Vision, Commitment and Passion	20%
Commitment Towards Systems Change	20%
Total	100%

2. *Virtual Conversation:* Applicants with the highest scoring applications will be invited to join an interview with 80x3 and Embracing Equity staff. Prior to these calls, detailed agendas, discussion points, and insights into the selection process will be provided to ensure transparency and facilitate productive discussions. Both the written application and virtual conversation will be scored against an evaluation rubric. Questions will be asked in each of the categories below and weighted as indicated.

Area of Assessment	% of Total Score
Capacity and Willingness to Develop or Expand Trauma-Sensitive and Culturally Responsive Services	40%
Organizational Capacity and Readiness for Leadership and Organizational Change Cohort	60%
Total	100%

Greater Twin Cities United Way reserves the right to make awards that support our cultivation of a balanced grant portfolio that most effectively advances our mission, goals, and priorities. Toward this end, and in addition to criteria identified in this RFP, funding decisions may include considerations of geography, scale, and ecosystem factors, among other factors.

Grant Terms, Payments, and Other Requirements

- Grants will average \$65,000; grant term is 18-months beginning in June 2025.
- Grant awards will be made in 2 payments. 80% of the award will be paid upon signature of the grant agreement. The remaining 20% of the award will be paid upon completion of the final report.
- Funded partners will be asked to provide direct deposit information for payment.
- Funded partners will commit to the activities outlined in this RFP including an 18-month leadership residency with United Way and its partner, Embracing Equity.

Application Resources and Other Questions

During the application period, Greater Twin Cities United Way staff are available to answer your questions and assist with your application. If your organization requires special consideration for any reason, please reach out to Senior Program Officer Jamie Bonczyk during office hours for assistance.

- Contact us at rfp@gtcuw.org and a Greater Twin Cities United Way staff person will respond to your question within 3 business days.
- The 80x3 Team will hold a live Q&A on Tuesday, March 4, 2025.
- Three office hours will be held by the 80x3 Team the following dates from 10 AM – 2 PM CST. Click on the date to sign up for a 15-minute slot.
 - [Monday, March 10th](#)
 - [Tuesday, March 11th](#)
 - [Friday, March 14th](#)