



**Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts
Polaroid Fund**

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Deadline: October 28, 2009

(4:00 p.m. in the office of the Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts)

To enhance the skills and education of the Greater New Bedford workforce

I. Introduction

A. Background

The Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts has assumed management of the New Bedford area grant program of the Polaroid Fund, a discretionary fund of the Boston Foundation. The Polaroid Fund distributes \$100,000 annually to promote the career advancement and economic security of residents of the Greater New Bedford area. This year an additional \$12,500 is being made available to support these efforts from the Acushnet Foundation Fund. The total available funds of \$112,500 will be distributed as follows: a total of \$87,500 will support workforce development programming, with an emphasis on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Adult Basic Education (ABE) and General Education Development (GED) classes; and \$25,000 will support family literacy programs that integrate early literacy programming for children birth to three years old with ABE/ESOL and parenting courses.

B. Overview

The Greater New Bedford region faces numerous workforce challenges, including rising unemployment, an average income significantly lower than the state average, a substantial percentage of residents who do not speak English as their primary language, and low education levels.

Since early 2008, unemployment in the Greater New Bedford has more than doubled, reaching 14% by July of 2009, the highest unemployment rate of any area in the state of Massachusetts. In some industries this decline was even more drastic, especially employment in the manufacturing industry. Between 1985 and 2007, manufacturing industry jobs fell from 20,528 to 4,866 jobs, a loss of more three quarters. The 2007 average annual wage for a worker in Greater New Bedford was \$38,047, only 68.8% of the Massachusetts annual wage. More than a third of New Bedford area residents speak a language other than English at home, compared to the state average of less than a fifth. And finally, with a high school graduation rate of 57.4% compared to the statewide average of 80%, nearly a third of New Bedford area residents over the age of 25 do not have a high school diploma and nearly a fifth of the area's residents have less than a 9th grade education.

In order to achieve viable workforce development and work readiness in this region, a range of programming and supports are needed for New Bedford's population. Non-English speakers need to become proficient enough in English to achieve their educational goals and perform well in the workplace. Adults without High School diplomas need ready access to pre-GED and GED classes. GED recipients need help bridging the gap between learning on the high school level and participating successfully in post-secondary education environments. Immigrants need access to citizenship classes and information about worker's rights. Service providers need support to increase their effectiveness and capacity. Employers need incentives and information that enables them to fully participate in worker



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education programming. And community organizing efforts need support to secure increased local, state and federal funding commitments.

In addition to continuing the Polaroid Fund's traditional commitment to workforce development and adult literacy, this year's Request for Proposals (RFP) continues its focus on early literacy and family literacy. The relationship between early literacy development, school readiness, school success, and workforce development represents an opportunity to engage in family literacy activities that support both parents and their young children. In order to improve educational outcomes for our youth, children birth to three need improved early literacy experiences. To support parents and caregivers in providing these developmental opportunities for young children, we will be entertaining family literacy proposals that integrate ESOL and or ABE classes with early literacy programs.

C. Description of Project

The purpose of this RFP is to support adults in their quest to become more independent and realize their full potential as successful members of society. Toward this end, the Polaroid Fund will support activities that help the New Bedford community's most vulnerable residents build the skills necessary to attain their educational and employment goals.

For the purposes of this RFP, the Community Foundation will consider proposals from organizations seeking to:

- Mitigate barriers to learning such as cultural and language differences, transportation and childcare issues, and fragmentation of available services.
- Advocate for public policy changes that increase provider capacity, create employer incentives to offer workplace literacy programs, and increases state and local funding.
- Advocate for greater private and employer investment in worker education.
- Support programs integrating early literacy programming for children birth to three years old with ABE/ESOL and parenting courses.
- Protect the cultural context and bonds of a community by preserving and supporting neighborhood based programs providing access to literacy and ABE/ESOL classes.
- Address gaps in programming and provider services. Encourage programming for all stages of adult learning, from adult basic education to preparation for successful enrollment in post-secondary education and training.
- Support capacity building of programs that meet one or more of the objectives listed above.



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D. Evaluation

Applications will be evaluated according to six major criteria for a total of 100 possible points.

- Project Plan (15%) is feasible and makes case for need, is innovative and does not duplicate existing services
- Impact (20%) delineates the number and population targeted and clearly highlights areas of systemic change
- Collaboration (15%) reflects and defines the nature and extend of collaboration between groups/agencies
- Budget (15%) is accurate, readable, clear, and aligned to the project, is appropriate for the number served and request, and does not subsidize existing cost
- Evaluation (15%) clearly delineates the plan for evaluation and the assessment of outcomes
- Sustainability (20%) demonstrates that realizable and long-lasting strategies are incorporated in the plan, and considers policy implications of the focus of the grant

E. Funding

Programs will be funded for a period of 12 months. Organizations can request up to \$25,000 for the 12-month period. This includes all Early Literacy Program applications.

II. Submission of Proposals and Selection Process

A. Submission of Proposals

All proposals must be received no later than 4:00 p.m. October 28th in our office. Mail or deliver to:

Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts
Attn: Polaroid Fund - RFP
63 Union Street
New Bedford, MA 02740

Email your electronic copy to:

Gabrielle Simmons: gsimmons@cfsema.org
Subject line (to avoid spam filtering): Polaroid 2009 Application

An Applicants Conference will be held for agencies interested in applying for a grant through this RFP

October 13 from 10:00-11:30
San Francisco Room
New Bedford Whaling Museum
18 Johnny Cake Hill



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B. Required Information

Please download our application form from our website: www.cfsema.org, or email Gabrielle Simmons at gsimmons@cfsema.org; use the subject line: Polaroid 2009 Application (to avoid spam filtering).

Please read the following instructions carefully.

C. Format and compliance

Applicants must be non-profit organizations. Please submit one complete paper proposal (with all attachments) and one electronic proposal (without attachments) and email it to Gabrielle Simmons (gsimmons@cfsema.org). In your application, be as concise as you can in your answers. A complete proposal consists of all information and documents requested in the application form. We reserve the right to reject any incomplete proposals.

D. Questions

Please bring your questions about this RFP to the Applicants Conference (see above) or call Craig Dutra 508-996-8253 ext. 201 or Gabrielle Simmons ext. 202

SAVE THE DATE:

We will be conducting interviews with qualified applicants at our office in New Bedford. The readers of the Polaroid Fund applications would be pleased to hear a brief (5 minute) presentation by select applicants followed by a question and answer session. **Please be sure to set aside these possible meeting times:**

Tuesday afternoon, November 17, 2009

and

Thursday morning, November 19, 2009.

You will be contacted with more precise times and details.