

Government of the District of Columbia Executive Office of the Mayor
Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants
441 4th Street NW Suite 727N
Washington D.C. 20001



**FY 2018 SHOW UP STAND OUT
TRUANCY REDUCTION PROGRAM
REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA) FOR PROGRAM
EVALUATOR**

RELEASE DATE: July 3, 2017

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Due Date: Applications are due on July 31, 2017, 3:00 p.m. Eastern time via email to:
brenda.aleman@dc.gov.

To access RFA, click on: <https://ovsjg.dc.gov/page/current-funding>

Eligibility: Non-profit organizations, for-profit organizations, and small businesses.

Scope of Work

OVSJG is seeking an evaluator to work with the truancy reduction program to continue the evaluation of years 4 (2015-2016)-5 (2016-2017). The scope of this evaluation project includes conducting a process and outcome evaluation based on a PDE (Program Development Evaluation) Plan. The following will be incorporated into this evaluation project.

1. Evaluation of the Show Up, Stand Out (SUSO) Program through engagement with community-based organizations (CBOs) and OVSJG staff;
2. Summarize and report on data provided by CBO's in Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) database;
3. Establish research agreements with DC Public Schools (DCPS) and DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB) to obtain attendance and other relevant data to assess the efficacy of the program;
4. May also need to establish research agreements with other DC agencies to obtain relevant data (e.g., DYRS juvenile justice);
5. If required, obtain Institutional Review Board Approval to conduct research with human subjects;
6. Develop reports to report on status of project (quarterly, annual, and longitudinal reports) with input from OVSJG director, program staff, and CBOs;
7. Update the Program Development Evaluation (PDE) Plan to incorporate years 4 (2015-2016)-5 (2016-2017) of the program;
8. Provide consultation towards the development of a framework to evaluate a high school truancy reduction pilot program.

SUSO has been evaluated since the inception of the program utilizing a control group of youth from non-SUSO schools, selected by propensity score by DCPS. Using this control group, the evaluation has found modest yet mixed results. While these results are somewhat promising, the challenge remains the comparability of the control group. The next step in the evaluation of this project is to conduct a randomized control trial (RCT) of youth to SUSO or to an alternative treatment option within the same school such as "Check and Connect". If this next step is taken, the evaluator hired for this project would be expected to help OVSJG navigate the challenges of implementing an RCT, including, but not limited to, advocating for the design with key stakeholders, obtaining necessary Institutional Review Board approval, and ensuring the randomization is maintained by working closely with the CBOs.

For the evaluator awarded this contract, the prior Evaluator will provide all documentation available that is not otherwise prohibited by established agreements (e.g., agreements with DCPS, PCSB, and/or with individual CBOs). This includes copies of prior reports, PDE plan, ETO User Manual, and the SUSO website.

Mission

The Show Up, Stand Out mission is to reduce unexcused absences by mitigating barriers to school attendance of children and their families with five or more unexcused absences prior to escalation to CFSA (Child and Family Services Agency) and/or CSSD (Court Social Services Division). This initiative is designed to reduce chronic absenteeism by supporting schools with a focus on providing services to identified families and students while fostering student achievement.

Vision

The District of Columbia values the highest quality education for all students attending the District of Columbia public schools and charter schools. Show Up, Stand Out strives to ensure that all students in the District of Columbia will have the opportunity to access services and programs that are designed to enhance the student's learning experience and engage the student more holistically in the educational environment.

Goals

The goals of the SUSO initiative are to:

1. Create a culture of educational attainment and youth engagement with participants engaged in the SUSO program so as to prevent unexcused absences and promote regular attendance;
2. Respond efficiently, and in a student-centered, research-informed manner to students who have been identified by their schools as having between five to nine unexcused absences;
3. Evaluate the efforts of the community-based service providers and youth service providers in accessing the students identified as truant;
4. Facilitate an electronic database for information-sharing and evaluation purposes between the community-based service providers and the youth service providers; and
5. Make policy recommendations to the Mayor and the District of Columbia Council regarding policies and legislation aimed at preventing future truancy.

Background of SUSO Program

Beginning fiscal year 2013, the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants (OVSJG), formerly the Justice Grants Administration, initiated the Show Up, Stand Out (SUSO) Initiative, a community-based truancy reduction initiative for the District of Columbia public elementary and middle school children. The program objective is **to reduce unexcused absences by mitigating barriers to school attendance for children and their families with five or more unexcused absences prior to escalation to Child and Family Services Agency and/or court referral**. The overall SUSO Initiative is designed to **reduce chronic absenteeism by supporting schools through the provision of support services to identified families while fostering the importance of school engagement for families and students**. There are two primary modes of intervention under the SUSO initiative – the first is for elementary school youth (the “Family Engagement Program”) where families of youth with between 5 and 9 unexcused absences are offered case management services. The second mode is for middle school youth (the “Youth Participation Program”) where students with more than 5 unexcused absences are engaged into a variety of clubs (e.g., fitness, mentoring, empowerment) in order to increase their attachment to school overall.

On an annual basis, OVSJG awards competitive grants to community-based organizations (CBO) to provide fast-tracked wraparound services to families who struggle with absenteeism in elementary and middle school. CBOs serve in the key role of assisting children and their families in addressing the practical, behavioral, financial, and health challenges that prevent them from attending school regularly. OVSJG works in partnership with DC Public Schools, the Public Charter School Board, and the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education to build an appropriate framework that facilitates proper interventions for this initiative. CBOs also facilitate the Youth Participation program by supporting the Youth Service Provider including managing referrals, conducting data entry and administrative support, and in some cases, directly providing the intervention.

The long-term goal and philosophy of the SUSO initiative is to **circumvent and reduce the probability of future delinquency through early intervention protocol**. Truancy has been clearly identified as one of the early warning signs of students headed for potential delinquent activity, social isolation, and/or educational failure via suspension, expulsion, or dropping out. The SUSO Initiative seeks to address this correlation before it becomes a chronic issue.

Overview of SUSO Program

Reducing absenteeism early in elementary school **impacts a child's attachment to school and can ultimately influence their performance and their probability of completing school which is why there is such an emphasis on this population**. This initiative seeks to impact students' academic performance as well as reduce the probability of future delinquency through early intervention protocol. Poor school attendance at a young age can lead youth to not want to seek higher education or impact their ability to secure a better future in the long run.

Absenteeism is a component of education that is both reversible and preventable. In elementary school, unexcused absences are often attributed to economic, parental, and social obstacles in the household. Engaging students and their families can be the key to developing consistent and comprehensive attendance habits for the future and can lead to strong academic achievement.

The nexus of personal, family and community, and school based factors also explain middle school youth truancy and may serve as the entryway to a path leading to school withdrawal.¹ A primary risk factor for continued or evolving chronic truancy among middle school youth is a failure to engage with school and develop attachment towards school. As youth age, they develop more autonomy and are particularly vulnerable to dropout and disengagement at or during key points in their educational careers. **School engagement concerns the extent to which students participate in the academic aspects of school, feel valued and accepted at school, and are involved in the social aspects of school.**²

¹ Lehr, C., M.F. Sinclair, & S. Christenson. (2004). Addressing Student Engagement and Truancy Prevention During the Elementary School Years: A Replication Study of the Check & Connect Model. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk* 9(3), 279-301.

² Wimmer, M.B. (2013)0. Evidence-Based Practices for School Refusal and Truancy, 2nd Edition. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Qualifications

Qualifications include:

- Ph.D. in social sciences or related field preferred, or Master's degree with commensurate quantitative skills and at least 3-5 years' experience in program evaluation.
- Minimum of three to five years demonstrated technical experience in education, at-risk youth interventions, family-based interventions, juvenile delinquency prevention, and/or the truancy/attendance field.
- Possess technical expertise in conducting random control trials.
- Demonstrated experience with evaluating similar types of programs.
- Ability to conduct process and outcome evaluation as well as maintain and analyze longitudinal data.
- Knowledge and experience with Efforts to Outcome (ETO) database is preferred but not required.

Requirements of Selected Applicant

Selected applicant(s) will be required to develop annual work plans describing anticipated tasks and priorities, a logic model and a budget. The selected applicant(s) will be expected to budget their time and keep within the workplan budget. Approval is required prior to work outside of the scope of workplan. Selected applicant(s) will report directly to OVSJG director or her designee. This grant/contract is based on a cost-reimbursement basis and selected applicant(s) will submit invoices on a monthly or quarterly basis.

Proposal Requirements and Timeline

Proposals prepared in response to this RFP should be submitted to: brenda.aleman@dc.gov with the subject line: 'RFA SUSO Evaluator'. Applicants should submit proposal qualifications, prior experience, references, a response to the qualifications/responsibilities detailed above, a proposed budget (October 2017-September 2018) with proposed hourly rates and total compensation, estimated expenses, overhead. Please limit proposals to twenty pages.

The start date of the Evaluator will be approximately October 1, 2017. Proposals should include a scope of work for October 1, 2017 – September 30, 2018. OVSJG has the option to renew and continue the Evaluator's work for fiscal year 2019.

All questions and other correspondence regarding this RFP should be sent in writing to: brenda.aleman@dc.gov with the subject line: SUSO Evaluator. All question and answers will be posted at: www.ovsjg.dc.gov. The timeline for the RFP is as follows:

Publication of RFP: July 3, 2017

Questions on RFP due: July 21, 2017

Proposal deadline: July 31, 2017

Notification of Award: September 18, 2017

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated pursuant to minimum experience and requirement of proposal and will include a peer review process. This evaluation will include the quality and quantity of successful relevant experience as well as demonstrated level of capabilities. OVSJG may request further information from an applicant(s) before making a final decision.