



WHATCOM COUNTY  
**HEALTH AND  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICES**



**UNITED WAY**  
Whatcom County

## 2025 Community Impact Grants Common Application

### PART A: COVER PAGE

*Please fill out this form completely. Note that individual funding agencies have specific grant requirements and will require supplemental materials. Please check the agency website below for details.*

#### To which source are you applying?

- City of Bellingham’s Housing or Human/Social Services NOFA:  
<https://cob.org/services/housing/funding-opportunities-2/partnerships-funding>
- United Way of Whatcom County’s Community Impact Fund:  
<https://www.unitedwaywhatcom.org/help-for-organizations/>
- Whatcom County Health and Community Services:  
<https://www.whatcomcounty.us/Bids.aspx>

#### Agency Contact Information:

Agency Name: Bellingham Public Schools Foundation

DBA (if applicable): Click here to enter text.

EIN: 91-1551087 UEID (from SAM.gov): \_

Mailing address: PO Box 28325, Bellingham, WA 98225

Website: www.bellinghamschoolsfoundation.org General phone: 360-676-6479

State of Washington Business License Number(s): (UBI): 601377284

#### Executive Director (or authorized representative):

Name: Sam Gearhart

Title (if not ED): Executive Director

Email: Samuel.gearhart@bellinghamschools.org

Phone: 360-676-6400

#### Application Contact (If different):

Name: Amelia Vader

Title: Grant Writer

Email:  
amelia.vader@bellinghamschools.org

Phone: 360-676-6400

#### Program Information:

Program Name: Family Resource Center at Carl Cozier

Program Address: 1330 Lincoln Street, Portable A, Bellingham, WA

Are all program services delivered at this address?  Yes  No



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**Funding Request:** The award amount is dependent on the funding organization. Please see individual funder's supplemental materials for more information about the funds available.

How much funding per year are you requesting for this program?

\$ 16,649

Total Annual Project Budget:

\$ 133,449

Annual Organizational Budget:

\$ 556,795



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## PART B: AGENCY INFORMATION

Please limit your responses to no more than two pages for questions 1-5.

1. **Agency Mission.** Please paste or copy your agency's mission statement below.

Bellingham Public Schools Foundation is the nonprofit partner for Bellingham Public Schools. Mission: *We raise funds and steward community resources so every child feels healthy, engaged, supported and challenged.*

2. **Agency Beneficiaries.** Briefly describe the intent of your agency's programs and who primarily benefits from them. Please describe your organization's impact, specifying the number of beneficiaries or clients served per year and their demographics.

Bellingham Public Schools (BPS) is a public school district serving the children and youth of Bellingham, WA, ages 0-22. In addition to general education services, BPS programs include GRADS, which serves pregnant and parenting teens, as well as Community Transitions, a Special Education program that serves students through the age of 22. Total enrollment is approximately 11,000 in a typical year.

In 2023-24, more than 947 BPS students experienced homelessness – a number that has increased significantly every year since the Carl Cozier (CC) Family Resource Center (FRC) opened (in 2021-22, 328 students were identified). Students of color are disproportionately impacted, representing 36% of the overall student population and nearly 70% of students experiencing homelessness.

The CC FRC is open to all BPS families, and is designed to serve historically marginalized populations such as families experiencing poverty and/or homelessness, and those with a home language other than English.

Between July 2023-June 2024 the CC FRC served 525 households:

- 58% had extremely low income (30% or less of median household income of Bellingham)
- 25% had very low income (31-50% of median)
- 64% of clients identify as BIPOC (Latine/Hispanic, Black, Asian, Native/Indigenous or multiracial)

In 2025-26 the CC FRC will serve 615 families annually and 85% of the families will be ALICE households.

3. **Qualifications and expertise.** Briefly summarize your agency's qualifications and expertise (e.g., years of operation, accreditations, experience of staff members, and number of volunteers). Please mention any recent major organizational changes.

BPS has approximately 11,000 students and 1,500 staff members. Of the 852 teachers working in the district, 74% have a Master's Degree and 19% hold the National Board Certification, with an average of 14 years experience. About 4,300 individuals volunteer their time in schools each year.

For the last 16 years, the BPS Family Engagement department has provided communication, translation and cultural competency support to families, along with specialized navigation support for families and students experiencing homelessness. The first BPS FRC opened within Shuksan Middle School in 2009



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and laid the groundwork for the long-term, ongoing partnerships that benefit both FRCs today. The FRC at Carl Cozier opened in 2021 thanks to grants from the City of Bellingham and United Way.

The CC FRC Coordinator is Evelyn Molina, who was hired in November 2024. She is a native Spanish speaker. More than the Shuksan FRC, the focus of the CC FRC is housing and serving families at risk or experiencing homelessness. Additionally, more refugee families are accessing this FRC due to proximity to their housing. As a result, the needs have grown and more staff time is needed to provide the intensive supports required to operate.

4. **Racial Equity and Social Justice.** What steps has your organization taken to address issues of racial equity and social justice within your agency? Which steps are complete, and which are planned or ongoing?

Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) has been a critical component of Bellingham Public Schools' since superintendent Dr. Greg Baker joined the district in 2009. In 2019, EDI was added as a specific strategy of BPS' strategic plan, *The Bellingham Promise*. Naming this key strategy allowed for the development of new initiatives, strengthening of ongoing work, and rebuilding of community relationships.

One example of EDI work is how BPS integrates culturally responsive practices in hiring, leadership, and teaching and learning including support for all candidates via 1:1 outreach, hiring committee training; annual BIPOC job fair; and employee resource groups. Additionally, BPS provides ongoing professional development opportunities including Cultural Identity & Diversity; Culturally Responsive Practice training; and Anti-Bias Training.

5. **Agency Funding.** List your organization's most significant funding sources from greatest to least (including the United Way, Whatcom County Health and Community Services and City of Bellingham); dollar amounts are not necessary. Significant funding sources can be defined as sources that make up more than 15% of your program budget. If you have many funding sources, you may list them by category (i.e., federal, state, foundations, individual donors). Please mention any anticipated or recent changes in your future funding or financial position.

*Bellingham Public School Foundation's* primary funding sources are individual donations (53%), followed by corporate gifts and matching (25%), and grants from local foundations (21%). *Bellingham Public School's* main sources of funding for 2024-25 budget are: State general purpose (50.5%), state special purpose (18.2%), local taxes (16%).

BPS anticipates a significant (~\$17m) budget shortfall due to the state not fully funding K-12 education. Budget challenges could result in higher class sizes and/or loss of programs. Final budget will depend on the state legislative session, which is scheduled to conclude in late April. When making budget cuts, BPS leadership prioritizes expenses that are closest to the classroom. Thus, BPS often seeks grant funding for family engagement and FRC activities to sustain these important services.

We are requesting \$100,000 from the City of Bellingham and \$16,649 from United Way to support 1.5 FTE to operate the FRC at Carl Cozier. Approximately \$16,800 in personal care items are provided annually by the Friends of the FRC annually. These represent the full budget of the FRC. Maintenance is covered by the district as part of general operating expenses.



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## PART C: PROGRAM INFORMATION

Please limit your responses to no more than two pages for questions 6-8.

6. **Program Summary.** Briefly summarize the program and its core activities in one or two sentences.

The Family Resource Center (FRC) at Bellingham Public Schools provides support to families including housing support, parenting classes, assistance navigating school systems and academic programs, translation, and basic needs supplies. The center is designed to serve historically marginalized populations such as families at risk of homelessness, and those whose first language is not English.

7. **Program Purpose.** Identify the community need(s) that the program addresses. What are the measurable outcomes that will result from the services provided?

According to the City of Bellingham's Consolidated Plan needs assessment, "people in Bellingham are earning more, but not enough to keep up with the increased cost of housing. Home and rental prices have escalated dramatically, and too many people are paying more than they can afford for housing." The city continues, "not only is there an increase [in homelessness], but due to a tight housing market and multiple barriers, these families are remaining longer in shelter situations that are unsuitable for children." This year, the family engagement team has already identified 606 students experiencing homelessness, and last year we identified a record 947 students experiencing homelessness.

Family Resource Centers are described in RCW 43.216.010 (15) as organizations that provide a single point of entry to a range of services for anyone in the community. FRCs provide information, assess needs, make referrals to family services, and provide direct delivery of family services by FRC staff or contracted providers. FRCs are welcoming and strengths-based and are designed to meet the needs, cultures, and interests of the communities served. Families and family advocates work in partnerships to develop and pursue families' goals in increasing self-reliance and self-sufficiency.

School-attached FRCs are particularly impactful and essential during periods of instability.<sup>1,2</sup> Families are referred to the center by school counselors, teachers and family liaisons, who identify families at risk for homelessness. Family Resource Centers have been shown to reduce cases of child abuse, rates of child maltreatment, increase family self-sufficiency and increase parent self-reports of being able to keep their children safe from abuse.<sup>2</sup> A 2022 report on bringing the Help me Grow program to Whatcom County found that local school-based FRCs are a "unique and effective approach to supporting families" and that they: establish long-term relationships with families, address obstacles quickly and efficiently, are convenient and accessible, are family-centered and that their knowledge of their community is deep and strong.<sup>3</sup>

Bellingham Public Schools operates two Family Resource Centers: Shuksan Middle School and Carl Cozier Elementary. This grant would support continued operation of the FRC at Carl Cozier with one full time staff and would add half time staff (.5 FTE) to support families during peak times and when the primary coordinator is unavailable.

The Carl Cozier location is central, close to bus lines and Bellingham Housing authority facilities, and has proven to be useful and convenient for families, with both FRCs operating at full capacity.



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Measurable outcomes for this project include:

- The FRC at Carl Cozier will be open 9am - 4pm on school days with a staff person available.
- 615 individuals will access services and referrals annually.

Citations:

<sup>1</sup> "One WA school district helped homeless students graduate. Can others?" Seattle Times, November 28, 2022. Accessed 01/15/2025. <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/one-wa-school-district-helped-homeless-students-graduate-can-others/>

<sup>2</sup> "Issue Brief: Do place based programs, such as Family Resource Centers, reduce risk of child maltreatment and entry into foster care?" Casey Family Foundation. June 2019. [https://www.casey.org/media/SComm\\_Family-Resource-Centers.pdf](https://www.casey.org/media/SComm_Family-Resource-Centers.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> "Bringing the Help Me Grow Framework to Whatcom County", Rachel Myers, RM + Co. October 10, 2022. <https://www.whatcomcounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/71243/Bringing-the-Help-Me-Grow-Framework-to-Whatcom-County-Final-Report-2022>

8. **Program Status.** How long has this program been in operation in Whatcom County? Since your last application, have you made any changes in how you offer services? If this is a new program, how far along is your agency in the planning process? What resources has your organization already invested?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

With more than 14 years experience operating an FRC, Bellingham is a model for other school districts. The FRC at Carl Cozier is supported by the Family Engagement team's long-term community partnerships that allow us to be responsive to the whole child and family, providing basic needs supplies and housing resources for families.

The FRC at Carl Cozier was opened in 2021 with City of Bellingham grant funding that supports the Carl Cozier FRC Coordinator salary. During the first year of the contract, the FRC at Carl Cozier served more than 505 families, and this year the FRC has already served 412 in the first two quarters of this year.

In 2024 we began hosting a Family School Partnership (FSP) housing case manager employed through Opportunity Council. This partnership has been extremely effective and we feel grateful to have a physical space that is known to families where we can host an outside organization. There are some limitations to who can be referred to the FSP and the program is short term (30-90 days), so the case manager does not take the place of the ongoing services provided by FRC Coordinator, and in fact, only increases the focus on housing supports for this FRC.

A key success of the Carl Cozier FRC is the coordinator's work to build relationships with Mercy Housing, Interfaith Coalition and local apartment complexes. As a result, the coordinator can work directly with these entities to help families submit applications and have a better chance at securing housing. Knowing these systems is invaluable, and directly benefits families furthest from opportunity.

Additionally, the location of this FRC is drawing a diverse group of families in part due to the resettlement of refugee qualifying families in nearby apartment complexes. These changes and improvements have increased both the need for and effectiveness of this important service location.



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## 2025 Community Impact Fund Grant Application Addendum

### UNITED WAY FOCUS AREAS

1. To support financial stability in Whatcom County, we have identified three funding priorities below, basic needs, economic mobility, and breaking the cycle of poverty. Choose **one** category below that best aligns with your agency/program:

#### Basic Needs

- Food security
- Stable, attainable, affordable housing
- Health and mental health care access

#### Economic Mobility

- Financial literacy and training
- Vocational readiness training and support
- Adult education programs

#### Breaking the Cycle of Poverty

- Affordable child care and early learning programs
- Academic programs to increase student attendance and achievement
- Parenting support
- Addiction treatment and recovery
- Abuse prevention

- 2. Please describe how your program/agency services align with the category you selected above.**

The Family Resource Center at Carl Cozier provides support to more than 500 families each year at risk of homelessness, providing a single point of entry to a range of services. The FRC coordinator provides culturally-responsive, bilingual services; they are trusted by families who are experiencing economic insecurity. They help families maintain and achieve housing stability through basic needs support, goal setting, navigation and referrals.

The FRC at Carl Cozier operates from 9am – 4pm during school days. A housing case manager from the Opportunity Council is onsite each day the center is open and works closely with the FRC Coordinator. The FRC Coordinator helps families access the following services including many of United Way's priorities:

- Basic needs such as housing, food, and clothing
- Child academic and behavioral support



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- Medical and mental health services
- Special needs and disability supports
- Financial and legal assistance
- Educational and employment opportunities
- Emergency assistance including housing supports
- Bellingham Public Schools resources and educational processes

Each family who calls or visits the FRC receives one-on-one support and help strategizing and connecting with potential community resources.

### **3. Please provide two or three key outcomes you measure that indicate progress toward your mission. List the number of clients being served, what you track, and the most recent results.**

Bellingham Public Schools' strategic plan, The Bellingham Promise, includes outcomes such as, "we develop students and graduates who are readers and writers, scientists and mathematicians." A student's ability to meet these outcomes is significantly impacted by their housing status.

Thus, we analyze graduation rates for students experiencing homelessness and have seen a steady increase since the COVID pandemic impacted social, academic and economic factors affecting student achievement. In 2023-24, 65% of students experiencing homelessness graduated on-time compared with 92% of their housed peers, an increase from 2019-20 (47%) that exceeds pre-COVID rates from 2018-19 (62%). This progress was supported by family engagement staff and strong community partnerships working to remove barriers.

FRC data is captured in quarterly reporting for the city of Bellingham. BPS meets city contract goals each year, serving 525 individuals last year, exceeding the contract goal of 515. The Carl Cozier FRC, sees around 45 new families each month, many returning throughout the year. Last year, and for the first two quarters of this year, the FRC served 83% extremely low and very low income households, and 62% of individuals identified as BIPOC. For comparison, BIPOC students make up 69% of students experiencing homelessness in BPS.

We also track personal care items distributed and school registration support:

- On average we distribute 145 personal care bags per month between our Shuksan and Carl Cozier Family Resource Centers.
- Our FRC team has also helped enroll 165 students this school year. Partner agencies know they can send families to the FRC and they will receive a warm welcome and the necessary help to get their student in school as soon as possible. We developed a strong partnership with World Relief – the local refugee resettlement agency. These families face extra barriers due to language barriers. We coordinate interpreters to make sure we can gather all the important



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information needed for a student to enroll in school and ensure that their needs will be met. Our team will follow through with the family until their student is fully enrolled in school to ensure they are getting the extra support needed to feel their child has no barriers towards their academic success.

These key outcomes, resources distributed to families and families accessing the Cozier FRC, show the impact of our program. From each interaction a family has with the FRC, it strengthens their sense of belonging and community of support. These connections lead to families feeling more welcome at their school and increases their engagement with school activities, like after school enrichment, PTA, and sports. It also opens the door for connection when that family experiences scarcity and housing instability.

#### **4. How does United Way's investment help meet the funding needs of the organization or program? Please give specific examples of how United Way funds are/will be utilized.**

As the nonprofit partner of a school district, the Bellingham Public Schools Foundation provides funds and support beyond the budget provided through basic education. By supporting the whole child, along with their family, we can level the playing field and work towards a world where all children experience the opportunity to reach their highest potential in the classroom and beyond.

United Way has been an exceptional partner in this work. United Way's support would support .21 FTE of the full time FRC Coordinator position at \$16,649 and is critical given the instability of state and federal funds.

The FRC coordinator is a trusted resources for families and staff. They help families maintain and achieve housing stability through goal setting, application support and navigation, and referrals, in addition to basic needs support. Former FRC Coordinator, Rosie Santos, was recently promoted to Family Liaison, a testament to the centrality of the FRC and its services, as well as BPS' focus on investing in staff development. Evelyn Molina was recently hired as the Carl Cozier FRC Coordinator, has previous experience with Sea Mar Community Health Centers and is fluent in Spanish.

The number of families served and the acuity of needs has only grown since the center opened in 2021. In 2023-24, more than 947 BPS students experienced homelessness – a number that has increased significantly every year since the FRC opened when 328 students were identified. Students of color are disproportionately impacted, representing 36% of the overall student population and nearly 70% of students experiencing homelessness.

This increase in need is evidenced by the number of individuals already served through the Carl Cozier FRC this school year through December 2024: 415. To accommodate the influx in families, family liaisons have been providing fill-in staffing at the center, pulling needed resources from schools. Thus, we are



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asking for additional funds from the city of Bellingham to support increased service delivery and to ensure quality, ongoing support for families: \$100,000 to support 1.5 FTE to run the FRC at Carl Cozier, increasing the number of people served to 615 annually. United Way funds would support .21 FTE of the full-time position at \$16,649.

**5. Briefly describe how your agency/program will utilize community partnerships or coordinate with other agencies (UW partner agencies, other community non-profits, government agencies, local companies, schools, etc.) to advance your work/mission.**

BPS' strategic plan, The Bellingham Promise, is a "collective commitment" to Bellingham's children, recognizing that "together we achieve more than alone." Formal partnerships through the FRC include a family support program with Opportunity Council (OC) that co-locates one OC housing case managers at the FRC five days a week. Additional collaborations include releases of information and referral systems with OC and Lydia Place, and in-kind and monetary donations from individuals and nonprofits such as Friends of the Family Resource Center (FRC) and the Bellingham Public Schools Foundation.

Family Liaisons Jami Pitman and Emily Humphrey-Krigbaum serve on the countywide McKinney-Vento Consortium, and Emily serves on the Whatcom County Coalition for Ending Homelessness.

Specifically, we partner with organizations serving children and youth experiencing homelessness through referrals and collaborations including:

- Opportunity Council (onsite and remote case manager support)
- Northwest Youth Services (youth shelter)
- World Relief (Refugee family support and events)
- Vamos Outdoors Project (Latine-focused afterschool wrap-around and mentorship program)
- Compass Health and Unity Care NW (onsite mental health counseling)
- Lydia Place (case manager collaboration)
- Bellingham Food Bank (basic needs, personal care items support)
- WorkSource (job training)
- Public benefit programs such as DCYF, DSHS and DOL

6. United Way focuses on ALICE households in Whatcom County. ALICE refers to households that earn more than the Federal Poverty Level but not enough to afford the basic cost of living in our community.
- a. What percentage of your program recipients are below the ALICE threshold based on the survival budget for Whatcom County? 85%
  - b. What percentage of your program recipients are ALICE (above FPL but below the ALICE threshold)? 85%
  - c. Do you collect client data by zip code? No.



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Visit the [United for ALICE](#) website for the most recent (2024 report) Whatcom County data to determine the survival budget guidelines for ALICE households.

7. Please share an example of a client who was helped by your services.

*\*Note: if you receive a 2025 Community Impact Grant, this story may be shared on your behalf by United Way for the purpose of our community fundraising. Names and details may be altered for privacy.*

A parent came by the FRC to pick-up personal care items. This mom had never been to the FRC before and asked about general resources. From this conversation, she opened up about recent domestic violence in the household. We were able to make a phone call to DVSA so Mom could get connected with an advocate and complete a referral for housing support through Opportunity Council. This example shows the importance of our Family Resource Centers. Families might initially come in just for personal care items, but so much more comes out of having a safe and supportive place to make connections.

### **Application Checklist:**

The United Way Addendum and all materials listed below must be submitted by **5pm on Thursday, March 6, 2025.**

Please submit all materials by email to [hello@unitedwaywhatcom.org](mailto:hello@unitedwaywhatcom.org)