

Grand Rapids Southeast Promise Neighborhood Project (GRSEPNP)

Abstract

Western Michigan University (WMU) and a group of partners with various expertise (including Baxter Community Center, Early Learning Neighborhood Collaborative, Family Futures, Grand Rapids Community College, Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids Public Schools, Kent Intermediate School District and LINC) are committed to creating a sustainable promise neighborhood in the southeast quadrant of Grand Rapids, Michigan. The project seeks to increase the capacity of all partners and focuses on achieving results for children and students throughout the neighborhood. It creates a pipeline of 14 cradle-to-career solutions of both educational programs and family and community supports, with Grand Rapids Public Schools at the center. All partners are engaged to use the “renewal” rather than the “reform” model.

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) is a strong advocate and supporter for the project. The mission of WKKF is closely aligned with the purpose of the Promise Neighborhoods Program. The Foundation’s work in Grand Rapids, as a “place-based” program, helped forge the partnerships for this proposal. Both needs assessment and segmentation analyses clearly show the designated promise neighborhood as an area that is being left behind and in need of systemic improvements. Taking into account the specific needs of the neighborhood, research-based evidence, and the strengths of the partner organizations, the 14 solutions were developed to improve developmental, educational and social outcomes for children and students of the neighborhood.

This project is both cost-effective and sustainable. It has (a) strong advisory, leadership and implementation teams and (b) rigorous measurement and evaluation processes that will not only promote continuous improvement, but also be used to document the lessons learned. The

ultimate goal of this project is to, not only improve the child and student outcomes in Southeast Grand Rapids, but also add to the body of evidence of methods that can be used to improve all impoverished neighborhoods, as well as their schools, children, and students.

The geographic area for the GRSEPNP is the southeast quadrant of the City of Grand Rapids, the second largest city in Michigan. It contains the Ottawa Hills High School, and the following feeder schools: Alger Middle School (6-8), Brookside Elementary (K-5), Campus Elementary (K-5), Congress Elementary (K-5), Dickinson School (K-8), Gerald R. Ford Academic Center (K-8), Grand Rapids Montessori Elementary (K-8), Ken-O-Sha Elementary (K-5), Martin Luther King Jr. Leadership Academy (K-8), Mulick Park Elementary (K-5), Ridgemoor Park Montessori Academy and Sherwood Park Global Studies Academy. The following ZIP codes are associated with GRSEPNP: 49506, 49507, 49508, 49512, 49546, and 49548. Each year, 9,542 children, from birth to 12th grade, will be served. In addition, an annual average of 9,600 adults will be served by the Opioids Abuse Prevention Program.

The proposed project addresses Absolute Priority 1 (Non-rural and non-tribal communities) and all three Competitive Preference Priorities. It addresses Competitive Preference Priority 1 by having an experienced partner who received and implemented a Drug-Free Communities Support Program grant in neighborhoods including GRSEPN and will conduct high-quality community-based opioid abuse prevention activities for the project. It addresses Competitive Preference Priority 2 because the applicant and the partners in the grant proposal have never received a Promise Neighborhoods Program grant, including through membership in a group application. It also addresses Competitive Preference Priority 3 by having strong and/or moderate research evidence, sanctioned by the What Works Clearinghouse, for each of the 14 solutions in the cradle-to-career continuum.