

# Request for Proposals

Midlands Reading Consortium  
STEM Expansion

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## ADDRESS

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## ABOUT MRC

The Midlands Reading Consortium (MRC), a direct service program of United Way of the Midlands (UWM), started in 2007 as a pilot program for striving readers in two elementary schools. MRC addresses low reading proficiency by supplementing and enhancing shared reading experiences to ignite a love of reading and improve reading engagement for elementary school students. MRC's focus on reading engagement is a strategy to support students in reaching mid-term outcomes of academic performance (on-time grade promotion, standardized test scores) and ultimately, long-term outcomes of on-time graduation rates and college or career readiness.

MRC improves reading engagement through a variety of strategies such as one-to-one reading sessions, guest reading opportunities, incentives to support summer reading camps, book donations, the 'Be a Book Bunny' program, company read for a day events, reading nooks, and family engagement events. One-to-one reading engagement sessions are the main component. Trained community volunteers read with a prekindergarten-third grade student for thirty minutes a week throughout the school year (approximately 15 sessions). During the one-to-one reading engagement sessions, volunteers model a love of reading, build the student's confidence, and support the student's learning. This weekly time is critical for the student's reading growth as many students do not receive this individualized reading attention because many caregivers do not have the tools to read at home and teachers must divide their time among large classes.

MRC targets bubble students, which are students who have the greatest chance of meeting grade-level expectations because they are right on the cusp of reading at grade level. Students are referred to MRC by teachers and reading specialists. MRC does not serve students whose academic needs require interventions by specialists because MRC volunteers are not specialists. However, MRC volunteers receive training on the fundamentals of reading such as phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension, which equips them to effectively work with bubble students.

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During the school year, MRC served 691 pre-kindergarten to third grade students and engaged more than 400 volunteers through the one-to-one reading sessions. There is not an income requirement for students to participate in MRC. However, most MRC students live at or below 200% of the poverty level. Last year, 85% of students lived at or below 200% of the poverty level. MRC currently operates in a total of 25 elementary schools in five counties: Richland, Lexington, Newberry, Fairfield and Orangeburg.

MRC is currently coordinated by three full-time staff members and four AmeriCorps members. The aforementioned staff members comprise UWM's Education Team. MRC has the ability to host as many as 10 AmeriCorps members. The MRC volunteer base is composed of retired teachers, working professionals, college students, high school seniors, grandparents, and community leaders.

In 2012, MRC began to develop an initial evidence base to support conclusions about the program design's contribution and observed outcomes using pre-tests and post-tests. Teachers used assessments to evaluate MRC students at the beginning of the school year (pre-test) and at the end of the school year (post-test) to capture progress. Today, teachers use a similar five-question pre-test and post-test evaluation instrument to evaluate MRC students. Volunteers are asked for feedback at the end of each 15-week semester. The MRC staff's access to statewide literacy test scores varies by school district. MRC is currently active in eight school districts.

MRC also receives input from UWM's Education Council. The Education Council includes the full-time staff members on the UWM Education Team and community volunteers with an interest in education. Many Council members have experience working in education. The Council is responsible for overseeing UWM's education work, including MRC. The Council is also responsible for helping UWM make strategic decisions related to MRC.

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## ABOUT THE PROPOSAL

The Midlands Reading Consortium (MRC) program is a replication of the research-based Schools of Hope (SOH) AmeriCorps Project in Dane County, Wisconsin. Schools of Hope began in 1995 as a collaboration between United Way of Dane County and the Madison Metropolitan School District. Schools of Hope's mission is to increase the academic performance of elementary students of color and those from low-income families. The program is led by school-based AmeriCorps members who match volunteers with students who need help with reading. The Schools of Hope model includes literacy and math instruction. MRC only replicated the literacy component of the program. However, MRC's program design is well suited to expand beyond literacy support to include STEM because the original model incorporated math.

There are three current differences between MRC and SOH: SOH focuses on literacy and math whereas MRC focuses exclusively on literacy; SOH student engagement is elementary to high school while MRC student engagement is prekindergarten to third grade; and SOH's Council has parent representation unlike MRC.

The United Way of the Midlands (UWM) is seeking a proposal to expand MRC to include a STEM curriculum. The written proposal should include an implementation, funding, evaluation, and sustainability plan. It is the responsibility of the proposal's author to clearly identify all portions of the proposal that contain proprietary information. The proposal can be designed for students in grade levels outside of MRC's current prekindergarten to third grade focus.

STEM is needed to equip South Carolina's students with the knowledge and skills needed to enter many current and future workforces. Unfortunately, the pandemic created learning loss in math and science as well as literacy.

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## PROPOSAL FORMAT

Each section should be no longer than one page.

- Title Page
- Abstract
- Literature Review
- Implementation Plan
- Funding Plan
- Evaluation Plan
- Sustainability Plan



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## CONTACT INFORMATION

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## SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Proposals should be single-spaced using a 12-point sans serif font and include page numbers. Submit all proposal documents as one compiled PDF to **[jbodrick@uway.org](mailto:jbodrick@uway.org)** no later than March 31, 2022.

## PROJECT TIMELINE

