

WOMEN UNITED GRANT APPLICATION FORM

Organization Information

Organization Name

Bench Mark Program

EIN

46-5047462

Address

102 S. Prince Street
Lancaster, Pennsylvania 17603
United States

Contact Name

Holland Baldrige

Contact Phone

717-502-3624

Contact Email

hollandbaldrige@benchmarkprogram.org

Executive Director / President (If different)

Willem Kiefer

Eligibility Criteria

Is your organization a registered nonprofit organization with an official letter of determination of 501c3 status from the Internal Revenue Service?

Yes

Has your organization operated in Lancaster County for at least one year (operating in Lancaster before July 1, 2024?)

Yes

Does your organization or program you are requesting funding for in this application serve primarily women over the age of 18?

Yes

Does your organization provide services to families at or below the ALICE threshold in Lancaster County?

Yes

Is your organization delinquent on any state or federal debt?

No

Does your organization share United Way's view of collaborative and inclusive service to the entire community, without excluding anyone on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, ethnicity, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, or any other factor not relevant to a person's eligibility for service or ability to contribute?

Yes

Has your organization update your listing with PA 211 in the last 12 months?

Yes

Application Elements

Organization Description

Bench Mark is a strengths-based family of mentors who use exercise, academics, and career counseling to help our students attain their successful future. Founded in 2014 to transform the way we serve our community's most vulnerable, yet promising population, we strive to provide an enduring network of support to highly at-risk youth who have limited access to resources.

We offer youth leadership opportunities, after-school tutoring, one-to-one mentoring, strengths-based skill building, suspension alternatives, and an open gym, Monday through Friday for youth ages 13 through 24. Youth are referred to our programs by partnering community agencies such as the Lancaster Youth Intervention Center or the School District of Lancaster; they also find us in the community and choose to come for the intentional time they receive from caring adults during programming and open gym hours. In everything that we do, our program leaders and mentors share their professional networks with our students to help them build their social capital. Bench Mark Program is meant to be a long-term resource, and our job is to care for our youth's well-being and happiness for as long as they need.

Commitment to Equity

At Bench Mark, more than 95% of our attendees and their families live below the Federal Poverty Level. Giving our youth a chance to learn valuable soft skills, set goals, and make connections that they might not otherwise have access to is key to positively impacting the course of their lives and those of future generations.

Bench Mark purposefully hires and trains a diverse mentoring staff that have similar experiences and backgrounds to our youth. This hiring practice includes offering employment to some of our attendees and giving them an opportunity to gain skills needed for employment elsewhere in a field of their interest. In some cases, youth who begin working part-time at Bench Mark graduate into full-time roles. These hiring practices mean that our mentors can authentically relate to and meet our youth where they are in life.

What is most exciting to Bench Mark is that our soaring attendance has brought in a new wave of young women who once thought Bench Mark was "just for boys." With our Women's Strength and Fitness Center occupying the entire second floor of our facility, more than 20% of our total population identify as women. This program is growing steadily, and we are working to keep up with a demand for new offerings that meet the needs and interests of young women in our community.

Proposal Details

Main Priority Area

Women's Financial Stability

Grant Dollar Amount Requested

\$17,940.00

What percent of the overall project budget is covered by the Women United grant?

13.11

Project Description

This project is specifically focused on growing our Women's Strength and Fitness Center by elevating the next generation of young women who attend Bench Mark so that when they turn 18, they can be hired as mentors for the next group of young women participants.

Bench Mark has a history of hiring program graduates, giving them a head start on a long-term successful career path. Our current Strengths-Based Skill Building Program Manager is one of the first students Bench Mark worked with, and we hope to bring this same career pipeline to our WSFC. Given Bench Mark's commitment to 1:1 mentoring with our youth, the hiring and training of effective women mentors is key to the ongoing success of the WSFC.

The requested grant funds would be utilized to create a part-time employment opportunity for a successful female program graduate to return to the Women's Strength and Fitness Center and support the Program Manager (currently the only employee within this program). This new role would serve as a Peer Mentor to young women and help to increase awareness of the Women's Strength and Fitness Center in our local high schools through site visits and engagement with local school social workers and counselors. With the presence of a Peer Mentor (often referred to as "credible messenger"), we will be able to serve more young women and identify more needs that we can meet through new, innovative, and evolving programs, including focusing on financial literacy and financial wellness. This part-time Peer Mentor will assist in developing an age-appropriate, evidence-based financial wellness curriculum and workshops, and help identify current program attendees to assist in childcare for young women who wish to attend. As a result of this project, we expect to grow the number of women-identifying program members, expose our young women to a variety of career options (including employment through Bench Mark when they turn 18), provide reliable child care for current and future attendees, and have younger youth trained, certified, and paid to provide childcare for women attending WSFC programming.

- One part-time WSFC Mentors who will work 15 hours/week at rate of \$23/hour
- Cohort of 3-5 youth babysitters at \$15/hour
- As-needed at Program and/or on standby during specific weekdays
- CPR & First Aid Certification: Adult, Child, and Baby CPR, First Aid, AED Training Online: \$37/person

Collaboration

We are in constant collaboration with our local partners in Lancaster County Youth Intervention Center, Department of Juvenile Probation and School District of Lancaster to serve our youth throughout the day and throughout their life. Bench Mark also partners with the Teen ELECT parenting program through Community Action Partnership to provide opportunities for young mothers space and time to workout and connect with mentors. We plan to continue these collaborations when it comes for our WSFC as we work towards meeting the needs of underserved young women in our community. As a mentor at Bench Mark, an important part of the job is communicating with these partner agencies to update necessary personnel on youth progress, issues, community service requirements and future goals the mentor and youth have discussed. These relationships between our partners, mentors and program members are what allows Bench Mark to be so effective and continue to grow in our role and impact in the community.

Implementation Plan

Within our fully-equipped WSFC, we're proud to have created a welcoming space where young women can develop meaningful relationships with our mentors and acquire the skills to make remarkable changes in their behavior, school attendance, and engagement in our local workforce. The key activities within this grant program entail the hiring and training of the aforementioned WSFC Peer Mentor.

Identify and hire a female Bench Mark program graduate as a part-time Peer Mentor. The hiring process will purposefully incorporate input from our current young women attendees.

Design and implement a training and onboarding process for the WSFC Peer Mentor so the process can be replicated and sustained with new program graduates interested in employment.

Conduct a pre-survey with young women attendees to gauge interest and knowledge levels around financial literacy and wellness. This will help inform curriculum development and workshop offerings and will serve as a baseline for data collection around growth.

Utilizing evidence-based program resources from The Circle Foundation, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and the Anne E. Casey Foundation, build and implement a financial literacy and financial wellness curriculum for young women attending Bench Mark's WSFC.

Engage community partners such as CAP, ASSETS Lancaster, PA CareerLink, and local female entrepreneurs to provide workshops, speaker series, and field trips for young women program members.

Identify a cohort of 14-17 year-old female-identifying members to train and become CPR certified babysitters. This will enhance the caregiving skills and employability of our younger youth as babysitters both in and outside of the Bench Mark Program. *Note- mothers will be present in the building at all times while their children are receiving childcare* It will also allow young mothers time and space to get a workout in, connect with their mentors, and attend workshops and programming they may otherwise miss out on. The ability to provide childcare will allow more young women, ages 18-24, access to our impactful programs.

Bench Mark's flagship program is our Open Gym that operates Monday through Thursday from 5-8pm and on Friday from 3-5pm. We will be able to replicate this same schedule within our WSFC, once we have mentors to lead this new programming. To augment the work of our WSFC leaders, we are fortunate enough to have an extensive network of volunteers who have offered their skills and services for programming such as dance classes, yoga, and cooking/nutritional classes. The key to the success of the program will include more evidence-based practices to enhance services for every student that walks into the WSFC.

Outcomes & Evaluation

If funded, Bench Mark Program would apply the same success criteria to this grant program (the WSFC overall) as it does to each of its other initiatives:

- Do adjudicated youth who attend the program reoffend (or have a behavioral issue) while they are engaged in the program (recidivism metric – critical to all youth served by Juvenile Probation)

We believe that we can achieve a re-offend rate of less than 20%

- Do youth who attend the program improve their school attendance and/or GPA while engaged in the program?

We believe that we can achieve a school attendance improvement rate for more than 75% of student participants

We believe that we can achieve a student GPA improvement rate for more than 50% of student participants

- Do youth who attend the program make progress toward the attainment of gainful employment (soft skills training, resume writing, job interview preparation, etc.)?

We believe that we can achieve a career readiness rate of more than 75% of student participants

- Do youth who attend the program increase their resilience, as measured in pre-post test of the Child and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM)

We believe that more than 75% of youth attendees in the WSFC will show improvement in their resilience score.

Attainable and Impactful Goals:

Hire one dedicated part-time staff responsible for assisting the Program Lead in the operation of the WSFC, effective programming, and most importantly, increasing positive student outcomes. Staff must be committed to Bench Mark's values, which include consistent program improvement.

Train at least three youth, ages 14-17, to offer childcare during Bench Mark Program hours on select days.

With WSFC staff in place, we will continue consistently available, equal-opportunity programming in the WSFC, and at the beginning of Q3 2025, offer a consistent financial literacy and wellness program.

Serve a total of 15 female-identifying members per day, or 50 individual female identifying members per week, ideally reaching more young women ages 18-24 through enhancing programming options and additional outreach and engagement.

Tangible/Measurable Outcomes:

Attendance Numbers: We expect to increase nightly attendance at the Women's Strength and Fitness Center from 8 women/night to more than 15 women/night (an increase of 87%)

Students Success Stories: Highlighting regular success stories through a quarterly email report to stakeholders as a result of United Way's funding.

Program Growth: 40% increase of program offerings as a result of additional staff.

Financial Literacy and Wellness: Utilizing a pre- and post-program survey, we expect to see 80% of participants grow in their knowledge and practice of financial literacy and wellness.

Bench Mark's WSFC is the first, free fitness-based mentoring program available to at-risk young women in Lancaster

City. It will be a consistent, reliable, safe place for young women to meet with women mentors and work on their fitness goals, academic goals, and career-related goals. It will serve as the launching point for new programs between Bench Mark and its partner agencies, which might include new programming with the Youth Intervention Center (a partial shelter for young women) and a number of group homes for young women in Lancaster County and surrounding counties. It will become a place for new volunteer opportunities for women in our community who are looking for a way to directly support younger women who need them. Most importantly, it will give young women ownership of a space where they can begin to discover their own strength, their capacity for change, and a pathway, with resources, to help them achieve their personal and professional goals.

Evaluating Outcomes:

Bench Mark Program tracks its metrics and evaluates its outcomes through the use of a case management software called Filemaker (designed by a partner at The Candy Factory in Lancaster City). This software allows staff (including proposed WSFC staff) to submit daily case notes regarding their programming with students, needs identified, and action-steps taken to meet those needs. This software aggregated metrics into a dashboard function that is monitored by Program Management. Data that relates to the aforementioned outcomes and goals can then be compared on a weekly and monthly basis. In weekly program team meetings, the WSFC Manager will review metrics with WSFC Mentors and make adjustments to programs as necessary. Ultimately, monthly WSFC metrics are also reported to the Bench Mark Program Director of Programs for review.

Bench Mark Program will deem its outcomes “effective” if its metrics are within 10% of the previously stated goals and if the following is true:

Attendance at the WSFC has increased on a monthly basis throughout the grant term

Bench Mark Program can share at least 2 student success stories (with all appropriate student permissions) on a quarterly basis

WSFC Programs are operated on a consistent basis, with no more than 2 days of program cancellations per month

The WSFC has added at least 2 new program offerings within the grant term, including a financial literacy and wellness program.

As mentioned above with expected outcomes, the following are the WSFC program metrics:

Do adjudicated youth who attend the program reoffend (or have a behavioral issue) while they are engaged in the program (recidivism metric – critical to all youth served by Juvenile Probation)

We believe that we can achieve a reoffense rate of less than 20%

Do youth who attend the program improve their school attendance and/or GPA while engaged in the program?

We believe that we can achieve a school attendance improvement rate of more than 75%

We believe that we can achieve a student GPA improvement rate of more than 50%

Do youth who attend the program make progress toward the attainment of gainful employment (soft skills training, resume writing, job interview preparation, etc.)?

We believe that we can achieve a career readiness rate of more than 75%

Do youth who attend the program increase their resilience, as measured in pre-post test of the Child and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM)

We believe that more than 75% of youth attendees in the WSFC will show improvement in their resilience score.

Attendance Numbers: Increase nightly attendance at the Women’s Strength and Fitness Center from 8 women/night to more than 15 women/night (an increase of 87%)

Students Success Stories: Highlighting at least two success stories a quarter as a result of United Way funding.

Program Growth: 40% increase of program offerings as a result of additional staff.

Financial Literacy and Wellness: Utilizing a pre- and post-program survey, 80% of participants grow in their knowledge and practice of financial literacy and wellness.

Documents

Required Documents

- [Womens-Strength-and-Fitness-Center-Budget-Womens-United-Grant.pdf](#)
- [FY-2025-Budget.xlsx-Budget-25.pdf](#)
- [2023-FS-Bench-Mark-Program-FINAL-2.pdf](#)
- [Bench-Mark-Board-Member-Roster-1.pdf](#)

- [BMP-IRSLetter.pdf](#)