



NewAlliance Foundation's  
Public Library Summer Reading Initiative

## **I. Introduction**

As an independent charitable foundation, NewAlliance Foundation provides financial support to charitable organizations addressing diverse community needs in the arts, community development, health and human services, and youth and education. A segment of our grant-making is targeted toward programs that empower people through the development of literacy skills. We serve 42 Connecticut towns, encompassing Greater New Haven and east of the Connecticut River from East Hartford to Willimantic — communities that were originally home to NewAlliance Bank branches.

“READY for the Grade,” NewAlliance Foundation’s Public Library Summer Reading Initiative, is a funding opportunity that is designed to address a component of literacy related to reading proficiency in children from age 5 to age 8 for three summers, beginning in 2020. Specifically, our goal is to partner with public libraries in our service area to reduce the loss in reading ability that low-income children experience during the summer, which will help them maintain grade-level reading skills during the school years from kindergarten through grade 3.

## **II. Purpose and Goals**

Each September, many of Connecticut’s children return to school with lower reading skills than they had before the summer vacation.

Connecticut has the largest achievement gap in the country. This gap is the difference in educational performance between Connecticut’s low-income and non-low-income students, and it disproportionately affects minority students, primarily African-American and Latino children.

Students from both low- and middle/high-income backgrounds make similar achievement gains during the school year. During the summer, however, youth from low-income families tend to lose more of their reading ability. Differences in out-of-school access to books, positive reading practices, and connections with institutions supportive of self-discovery and reading, account for much of the disparity in student academic success. This fact demonstrates the importance of summer learning, but also shows the disparities evident between students from different socioeconomic backgrounds. By third grade, low-income children can lag as much as two grade levels and have little or no chance to “catch up” to their non-low-income peers.

Research shows that reading proficiently by the end of third grade is a crucial marker in a child's educational development. According to a study commissioned by The Annie E. Casey Foundation<sup>1</sup>, students who don't read proficiently by third grade are four times more likely than good readers to leave high school without a diploma; and when poor readers also come from poverty-level backgrounds, they are thirteen times less likely to earn a diploma. When low-achieving students drop out of school, they forfeit the education they need to join a skilled workforce, contributing to the cycle of poverty in Connecticut's urban and rural communities.

NewAlliance Foundation believes that public library based summer learning programs can be an effective way to address Connecticut's achievement gap. These are most likely to have positive effects when they engage students in learning activities that are hands-on, enjoyable, and have real-world applications. We consider public library based summer learning programs to be "intervention programs," which support and strengthen learning at the critical times when children are at risk of falling behind grade-level standards.

Public libraries have a vital role in supporting the reading achievement of children who lack access to books and other reading materials in their daily lives. Spending a significant amount of time with books over the summer can help children to maintain their grade-level reading skills. This can lead to greater school achievement over the long term.

NewAlliance Foundation recognizes that public libraries have always been part of the support system for children and families in their communities. Many libraries offer educational enrichment activities of varying kinds, and many have developed programs that address summer reading loss for all ages of participating children. Public libraries are well-positioned to both introduce and engage children with printed materials and meaningful language development opportunities during the crucial preschool and elementary school years; thus contributing in a significant way to maintaining grade-level reading achievement.

### **"READY for the Grade" NewAlliance Foundation's Public Library Summer Reading Initiative**

NewAlliance Foundation is pleased to present "READY for the Grade," a program designed to support new and established public library programs that combat summer reading loss among children in our service area. Our goal is for participating students to enter school in September ready to learn, solid in their retained reading skills, and with the same literacy advantages as their non-low-income peers.

The key elements of this funding opportunity are:

- Each applicant will be a public library located in the NewAlliance Foundation service area.
- The public library will partner with a public school that serves low-income children and is located in the same community as the library.

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<sup>1</sup> EARLY WARNING! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters, published by the Annie E. Casey Foundation 2010.

- Each library's program, whether new or previously established, will be implemented during the summers of 2020, 2021 and 2022.
- The goal of each library's program is to have a measurable effect on reducing the loss of reading skills in low-income children over the summer.

### III. Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for "READY for the Grade," the applicant must be a public library located within town/city boundaries of the NewAlliance Foundation service area. The library must partner with a public elementary school located in the same community as the library.

Proposals may be submitted for either an existing library program that would benefit from a significant boost in resources to expand, deepen or diversify its current efforts, or to develop a new library program. In both cases, the goal is to address loss of reading skills in low-income children in your community during the summer months.

### IV. Program Description

NewAlliance Foundation seeks to fund the most well-planned, realistic, and innovative proposals received from public libraries. These proposals will show how the expansion of a current program or the creation of a new program will address Connecticut's achievement gap by reducing loss of reading skills in low-income children during the summer. Programs must run 6-8 weeks over the course of the summer and include between 25-35 hours of direct instruction.

**Programs must adhere to grade-level curricular standards, be led by experienced and qualified professionals, and be designed to complement group learning with individual support.** Grants will go to those libraries that have submitted the most comprehensive and realistic plans. Central to this funding opportunity is the partnership each public library will develop with an elementary school. We require that the school serves a low-income population of students and is located in the same community as the public library.

Libraries may use funds to hire program coordinators, teachers or tutors, acquire computers, hire performers, or to purchase software, books, or ESL teaching aids. Funds may be used to provide children with transportation to the library, to make field visits outside the library, or for incentives designed to encourage participation, such as providing hot meals and/or gift cards for family night events. Funds may also be used to advertise or promote the new or expanded program. Funds may NOT be used for capital expenses related to library expansion or renovation.

NewAlliance Foundation will require a "Memo of Understanding" signed by the principal of the elementary school that will be your partner for this grant. This memo will state the school's willingness to help identify children who would benefit the most from participation in this program. Ideally, as many of the same students as possible will participate in the program as they move from kindergarten through third grade. Although we recognize this may be a challenge, we expect realistic and reasonable means for student engagement and retention..

Another important component of the proposal is a description of how the library will encourage parents, guardians and other family members to be involved in and support their children's learning and literacy. We look forward to seeing how the library will address this important area.

Drawing upon demographic data, recommendations from community leaders in childhood literacy, and our preliminary assessment of emerging initiatives, we firmly believe that the public libraries selected to participate in this funding opportunity will be innovators for change and positively affect grade-level reading proficiency in low-income children in Connecticut. We hope to improve literacy, high-school graduation rates, and future employability and success by working together to narrow the achievement gap in our communities.

## **V. Evaluation**

Measuring results and accounting for progress is another important part of this funding opportunity. We expect great things from the public library's mutually beneficial partnership with the elementary school. We are confident that the library will be flexible in addressing unique needs, adjust strategies when obstacles prove difficult, and exhibit quick responsiveness to challenges. NewAlliance Foundation has hired an independent consultant to effectively document the impact of this program and confirm results with tangible data. This evaluator will track outcomes and evaluate the design and success of each program.

## **VI. Application Process**

Your successful proposal will allow the grant-award committee to target the NewAlliance Foundation's investment in the most effective manner possible. We are sensitive to the resources involved in applying for funding, so we have developed a simple application process to manage the administrative burden and allow sufficient time to assemble the components needed to submit a strong proposal.

## **VII. Award Information**

Libraries with successful proposals will be awarded a grant of \$25,000 for summer 2020 and then \$20,000 for summers 2021 and 2022 (total \$65,000 over three years).

Recipients will be required to submit interim reports (format will be provided) by the close of each calendar year, documenting progress and effectiveness of the program they have developed, before the subsequent year's funding will be released. An updated budget for the next grant period will also be required.

## **VIII. Additional Information**

All questions are welcome. For additional information, potential public library applicants are encouraged to contact Maryann Ott, Associate Director, NewAlliance Foundation, at (203) 859-6555, or write to [mott@newalliancefoundation.org](mailto:mott@newalliancefoundation.org).

**“READY for the Grade”  
NewAlliance Foundation’s Public Library Summer Reading Initiative**

**APPLICANT LIBRARY INFORMATION**

**Official Name of Library:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Street Address:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Mailing Address (if different):** \_\_\_\_\_

**City/State/ZIP :** \_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Web Site Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Authorized Representative of Library:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Representative’s Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Project Director or Primary Contact:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Projector Director’s Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Partner School:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address of Partner School:** \_\_\_\_\_ **City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **ZIP:** \_\_\_\_\_

**School Principal’s Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**School Principal’s Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_

**AUTHORIZATION**

*The undersigned certifies that he or she is authorized to represent the library applying for this grant and that the information contained in this application is accurate. The undersigned agrees that if a grant is awarded to the organization: (1) the grant will be used for the purpose outlined in the grant award letter and may not be expended for any other purpose without prior written approval from NewAlliance Foundation, (2) NewAlliance Foundation has received nothing of material value in exchange for the grant, and (3) information about the organization and the grant may be used by NewAlliance Foundation in any published materials.*

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Signature Head Librarian of Applicant Library Date

## PROGRAM INFORMATION

Title of Program: \_\_\_\_\_

Attach to the cover sheet the following materials, in the same order as listed. When answering questions 1 through 5, repeat the question in bold type and do not exceed 4 pages total to answer these five questions. Attach items 6-8 behind your narrative answers.

- 1. Outline a brief, but substantive description of your project. Clearly state your plan to either expand a current program or establish a new program to address the loss of reading skills in children from low-income families, from kindergarten through grade three, over the course of the summers of 2020, 2021, and 2022. Note the number of children you will target for participation, describe how you will identify them, and how you plan to gain their participation.**
- 2. Describe a typical day for a child participating in your program. Note the difference, if any, among children from each of the three grade levels being targeted by this grant. Include the number of weeks you will run the program, the days of the week, and the hours of engagement.**
- 3. Provide details on how you will involve parents, guardians, and other family members in supporting the child's efforts. How does your program address reading at home and/or motivate family members to engage in the child's summer learning and remain committed to it?**
- 4. Describe how you will staff your program. Make note of the experience and qualifications of the professionals who will have direct contact with the children, and if applicable, how you will use interns and/or volunteers to increase your staffing ratio.**
- 5. Describe the partnership you will establish with a local public school to identify children from low-income families who are also reading below grade level.**
- 6. Attach a one-page draft of your program budget, showing how funds would be spent to support your program.**
- 7. Attach a one-page draft of your proposed program's timeline that includes the steps you will take and the benchmarks you will meet to implement your program by the summer of 2020.**
- 8. Attach a "Memo of Understanding" on official school stationery, with an original signature, from the partner school's principal. This memo should state clearly the principal's support and willingness to assist with the identification of participating students.**

If you have any questions, contact Maryann Ott, Associate Director, NewAlliance Foundation, at (203) 859-6555, or write to [mott@newalliancefoundation.org](mailto:mott@newalliancefoundation.org).