

APPLICATION REPORT

Project Name: Stepping Stones
Applicant Organization: Special Needs Network
Awarded Amount: \$350,000
Funding Announcement Name: Promoting Service Access and Equity Grant



PROJECT SUMMARY

SNN launched Stepping Stones to mitigate inequities in diagnoses and care for Black children with autism spectrum disorder caused by racial bias and discrimination. Stepping Stones is a targeted and comprehensive program designed for Black, Hispanic, and other minority children up to 5 years old who have or may be at risk for autism or other developmental disabilities. Early detection, intervention, and high quality therapy are critical and can change a child's developmental path, yielding benefits in behavior, educational progress and attainment, and reduction in delinquency and criminality. The overarching goal of the program is to identify, serve, and support these marginalized children and their families before they fall through the cracks and become victims of an unjust system.

APPLICANT INFORMATION	APPLICANT RESPONSE	ATTACHMENTS
Applicant Eligibility		
Applicant Information		
1. Project Title What is the Project Title?	Applicant Response Stepping Stones	
2. Awarded Amount	Applicant Response \$350,000	
3. Organization Type Choose the response that best describes your organization.	Applicant Response Community Based Organization (CBO), 501(c)(3)	
4. Description of Organization/Group Provide a brief description of the organization/group. Explain what experience your organization has managing a project similar to the proposal and state the outcomes of that project. You may upload your resume and add a website link.	Applicant Response Special Needs Network (SNN) is a leading disability and social justice nonprofit. Our mission is to raise public awareness of developmental disabilities and to impact public policy while providing education and resources to families, children, and adults. The proposed project is our Stepping Stones program, targeted services for Black, Hispanic, and other minority children with developmental disabilities who are five years old or younger. The first few years of a child's life are a particularly sensitive developmental period, especially for those with developmental disabilities. Unfortunately, children of color often lose opportunities in this time that could significantly improve their short- and long-term outcomes because of system inequities and barriers to services and support. SNN has extensive experience serving marginalized children since our founding in 2005. Further, we have an ongoing advocacy and public policy campaign targeting this specific age group.	
5. Applicant in Good Standing Is the applicant in good standing with the California Secretary of State, California Franchise Tax Board, and California Department of Tax and Fee Administration? Please upload confirmation letter(s) proof of good standing.	Applicant Response Yes	
6. Subcontractors in Good Standing Are the applicant's subcontractors in good standing with the California Secretary of State, California Franchise Tax Board, and California Department of Tax and Fee Administration?	Applicant Response Yes	
Grant Reapplication Information		
Grant Reapplications		
1. Previous Award(s)	Applicant Response	

APPLICANT QUESTION	APPLICANT RESPONSE	ATTACHMENT												
<p>Did your organization receive DDS grant funding in fiscal year 2019-2020-21? If yes, go to question 2 to complete each column. If not, skip this category and go to category 3.</p>	<p>Yes</p>													
<p>2. Previous Grant Award(s) Since fiscal year 2019, complete a worksheet DDS Service Access and Equity grant your organization was awarded funding.</p>	<p>Applicant Response</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="483 415 1328 604"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year Awarded</th> <th>Project Title</th> <th>Grant Number</th> <th>Award Amount</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2021</td> <td>Stepping Stones</td> <td>20-C21</td> <td>300,000.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020</td> <td>Parent Advocacy Mentoring Program</td> <td>19-C21</td> <td>167,101.00</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year Awarded	Project Title	Grant Number	Award Amount	2021	Stepping Stones	20-C21	300,000.00	2020	Parent Advocacy Mentoring Program	19-C21	167,101.00	
Year Awarded	Project Title	Grant Number	Award Amount											
2021	Stepping Stones	20-C21	300,000.00											
2020	Parent Advocacy Mentoring Program	19-C21	167,101.00											
<p>3. Previous Grant Outcomes Provide a brief grant summary of your project outcomes for fiscal year 2019-20 and/ or 2020-21.</p>	<p>Applicant Response</p> <p>20/21 - Stepping Stones: Though a robust at each event campaign, we have successfully completed 20 hours of training groups with over 100 participants total, and 25% of those completed all four sessions of the cycle series. We are on track in serving our target population of African-American and Hispanic families due to extensive community collaboration and digital communication within service provider networks serving primarily low-income and minority groups. This includes a Spring Back to School Grand Go with a key faith-based group in South Los Angeles, Crystal Stairs, and Council District 9 staff who have served over 800 needy families. Our Parent Advocacy Mentoring Program has connected participants to additional services with their Local Regional Centers, Easter Seals therapists, and Special Education support networks.</p> <p>19/20 - AM: Developing an adaptive programming strategy was critical to the ever-shifting environment we are facing from a dual pandemic – COVID-19 and a racially-diverse social unrest in order to move the project forward in a meaningful way to participants. We immediately began expansion of our Community Resources database to respond to increasing needs in SNNH line set-up to address community needs. In addition, our communications team developed an outreach strategy that was framed around online programming that focused on participants' needs - wellness and self-care, COVID-19 informational support, cultural and thematic family activities, and impactful initiatives. Starting with weekly Friday Danes and Fitness classes then adding Tele-Townhalls on home healthcare services and virtual awareness events like Cinco de Mayo Fiesta Dance on Facebook Live provided continuous and expanded community engagement and supported our event efforts for the Parent Advocacy Mentoring Program and Parent Pivoting all activities to an all-virtual platform created a more intimate connection and broader accessibility with families across the state through virtual Support Group meetings, organizational network monthly meetings, and virtual engagement events. Not only did we provide emotional support to help families deal with the overwhelming stress and isolation, we collaborated with community partners. Beyond the use of virtual platforms for disadvantaged families with laptops for continued online learning. At our annual Christmas Toy Exchange, under the strict health guidelines, we brought over 1,000 families with toys, backpacks, family supplies, gift cards, food, and resource information with the help of our LA County mental health and healthcare partners to help offset the economic impact these struggling families were experiencing.</p>													
<p>4. Project Transition If awarded, how will you convert the proposed project into the 2021-22 proposed project? Does your proposed project expand on previous activities, if so, how? What activities, measures, or target groups are being added? Provide a summary of the differences and reasons why you are proposing the change.</p>	<p>Applicant Response</p> <p>If awarded, this grant would extend the existing Stepping Stones which is currently underway. The Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities is not open, but the Stepping Stones project is meeting its goals to build awareness through a networked outreach campaign, offering speech and language, occupational, physical, and Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA therapies) at home or via telehealth. We are serving our targeted demographics and age group and are on track to meet our goal of serving 100 children in the first two years. SNN is currently in its third cohort of trainings for parents.</p>													
<p>General Application Proposal Summary</p>														
<p>1. Project Type Choose the project type that best describes your activities from the list below:</p>	<p>Applicant Response</p> <p>Community Center</p>													
<p>2. Duration of project Choose the duration for your project.</p>	<p>Applicant Response</p> <p>24 months</p>													
<p>3. Regional Centers</p>	<p>Applicant Response</p>													

Choose the Regional Center(s) that you prefer to serve. Check all that apply.	South Central Los Angeles Regional Center	
4. Counties Served List the county or counties you prefer to serve. Check all that apply.	Applicant Response Los Angeles County	
5. City of Los Angeles If you prefer to serve the City of Los Angeles, list the zip codes you prefer to serve.	Applicant Response 90016, 90018, 90007, 90008, 90043, 90062, 90037, 90011, 90044, 90001, 90002, 90003, 90059, 90262, 90061, 90222, 90248, 90220, 90221, 90723, 90262	
6. Community Based Organizations Will you be working with other Community Based Organizations? If so, provide the name of the organization and how you will be working together.	Applicant Response Yes	
7. Multiple Organizations Does your project include partnership with one or more organizations either as a co-applicant or subcontractor? If "yes", please upload a letter of support from each organization, that includes an explanation of their role in the partnership.	Applicant Response No	
8. Strategies and Sustainability How will you expect to continue its work after the grant funding has concluded?	Applicant Response SNN maintains a large network of similarly focused partners and informal collaborators. We always have and will continue to work with them to share strategies and lessons learned to address the disparities identified within this proposal. After grant funding, Stepping Stones operations will be folded into SNN's annual operating budget. Because of its partnerships with entities like Kaiser and Easter Seals, projects will be funded as a special enterprise. It will be the supported and sustained through generous contributions from individuals, foundations, and businesses.	
1. Ethnic Groups Served Select the ethnicity group(s) the project will serve. From "Indian", "Pacific Islander", "Slavic", "Other" use comment section to list specific groups. Applicant Comment	Applicant Response African American, Hispanic	
2. Ethnic Group(s), Language(s) and Number of Individuals Served For each ethnicity group, provide the number of individuals you expect to serve and the related language(s).	Applicant Response	
	Hispanic	195
		Spanish, English
3. Age Group(s) Served Select all Age Groups the project will serve. Applicant Comment	Applicant Response Birth up to Teen (Early State), Teen to Five	
Project Application		
Project Application		

APPLICANT TITN	APPLICANT RESPONSE	ATTACHMENT
<p>1. Project Summary and Organizational Experience</p> <p>Provide a clear and concise project summary that includes a defined target population, categorical area, and project design. Specifically describe what your project will accomplish and how it will benefit the community served. In your answer, include what experience your organization has working with the target population?</p>	<p>Applicant Response</p> <p>SNN launched Stepping Stones to mitigate inequities in diagnoses and care for Black children with autism spectrum disorders caused by racial bias and discrimination. Stepping Stones is a targeted and comprehensive program designed for Black, Hispanic, and other minority children up to 5 years old who have or may be at risk for autism or other developmental disabilities. Early detection, intervention, and high-quality therapy are critical and can change a child's developmental path, yielding benefits in educational progress and attainment, and reduction in delinquency and criminality. The overarching goal of the program is to identify, serve, and support these marginalized children and their families before they fall through the cracks and end up in a foster care system.</p> <p>SNN will provide Stepping Stones in a new Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities (CADD), which is located in the campus of the new Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Hospital in the historic Watts/Willowbrook/Compton neighborhood. Stepping Stones' target population is Medi-Cal recipients, uninsured, and low-to-moderate-income families who are affected by developmental disabilities with children 5 years old or younger (emphasis on ages 3-5). These families live within the service area of the South Central Los Angeles Regional Center, including the communities of Bell, Bell Gardens, Compton, Crenshaw, Huntington Park, Lynwood, Maywood, Paramount, and South Gate.</p> <p>The multi-faceted program design is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach: Unfortunately, in our attachment, there is a severe lack of understanding about developmental disabilities. To overcome this obstacle, SNN has executed an outreach plan to inform parents about early warning signs of developmental disabilities and how to access services. The plan includes bilingual outreach and span radio, cable TV, print media, and community partnerships. • Direct services: Stepping Stones provides an engaging, welcoming environment where therapy, learning, and social integration are naturally. Other critical services will include speech and language, occupational, physical, and Applied Behavior Analysis therapies. • Advocacy and other parent training: Engaging training that provides parents with the tools and skills to be their child's best advocate, acquire the appropriate care, and advocate for the wider disability community. <p>Stepping Stones benefits families in South Los Angeles by improving the quality of life for marginalized children who have few, if any, other places to turn for high-quality care. Immediate benefits include empowering parents to recognize risk factors and warning signs and guiding them to help, including the RC. Long-term this program will help children achieve their goals in cognitive, social/emotional, communicative, adaptive, and physical development. Parents will experience a reduction in stress associated with untreated disabilities and associated behavioral challenges.</p>	
<p>2. Data and Community Input</p> <p>Explain how the target population(s) are understood using RCOS data and other data as supporting evidence of the disparity. In your answer, include how your organization used input from the community and/or target population to design the project?</p>	<p>Applicant Response</p> <p>Stepping Stones will be based in SNN's CADD, which is located in the Willowbrook neighborhood of South Los Angeles. It serves families in the immediate surrounding neighborhoods and communities, many of which have served by the SCLARC. This is a region that faces deep disparities in care due to systemic and social demographic inequalities. At 31%, this area has the highest poverty rate in Los Angeles County. The county-wide average is 17%. Low-income children are often diagnosed at older ages than their more affluent peers, giving them fewer opportunities for proper intervention and treatment. Additionally, this region is diverse with the highest percentage of African Americans in the area (28% compared to 8.5% city-wide) and Latinx (68% compared to 48% city-wide). African American children are grossly overrepresented among children with special health care needs. In Los Angeles County, 30% of children with special health care needs are African American; however, African American children only make up 12% of children in Los Angeles County.</p> <p>We maintain continuous, meaningful communication with partners, including the RCs with which we collaborate, to ensure we effectively respond to their consumers' needs. We encourage participants to share feedback, which informs programmatic updates. Our professional evaluators and internal surveys we conduct are more formal ways of gathering input. SNN also maintains a Parent Advisory Council where members share advice and counsel.</p>	
<p>3. Uniqueness</p>	<p>Applicant Response</p>	

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<p>How is the proposed project unique different from a currently funded grant (e.g., strategies, activities, and activities) in the proposed regional center at hment area? If the project is similar to a currently funded grant listed on the Department's website, how is the proposed project different?</p>	<p>Stepping Stones will be an essential component of CADD, which is a track to become California's first-ever, full-service autism health and community center. For the first time, the center will be a "one-stop-shop" of a variety of people with developmental disabilities. The opening of CADD will be monumental for the region and the countless families who have few, if any, other places to turn for support and guidance. Programming will include medical and developmental services under one roof. All services will be culturally competent, linguistically appropriate, and focused on a holistic experience that facilitates new skills, interactions, and growth. This will greatly enhance opportunities for families in this region by improving equity in the field and educating babies to services.</p> <p>Stepping Stones is distinguished in the field because it involves direct services for at-risk infants, toddlers, and young children combined with programs for underserved parents, and a broader community outreach campaign. This model and combination of services have not previously been implemented in this community at this scale. Because of the unique nature of the program, it will attract tremendous attention from public health professionals, elected officials, and community leaders.</p>	
<p>4. Improve Equity and Service Access</p>	<p>Applicant Response</p>	
<p>How will you promote equity, access, and reduce barriers to services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families?</p>	<p>SNN's primary organizational purpose is to improve equity and access, and reduce barriers to services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Stepping Stones is one such way we do this and we have refined the program model to ensure we are doing it in effective and efficient ways.</p> <p>All services at Stepping Stones are culturally competent and linguistically appropriate, mitigating cultural and language barriers. Additionally, Stepping Stones reaches deep into the target community through comprehensive outreach to identify families who may otherwise be overlooked. We educate providers to services, which may include challenges from specialty seeing, tenuous linkages to referral and evaluation, and difficulty with navigating and crossing multiple agencies, sometimes with very limited English language skills. Further, Stepping Stones' location, within CADD and on the Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Hospital campus, will provide an inclusive experience. Children with special needs often have calendars full of doctor and therapy appointments. With anxiety, sensory difficulties, and communication issues, these appointments can be stressful, and even traumatic, for patients and their caregivers. We seek to alleviate some of this pressure by placing all services in one familiar, welcoming space thereby educating providers to services.</p>	
<p>5. Support of RC Plan</p>	<p>Applicant Response</p>	
<p>How does this project support the RC plan to promote equity and reduce disparities in your proposed at hment area? If you are a RC, how does this project support your recommendations and plan to promote equity and reduce disparities in your at hment area? How will you collaborate with their organizations that serve individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families?</p>	<p>The foundation of Stepping Stones, and the large CADD project, is to implement targeted programs and services to minimize the adverse effects of systemic racism, which have created inequities and disparities in care for developmental disabilities in this community. Stepping Stones will do this in a number of ways. First and foremost, we will ensure Black, Latinx, and other minority children who are often overlooked have access to high-quality care. They will receive early interventions services, which are easily accessible in more affluent, white neighborhoods and communities, but hard to get in this community, leveling the playing field for minority children. It will also enhance the capacity of parents and caregivers to identify issues and actively participate in interventions and efforts, diversify the workforce to more fully reflect the demographic composition of the target population, and invest resources and human capital into a community that has been underserved for decades. To implement the RC's work, services will include educating parents and caregivers about the RC services available and referring them to the RC, when applicable.</p>	
<p>6. Project Activities</p>	<p>Applicant Response</p>	

APPLICANT QUESTION	APPLICANT RESPONSE	ATTACHMENT
<p>Note: Before answering this question, applicants must complete the Activities Template located in the middle tab directly above.</p> <p>Clearly and specifically state how the schedule of activities demonstrates the steps that the project will take to achieve its stated objective and measures.</p>	<p>SNN has developed realistic, predictable activities and measures to ensure Stepping Stones achieves our stated goals and deeply impacts the project's achievement. Work is already underway. SNN is currently finalizing CADD space in preparation for a Spring 2022 opening. Stepping Stones will have dedicated space within the CADD building. We are also developing a detailed work plan for Stepping Stones, which includes staffing, training, and other project components.</p> <p>Beginning in January, we began a targeted outreach effort. We intend this awareness campaign to reach 250,000 to 500,000 people through radio, cable TV and print media ads, social media, community events, and partnerships with community organizations. SNN launched speech and language, occupational, physical, and Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapies, as well as ancillary services and enrollment in late spring 2021. These services build on our existing services but are targeted more specifically for youth aged five and younger. We expect to serve 100 children in the first two years.</p> <p>We have begun parent advocacy training based on our parent AM program. PAM was first launched in 2010 and is an ever-evolving program that is updated often to reflect new strategies, collaborations, and lessons learned. It has also perpetuated multiple spin-offs that address more specific populations with disparities, including military and homeless families who have children with developmental disabilities. We expect to train 200 parents in the two-year grant period. Throughout the entire grant period, we will continuously collect and analyze data to ensure we are on track to meet goals and project design and operational details are effective. Measurements include tracking the number of children and parents engaged in programming. We will also undertake a comprehensive evaluation to understand the program's impact on specific children and families.</p> <p>Each youth participant will engage in a baseline assessment. Our multi-disciplinary team will then determine the length of the program for the child. This will likely be between three and 12 months, depending on the child's needs. There will also be midline and final assessments to measure developmental progress. The impact on parents and caregivers will be determined through pre- and post-training data.</p>	
<p>7. Project Measures</p> <p>Before answering this question, applicants must enter performance measures into the Activities Template located in the middle tab directly above.</p> <p>Are you proposing measures appropriate to track the project's effective activities? Explain how you proposed measures provide insight into the effectiveness of the overall design of the project and demonstrate how the impact on the community will be evaluated.</p>	<p>Applicant Response</p> <p>Our proposed measures are appropriate and will provide deep insight into program effectiveness and impact. We will undertake both numerical and narrative performance measures, including a count of youth served and parents/caregivers served, as well as results from baseline, midline and final assessments, and pre- and post-training surveys.</p> <p>SNN is wholly committed to evaluating our programmatic progress and impact, as well as to sharing these outcomes with stakeholders. We have extensive experience using the methods described above to assess the progress of our programs and participants and to determine if our stated goals have been met. We will build off this track record to successfully measure Stepping Stones' program impact.</p>	
<p>8. Budget Template and Narrative</p> <p>Note: Before answering this question, applicants must complete the Budget Template located in the tab directly above.</p> <p>In your Budget Template, explain how the project budget is consistent with the stated project objective and activities, and clearly and concisely explain how the proposed expenditures support the overall project design and proposed outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget Template example is located at Attachment C. Budget Details and Restrictions are available here. 	<p>Applicant Response</p> <p>The project budget is consistent with our objective and activities in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personnel - Early Intervention Clinical Manager, Early Intervention Supervisor, and Early Intervention Technicians support the overall objective through direct service engagement with children under five who have or are at risk for developmental disability, their parents, or caregivers. Specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Early Intervention Clinical Manager will supervise and guide program planning, including performance measures and evaluation. This includes surveys, the number of parents/caregivers and children served, and assessments of youth, Early Intervention Supervisors will provide clinical oversight opportunities, the majority of the grant activities, including providing advocacy training, speech and language, occupational, physical, and Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapies, as well as ancillary services and enrollment, and The Outreach Specialist will develop a plan and implement awareness/outreach campaign across multiple channels (radio, cable TV and print media ads, social media, community events, and other partnerships with community organizations). Operating Expenses - The operating expenses are in line with the overall objective through the support of program engagement and outreach. Specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outreach and advertisement allows SNN to engage children with developmental disabilities and their parents/caregivers who are at risk for missing resources available to them in the community, Equipment and technology such as iPads, printers, monitors, and other devices allow staff to fully implement program services that improve behaviors, teach new skills, and remediate areas of weakness, and IT services support the ongoing use of the equipment and technology. Administrative/indirect expenses such as legal and accounting allow SNN to continue to be the "go-to" advocacy organization for autism and other developmental disabilities, maintaining our reputation for professionalism and quality in serving parents and caregivers, parents, directors, community and religious leaders, state, local, and national elected officials, and leading special education professionals. 	

<p>9. Budget Costs</p> <p>Explain how the project budget costs are clearly associated with the project activities and objective and confirm that the budget does not include non-all wtable sts osts funded by the sources.</p>	<p>Applicant Response</p> <p>Personnel listed in the budget are directly associated with the implementation and analysis of pre- and post-sevice data for parents/caregivers, the delivery of advocacy training to parents/caregivers, the implementation and analysis of baseline, midline and final assessments data for youth, the delivery of the apies, an illayse vies and eni hment, and the development and implementation of a bilingual ut each ampaign. Operating expenses listed all wfo the successful implementation of the program and out each ampaign. Legal and accounting sts support the ve all p g am implementation.</p> <p>The budget does not include non-all wtable sts osts funded y the sources.</p>	
<p>1. Confirm Proposal Discussion with RC(s)</p> <p>CBOs are required to discuss their proposal with each RC(s) the CBO is intending to serve. If you are a CBO, have you discussed your proposal with each RC you are intending to serve?</p>	<p>Applicant Response</p> <p>Yes</p>	
<p>2. RC Contact</p> <p>CBOs are required to submit their application directly to the Department and to each RC(s) attachment the CBO is intending to serve. If you are a CBO, state the name(s) of the contact person(s) at each RC you have discussed your proposal with.</p>	<p>Applicant Response</p> <p>Dexter Hende s n - Executive Director Of South Central Los Angeles Regional Center</p>	
<p>3. Applicant Certification</p> <p>By submitting this application, the Applicant is certifying the truth and accuracy of the proposal. The applicant also certifies that if you have submitting organizations, each participating organization has reviewed your project and agrees to their assigned activities, measures, and the budget.</p>	<p>Applicant Response</p> <p>Yes</p>	
<p>Applicant Comment</p>		