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2010 to 2010 Strategy Guidance Letter: B-104 Children's Social/Cognitive Development

United Way Windsor-Essex County
300 Giles Blvd. East, Windsor, ON N9A 4C4

A. **Priority Area:** Positioning kids and families for success.

B. **Strategic Area of Focus:** Children's social/cognitive development.

Definition: Innovative and integrated strategies that build on existing supports/services to youth and strengthen children's social/cognitive development. Train-the-trainer strategies build capacity among existing youth service providers by teaching children's social/cognitive strength development techniques.

C. **Priority Population**

All strategies that receive funding must serve the following population(s):

- o Youth ages 7 to 18.

D. **Intended Outcome:** Existing youth support/service providers have increased skills and knowledge regarding how to strengthen the social and cognitive development of youth ages 7 to 18, which results in stronger cognitive/social skills in youth.

Definition: Social skills help assist with cognitive development through social competence. Effective interpersonal skills and appropriate conflict-resolution skills can lead to greater acceptance by peers, which improves self-confidence. Social skills influence success throughout life. This is because the establishment of relationships is a vital social skill in both a child's and adult's life. The intended outcome focuses on *Adaptation* as described by Torjman's (2007) Resilience Framework.

E. **Strategy Paths**

To be considered for funding, strategies must address all Strategy paths, as indicated below:

Strategy paths	Potential results
Building capacity among youth support/service providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of youth support/service providers who complete train-the-trainer training that focuses on strengthening youth social and cognitive development • Number of participating youth who have improved social/cognitive development
Building capacity within families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of parents who participate in youth social/cognitive strengthening training.



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F. Preferred Strategy Components

In addition to the required components, preference will be given to those strategies that are able to demonstrate Preferred Strategy Components, as indicated below:

Preferred Strategy Components— (policies, practices and/or activities)	Examples
Emphasize social competencies that build resilience in youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E.g., social competence (empathy, communication skills, sense of humour) • E.g., moral competence (development of character, values, personal responsibility)
Emphasize cognitive competencies that build resilience in youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eg., cognitive competence (reasoning, problem-solving, planning skills) • E.g., vocational competence (educational aspirations)
Training programs based on a written curriculum with established pre- and post-tests or other evaluation methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training is based on a program that is recognized by professionals as effective, and is supported by evidence that demonstrates its effectiveness • Staff have excellent facilitative skills, address individual needs as they arise, and are well-versed in the training program
Encourages parent and family engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides opportunities for parents, families, and youth to apply their learning together.
Builds on existing youth and family assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs intentionally build assets that support the positive social/cognitive development of youth, e.g., Search Institute's 40 developmental assets
Provide programming and activities that promote a positive social identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities should be designed to enhance self-efficacy, and positive group regard along with a respect for diversity



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F. (cont'd) Preferred Strategy Components for all strategies

Preferred Program Components for all strategies	Examples
Staff/volunteers are trained and well-prepared	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff and volunteers have relevant training, knowledge and skills • Staff keep up-to-date with current developments in the field, including promising and evidence-based practices • Volunteers are provided with strong supervision including screening, orientation and recognition.
Client-centered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active efforts to be inclusive and to connect with client populations in program planning, delivery, evaluation • Services provided are determined by participant needs and priorities • Operate from an accessible, identifiable location that facilitates access to other participant opportunities.
Diversity is acknowledged and respected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitive to issues of diversity, transportation and childcare • Staff must be culturally competent and aware of diversity issues. • Staff and volunteers reflect the community
Monitor progress and evaluate outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct ongoing program evaluations to ensure program effectiveness • The evaluation includes various methods for measuring potential results as outlined in the strategy paths • Willing to participate in organized learning communities with other strategy partners.
Maintaining success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Measures will be taken to encourage continue positive results after initial implementation ▪ E.g., by offering "booster" sessions; providing follow-up resources; tying the strategy with activities of other relevant community groups & programs.



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<p>Demonstrate effective collaboration and partnerships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve a range of community partners • Leverage resources and support from an array of stakeholders, e.g., other not-for-profit organizations, private or public sector organizations, and other groups. • Written memoranda of understanding with other organizations to ensure that roles and responsibilities are clear.
<p>Integrated and coordinated approach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy is linked with other community services, group, and initiatives in an effort to enhance services.
<p>Standard safety policies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protocols are in place that ensure the safety of children/youth and address family situations of abuse and neglect • Conduct screenings for family violence issues & provide participant links to appropriate services. • Establish specific policies of what constitutes acceptable and non-acceptable interactions, e.g., standards of volunteer behaviour
<p>Accessible / affordable / wrap around services that are place-based, strength-based & family-focused</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivered in accessible locations with availability of transportation • Emphasis that builds on individual and family strengths



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Recommended Resources:

Bandura, A. (1993). Perceived self-efficacy in cognitive development and functioning. *Educational Psychologist, 28* (2), 117-148.

Commission on Children and Families (2009). *Positive youth development: Essential Components / Demonstrated and Model Programs*.

Goldstein & Pollock (1988). *Social Skills Training Program*:
<http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~ebdstudy/strategy/socskills.htm>

Search Institute (2006). *40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents (ages 12-18) and Middle Childhood (ages 8-12)*.

Search Institute (2005). *Deepening impact through quality youth development strategies and practices: Key elements*.

Search Institute (2004). *Successful young adult development*.

Tribes Learning Communities method strengthens children and youth social-cognitive skills:
<http://www.tribes.com/about>

Social skills training: <http://www.socialskillstraining.org/>