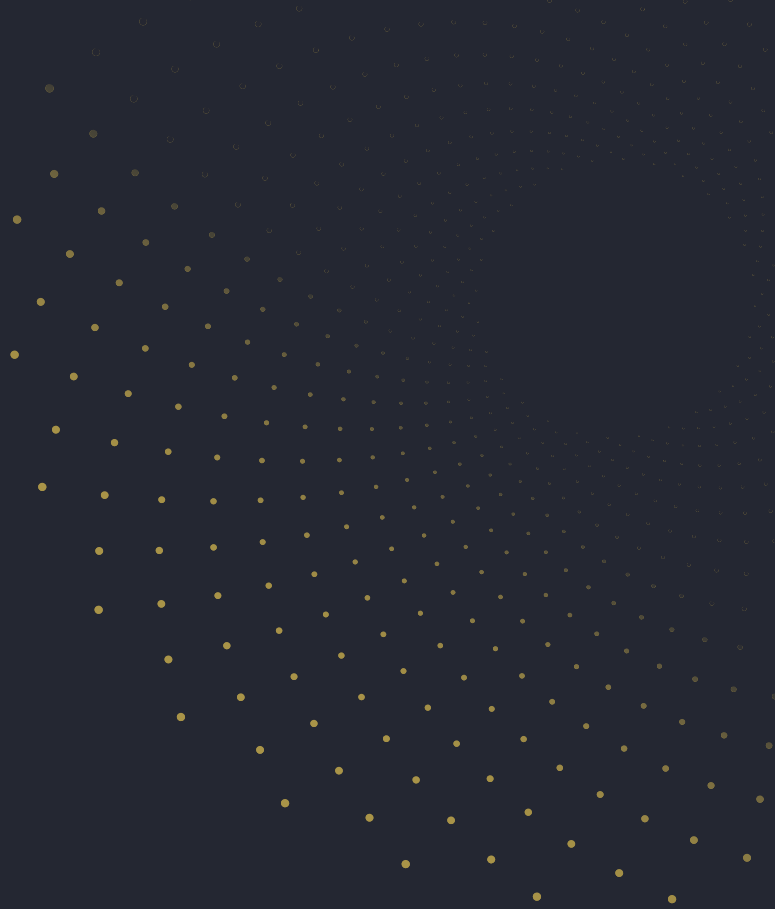




Oberkotter
Foundation



Request for Proposals:

A Family Navigation Approach to Early Hearing Detection and Intervention

APPLICATION PERIOD: OCTOBER 1, 2025 – NOVEMBER 28, 2025



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1. About the Oberkotter Foundation

The Oberkotter Foundation's mission is to help families ensure their children who are deaf or hard of hearing have opportunities to reach their full potential through listening and spoken language. Since its founding in 1985 by Paul and Louise Oberkotter, the Foundation has awarded more than \$500 million to programs throughout the United States in support of its mission.

The Foundation believes that early listening and learning are critical to a child's brain development and to a bright future with limitless opportunities. It supports innovations and initiatives that will improve access to quality audiological and listening and spoken language (LSL) services for children with hearing loss so that they develop age-appropriate listening, spoken language, and literacy skills. [Read more about the Foundation's beliefs here.](#)

2. Introduction

The Oberkotter Foundation has announced a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a funding opportunity titled, "A Family Navigation Approach to Supporting Early Hearing Detection and Intervention." This document provides background and eligibility information to help organizations determine whether this opportunity aligns with their goals and the needs of the children and families they serve.

Applicants are encouraged to review the RFP in full to understand the project's requirements and assess their eligibility before applying. Additional information, including answers to frequently asked questions, further details about the Foundation, and a link to the application can be found on the Oberkotter Foundation website by visiting, www.oberkotterfoundation.org/grants. Applications must be submitted electronically through Foundant, the online grant management system used by the Foundation, by 11:59:59 PM Eastern on Friday, November 28.

Only proposals that meet the outlined criteria included in this RFP will be considered for funding.



3. Background

The urgency of hearing loss identification and intervention, and its influence on developmental outcomes, is well established. In 2000, the Joint Commission on Infant Hearing (JCIH) introduced the “1-3-6” benchmarks¹ to guide timely identification and follow-up. These guidelines recommend:

- Hearing screening by **1 month** of age
- Diagnostic hearing testing by **3 months** of age
- Enrollment in early intervention services by **6 months**

Despite these widely acknowledged Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) benchmarks, many families still experience delays. The most recent Centers for Disease Control (CDC) data from 2022 indicated that although more than 98% of U.S. infants had their hearing screened by 1 month, only 40% of those babies who required a diagnostic hearing evaluation received it in a timely manner (Centers for Disease Control, 2024). Moreover, of those babies who were ultimately identified with hearing loss, just 41% were enrolled in early intervention services by 6 months of age. Early identification of hearing loss and enrollment in intervention services is critical to allow access to the rich, relevant auditory experiences in early life that are essential for optimal listening and spoken language development.

Social determinants of health (e.g., socioeconomic status, healthcare availability, access to transportation) and sociodemographic factors (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender) have been shown to influence early hearing detection, identification, and intervention outcomes. A recent systematic review by Findlen et al. (2023), which synthesized findings from 62 published studies, identified numerous individual-level and system-level factors shown to influence access to hearing healthcare. System barriers included provider shortages, structural inequities, provider and family knowledge gaps, and documentation issues. On the individual (family) level, contributing factors included financial instability, race, maternal education, rural residence, limited access to healthcare, and various medical complexities.

NAVIGATORS

Recognizing the challenges that many families face in accessing timely, high-quality hearing healthcare and early intervention services for their children, researchers have explored the use of navigators in pediatric audiology — an approach that has proven effective in other areas of healthcare. Navigators² are trained individuals who provide

¹ In 2019, the JCIH promoted “1-2-3” benchmarks for programs meeting the “1-3-6” milestones (JCIH, 2000); these recommendations emphasize the importance of consistent access to a language rich environment in very early life.



family-centered support to help reduce barriers to hearing care and promote timely early hearing detection, identification, and intervention. Navigators are not expected to perform clinical tasks or replace licensed providers. Rather, they can assist with logistical and practical needs such as appointment scheduling, sending reminders, addressing transportation, assisting with childcare issues or other barriers that may limit access to hearing healthcare and intervention services. Additionally, they can help families navigate the complexities of health care and early intervention systems by connecting them to individualized resources, including financial, insurance, and social support services that meet vital needs such as safety, security, and nutrition.

Navigators have been associated with improved hearing healthcare access in several studies. For example, Bush et al. (2017) reported that babies of families assigned to a navigator had significantly lower average age at first follow-up appointment, and rural families with a navigator demonstrated higher appointment adherence than those without. Similarly, Leong and colleagues (2024) reported significantly higher hearing rescreening rates among families supported by a community health worker compared to those without personalized, community-based assistance.

Building on this evidence, this request for proposals will focus on supporting navigator programs to reduce barriers to newborn hearing screening, diagnostic evaluation, and access to early intervention services.

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² Navigator: A trained individual who provides family-centered support to reduce barriers to hearing healthcare and promote timely early hearing detection, identification, and intervention. Navigators may engage families starting at the newborn hearing screening stage and continue to support them through rescreening, diagnostic evaluation(s), hearing device fitting(s), and enrollment in early intervention services. They help families access timely care and services aligned with their family's desired goals, and promote early intervention to support strong auditory, language, and developmental outcomes.



4. Opportunity and Requirements

OPPORTUNITY

With this published opportunity, the Oberkotter Foundation aims to support timely access to newborn hearing healthcare, particularly in underserved communities. The Foundation welcomes proposals from 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations serving families of children who are deaf or hard of hearing in the United States who would like to introduce or expand a navigator program to assist families in achieving and accelerating early hearing detection, identification, and intervention. Proposals should strive to minimize loss-to-follow-up/documentation after newborn hearing screening, ensure prompt completion of audiology diagnostic assessment as needed, and/or facilitate prompt access to hearing technology and early intervention services for children identified as deaf or hard-of-hearing.

This funding opportunity is designed not only to support implementation of a navigator program, but also to create insights into navigator utilization and impact, the challenges associated with the development and operation of a navigator program, and the financial requirements of operating such a program in real-world settings.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Competitive proposals should contain a plan that encompasses the following:

- **Implementation:** A detailed plan for implementing a new navigator program, or enhancing or expanding an existing one, with the goal of improving timely access to hearing healthcare in a real-world system. This plan should outline how the program will be designed to effectively serve families, identify any potential risks, propose risk mitigation strategies, and describe how the program will be monitored to optimize impact.
- **Hearing-Related Impact:** Proposals should include measurable, specific goals and a plan for tracking progress toward attaining timely hearing-related service access and program-related goals (see Table 1). Although baseline data is not required at the proposal stage, applicants are encouraged to include it if available.
- **Program Investment:** Proposals should include a plan for assessing actual program costs, potential cost-recovery opportunities, non-monetary benefits, and considerations for long-term sustainability beyond the grant period (see Table 1).



Table 1. Sample metrics to consider when evaluating navigator program impact and investment.

HEARING-RELATED IMPACT:	PROGRAM INVESTMENT:
<p>Hearing Rescreening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Average age at screening/ rescreening• Current benchmarks for screening <p>Diagnostic Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Average age at diagnostic hearing evaluation• Current benchmarks for diagnostic evaluation <p>Hearing Device Fitting & Early Intervention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Average age at hearing device fitting (if applicable)• Average age at enrollment in early intervention services• Current benchmarks for device fitting and early intervention <p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• % achieving benchmarks• Appointment adherence rates - % of missed appointments (no-shows)	<p>Program Costs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Upfront implementation (staffing, training, etc.)• Ongoing operational maintenance <p>Opportunities for Cost Recovery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improved appointment adherence/ provider billings• Reduced no-show rates/ resource and space utilization <p>Broader Value Considerations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Positive patient satisfaction ratings• Improved patient outcomes• Improved alignment with organizational values and brand

Applicants are encouraged to consider any other measures that reflect their organization's priorities or population needs, in addition to those listed in the table above.



PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

Navigator services must be delivered by individuals who are well-positioned to support a family in accessing hearing healthcare services for their baby primarily during the infant period. Navigators could assist families at any point from the initial screening stage through enrollment in early intervention services. They are expected to have basic knowledge of hearing loss, newborn hearing screening, the importance of early hearing detection, identification, and intervention, early intervention (EI) services, risk factors predisposing families to access challenges, and local support resources (i.e., providers and/or programs).

Selected proposals will receive up to three (3) years of funding, beginning April 2026. Competitive applications may include:

- Implementation of a navigator program, either independently or in partnership with other organization(s),
- Expansion or modification of an existing navigator program, and
- Adaptation of a proven navigator program adapted from another setting.

The Foundation will **not consider** proposals for:

- Planning grants that do not include the direct provision of navigator services,
- Counseling or family support services without an explicit focus on care coordination (i.e., support communities or mentor programs), or
- Virtual tools or resources for families without the addition of a person whose role is to guide families through some or all of the early hearing detection, identification, and intervention journey.



5. Eligibility and Selection Criteria

To be considered for funding, applicants **must** meet the following requirements:

- **Tax-Exempt Status:** Grants are only awarded to registered 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organizations located within the United States.
- **Organizational Capacity:** Applicants must have the administrative, financial, and operational capacity to manage grant funds and deliver on all proposed activities.
- **Relevant Expertise:** The applicant must have experience and/or foundational knowledge in early hearing detection, identification, and intervention, as well as social drivers of health access.

Submissions will be **evaluated based on**, but not limited to, the following criteria:

- **Alignment:** Project goals align with the priorities of the Foundation and the RFP.
- **Methods:** Clear plan for implementation and evaluation, including data collection and analysis to measure navigator impact.
- **Feasibility:** Project is realistic and achievable within the proposed timeframe and budget.
- **Population:** Access to the population, with an emphasis on underserved children and families.
- **Budget:** Well-planned, reasonable, and clearly justified to support the proposed project.
- **Timeline:** Specific, realistic milestones and deliverables.
- **Team Strength:** Key personnel expertise, qualifications, and relevant experience.
- **Potential Impact:** Likelihood of meaningful, measurable outcomes for the intended population.
- **Sustainability:** Continuation beyond the grant period has been considered.
- **Resources:** Necessary resources (e.g., space, tools) are clearly identified, with access confirmed or planned.
- **Collaborative Partners:** Letters of support are included for any collaborative efforts.*

* Any proposals developed in partnership with multiple organizations must be submitted by a single lead organization, but letters of support from all partnering organizations must be included with the application. The lead organization will be responsible for managing and disbursing awarded funds and submitting all required reports to the Foundation.



6. How to Apply

All applications must be completed through Foundant, the online grants management system used by the Foundation. A link to the application can be found on the Grants section of the Oberkotter Foundation website (www.oberkotterfoundation.org/grants). If you have not already done so, you will be asked to create an account before you begin the proposal. You will need to register with the EIN of the organization seeking funding for this proposal. Applicants selected for funding will be notified by February 27, 2026.

Technical or clarification questions related to the application or application process are welcome. Please email your questions to grants@oberkotterfoundation.org by November 7, 2025, to ensure a response. Feedback or guidance on specific projects, methods, or approaches will **not** be provided.

7. Timeline and Key Dates

Please refer to the timeline below for important dates:

Activity	Date
RFP Opens	October 1, 2025
Deadline for Submitting Questions	November 7, 2025
RFP Closes	November 28, 2025
Oberkotter Foundation to Notify Applicants	February 27, 2026
Estimated Grant Start Date	April 1, 2026



8. Funding Details

There is **no maximum or minimum amount** for this grant opportunity. However, reasonable budget justification is required for all proposals. The budget should accurately reflect the funding required to execute the project in your organization. The budget template can be found within the application. Please refer to the instructions contained within the Excel worksheet when completing it.

Note: The Foundation does **not** fund indirect costs.

Grants will be paid in annual installments for a period of up to three years. Grantees are required to notify the Foundation in writing of any significant changes to the grant – either before the start of the grant period or at any point during its duration – as quickly as possible.

9. Reporting

Successful applicants will be asked to track and report the impact of their navigator programs, based on their defined goals. This includes comparing baseline or pre-implementation benchmarks to post-implementation outcomes, as well as reporting on program costs, cost-recovery opportunities, and sustainability considerations beyond the grant period.

Grantees must submit annual progress reports through Foundant during the grant period and a final report at the conclusion of the award period. They may also be invited to share project outcomes or insights on Foundation platforms.



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Contact

Andrea Dunn, AuD, PhD

Vice President of Programs

Oberkotter Foundation

grants@oberkotterfoundation.org