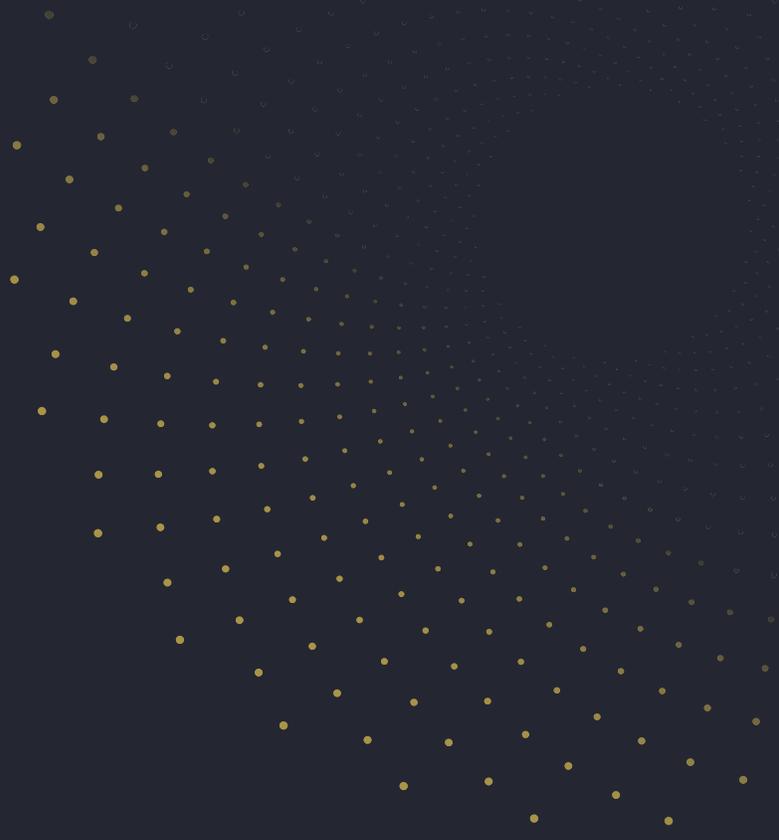




Oberkotter  
Foundation



Request for Proposals:

# Hearing Habits to Optimize Device Wear Time

APPLICATION PERIOD: APRIL 1, 2026 – MAY 29, 2026



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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 requests proposals for the following funding opportunity titled, "Hearing Habits to Optimize Device Wear Time." 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 Request For Proposals (RFP) in full to understand the project's requirements and assess their eligibility before applying. Additional information, including 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/wear-time-rfp](http://www.oberkotterfoundation.org/grants/wear-time-rfp). **Applications must be submitted electronically through Foundant, the online grant management system used by the Foundation, by 11:59:59 PM Eastern on Friday, May 29, 2026.**

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



### 3. Background

#### **Hearing device use supports listening and spoken language development.**

Consistent access to a language-rich listening environment is essential for listening and spoken language development. For children who are deaf or hard of hearing, use of properly fitted and programmed hearing technology, such as hearing aids, cochlear implants, and/or bone conduction devices, promotes consistent speech access. Evidence from pediatric hearing aid and cochlear implant users indicates that greater daily device use is associated with stronger language development.

For example, the Outcomes of Children with Hearing Loss (OCHL) longitudinal study found that children who had mild to severe hearing loss (n = 227) that wore hearing aids more than 10 hours per day exhibited superior language scores and greater language growth from 2 to 6 years compared to those with less than 10 hours of average use (Tomblin et al., 2015). Similarly, studies of pediatric cochlear implant users show a positive association between hearing hours percentage and spoken language outcomes (e.g., Gagnon et al., 2020), and that the age at which children achieve full-time device use is an even stronger predictor of language outcomes than age at implantation (Park et al., 2019; McCall et al., 2025).

#### **Device use is often lower in the critical developmental period.**

Consistent use of hearing devices is especially important during the first few years of life, known as the “critical period” for language acquisition, when the neural connections are most malleable. The type, amount, and adequacy of speech input during this period have a robust influence on later spoken language outcomes.

Despite compelling evidence of the benefit of consistent hearing technology use for listening and spoken language development, studies suggest that hearing devices are seldom worn during all waking hours, especially in infants and young children.<sup>1</sup> Caregivers (>80%) commonly overestimate their child’s device use time, with the average overestimation being around 2.5 hours per day (e.g., Muñoz et al., 2014; Visram et al., 2021; Walker et al., 2013; Walker et al., 2015).

Issues achieving consistent device use are not unique to infants and young children who use hearing aids. Park and colleagues (2019) reported that over half of children in their study took over a year to reach full-time cochlear implant use, and only about half achieved full-time use by age three. Although wide individual variability exists, age effects have been repeatedly observed, with lower use time more commonly seen in younger children (e.g., Easwar et al., 2016; Wiseman & Cxyz, 2020).

<sup>1</sup> Datalogging measurements from 6,696 pediatric hearing aid users between birth and four years of age indicated that infants and toddlers wear their devices an average of 4.5 hours per day (Jones & Feilner, 2013). Similar averages in “infants” (i.e., 6 months–24 months) have been reported by others, with only about 25% using their devices for more than 8 hours per day (Walker et al., 2015).



## Barriers to achieving full-time device use are multifaceted.

Research has uncovered a range of malleable and fixed factors pertaining to the child, caregivers, parent and provider support, and social circumstances, revealing the complexities surrounding device use and the need for responsive solutions (Gagnon et al., 2024; Nailand et al., 2022).

On the child level, factors such as younger age, additional medical diagnoses, and better pure tone thresholds have been associated with lower use. In infants, practical issues like difficulty with device fit, retention, or feedback, coupled with more limited parent knowledge of devices can play a role. Although wear time typically increases as children age (e.g., Moeller et al., 2009; Muñoz et al., 2014; Walker et al., 2015), variability and inconsistency can persist, particularly in more challenging situations (e.g., Moeller et al., 2019) and among children with milder hearing loss (e.g., Muñoz et al., 2016; Fitzpatrick et al., 2019). Challenges with child temperament (e.g., crying, tantrums), mobility, and exploration have also been reported as common factors that influence hearing device use.

At the caregiver level, emotional stress, uncertainty, grief associated with hearing diagnosis, lack of social support, competing demands, and other life burdens can create barriers to hearing care and device use (e.g., Nailand et al., 2023). Caregiver mental health and socioeconomic factors are influential, with parent-reported symptoms of depression, lower income, and public versus private insurance being linked to reduced wear time (e.g., Muñoz et al., 2016; Wiseman & Warner-Czyz, 2018).

Caregiver education (e.g., Walker et al., 2015; Muñoz et al., 2016; Wiseman & Warner-Czyz, 2018), knowledge, and self-efficacy have been positively associated with device wear time (Ambrose et al., 2020), but knowledge gaps and insecurity are reportedly common, especially for families of children newly identified with hearing loss.<sup>2</sup>

Support from service providers and other families can help with device use (e.g., Moeller et al., 2009; McCreery et al., 2015; Muñoz et al., 2017; Nailand et al., 2023), especially when delivered in a family-centered, culturally and linguistically relevant, accessible way. Importantly, support and education must extend to all individuals involved in the child's care, including other family members, daycare workers, early intervention professionals, etc., to achieve consistent device use during all waking hours across all settings.

<sup>2</sup> In a survey of parents of young children, Muñoz and colleagues (2015) reported that 40% of parents were initially overwhelmed by the hearing aid information, 26% expressed concerns about the appearance of the hearing aids, over half were unsure of recommended strategies for keeping the devices on, and 30% did not recall receiving guidance on a hearing aid wear schedule from their audiologist (Muñoz et al., 2015).

## Summary

The importance of device use and the prevalence of wear-time challenges highlight the significant potential for improvement as well as the need for additional research and interventions to help support consistent use. To help families overcome the multifaceted barriers that can prevent full-time use of hearing technology and impact listening and spoken language outcomes for children who are deaf or hard of hearing, this request for proposals will focus on supporting projects aimed at developing or expanding projects that promote hearing device use during all waking hours in infants and young children.

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## 4. Opportunity and Requirements

### OPPORTUNITY

With this published opportunity, the Oberkotter Foundation invites proposals for projects intended to help families establish and maintain hearing device use throughout all waking hours, to support children's long-term listening, spoken language, and literacy development.

This funding opportunity is intended to support project implementation and generate insights into how tools and strategies impact outcomes for populations served. Proposals should aim to promote timely and continuous access to hearing technology and equip families with the knowledge, support, and resources needed to build strong hearing habits for consistent device use to support ongoing listening and language development.

### APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Competitive proposals should include the following:

- **Implementation:** Detailed methods for implementing a new project or adapting or expanding an existing one, with the goal of supporting families in achieving consistent hearing device use. Family-centered design, potential risks, risk mitigation strategies, and project monitoring to optimize impact should be considered.
- **Impact:** Clear, measurable, and achievable goals and a plan for tracking progress toward defined hearing device wear-time goals. Baseline data is not required, but may be included if relevant and available.
- **Project Costs:** Plan for monitoring project costs throughout the duration of the grant period, with consideration to sustainability beyond the grant period.



## PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

### Approaches and Methodology

This RFP focuses on addressing barriers to consistent wear time for children and families. The Foundation welcomes a variety of solutions and approaches to achieving this goal. Proposals do not need to be limited to a single model or method.

### Monitoring and Evaluation

Projects should include a plan for monitoring wear time over the course of the grant to assess the intervention's impact. While baseline data is not required, applicants may make comparisons to baseline measures or published benchmarks to assess impact. There are no prescribed data metrics; applicants should choose metrics most suitable for their proposed projects. For example, projects may use datalogging, parent reports, surveys, or other measures to monitor progress toward stated objectives.

The Foundation prioritizes interventions for children from birth to 3 years of age, with consideration for underserved families, but also have the potential for broader impact.

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

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

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

- Projects that do not include the provision of direct support or solutions designed to benefit children and families,
- Counseling or family support services without an explicit focus on promoting hearing device use, or
- Development of educational materials duplicative of those freely available through Hearing First, an initiative of the Oberkotter Foundation, which are accessible here: [www.hearingfirst.org/weartime](http://www.hearingfirst.org/weartime).



## 5. Eligibility and Selection Criteria

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

- **U.S.-Based Organizations:** Nonprofit and tax-exempt organizations, primarily 501(c)(3)s, located and operating within the United States or its territories.
- **Organizational Capacity:** Organizations with the administrative, financial, and operational capacity to manage grant funds and deliver on all proposed activities.
- **Relevant Expertise:** Applicants with experience and/or foundational knowledge in early childhood hearing loss, as well as social drivers of health access.

Proposals 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:** Projects have a clear implementation and evaluation plan, including analysis of the impact of the intervention.
- **Feasibility:** Projects are realistic and achievable within the proposed timeframe and budget.
- **Population:** Projects that prioritize interventions for children from birth to 3 years of age, consider underserved families, and have potential for broader impact.
- **Budget:** Projects have a well-planned, reasonable, and clearly justified budget that supports the proposed project.
- **Timeline:** Projects have specific, realistic milestones and deliverables.
- **Team Strength:** Key personnel possess expertise, qualifications, and relevant experience.
- **Potential Impact:** Projects demonstrate potential for meaningful, measurable impact on the intended population.
- **Sustainability:** Consideration has been given to continuation beyond the grant period.
- **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](http://www.oberkotterfoundation.org/grants)). If you have not already done so, you will be asked to create an account before you begin the proposal. Applicants selected for funding will be notified in October 2026.

Technical or clarifying questions related to the application or application process are welcome. Please email your questions to [grants@oberkotterfoundation.org](mailto:grants@oberkotterfoundation.org) by May 11, 2026, 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	April 1, 2026
Deadline for Submitting Questions	May 11, 2026
RFP Closes	May 29, 2026
Oberkotter Foundation to Notify Applicants	September 2026
Estimated Grant Start Date	October 1, 2026

## 8. Funding Details

There is **no maximum or minimum** amount for this grant opportunity. The budget should accurately reflect the funding required to successfully execute the proposed project and include line-item justification of expenses. Budgets must be completed using the provided template, which can be found within the application. Please refer to the instructions contained within the Excel worksheet when completing it.

The Foundation will consider indirect costs pursuant to the Indirect Costs Policy located in the appendix of the RFP and within the budget section of the application.



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 outcomes in line with their defined project goals. This includes sharing post-intervention results to demonstrate project impact, as well as providing financial reporting on project costs and plans for sustainability 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.



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## Contact

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# Indirect Costs Policy

## I. Introduction

The Oberkotter Foundation (“Foundation”) is dedicated to investing its resources so that all children who are deaf or hard of hearing have opportunities to reach their full potential. The Foundation operates within the public trust and strives to maintain the highest code of conduct in all its operations. The Foundation has adopted this Indirect Costs Policy (“Policy”) to govern its activities.

## II. General Policy

The Foundation is committed to exercising national leadership as an exemplary foundation and pursuing its mission consistent with philanthropic best practices. This Policy is meant to articulate general principles regarding the Foundation’s approach to funding indirect costs, in order to ensure the Foundation’s funds are distributed and used in a manner consistent with its mission and values.

The Foundation recognizes that our funding recipients have indirect costs necessary to support their organizations, and the Foundation’s consideration and payment of indirect costs accordingly promote our funding recipients’ ability to accomplish project-based objectives. The Foundation further recognizes that it may fund various types of organizations, each with their own funding needs, fundraising opportunities and mechanisms, and scopes of operation and impact.

Accordingly, as a general policy, the Foundation has established indirect cost rates for project funding recipients, based on organization type. With this Policy, the Foundation intends to support its funding recipients responsibly and fairly and promote effective allocations of resources to accomplish the purposes of funded projects.

The rates below are the indirect cost rates allowed under this Policy, expressed as a percentage of the total direct costs of the project. Indirect costs for organization types not listed below will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

<b>Funding Recipient Type</b>	<b>Indirect Cost Rate</b>
Tax-Exempt U.S. Universities, Colleges, Hospitals and Health Systems	Up to 15%
Other Tax-Exempt U.S. Non-Profit Organizations	Up to 25%
U.S. Government Agencies or Departments or Divisions Thereof (except as noted above); For-Profit Organizations	0%



### III. Definitions and Guidelines

The Foundation funds both direct and indirect costs associated with projects. This section distinguishes these costs, defining direct costs as expenses directly attributable to a project and its outcomes, and indirect costs as a reasonable portion of necessary expenses related to the general operations and business needs of funding recipients. More specifically:

- **Direct costs** are expenses directly attributable and allocated to the execution of the specific project. They may include program staff salaries and fringe benefits (or the portions thereof allocated to the project), materials and supplies acquired to complete project work (pro-rated in case of partial use), or fees necessary to execute the project (e.g., required travel, training, consultants, or contractors). Generally, costs that would not exist if the project did not exist often may be considered direct costs.
- **Indirect costs** are general overhead and administrative expenses that support the entire organization and operations of a funding recipient and often reflect shared resources among the organization and its projects as opposed to any particular project. They may include facilities expenses (e.g., rent, utilities, furniture), general operating equipment and services (e.g., office equipment, computers and printers, communications or information systems), salaries and benefits of executives or administrative staff (e.g., C-suite, human resources, finance, legal, information technology), or central administrative functions (e.g., accounting, audits, fundraising, staff development and training). Generally, costs that would exist if the project did not exist often may be considered indirect costs.

The Foundation's expectations regarding indirect costs are summarized within the following general guidelines:

- The rates provided above apply only to project grants. They do not apply to general operating grants or endowment grants, due to the nature of those grants.
- The rates provided above apply only to organizations in the United States. Indirect costs for project funding provided to non-U.S. organizations will be determined on a case-by-case basis, with the requirement that any funding for indirect costs provided to such organizations must be applied toward charitable purposes.
- The rates provided above are the maximum rates allowed under this Policy. The actual indirect cost rate awarded may vary depending on a variety of factors, including but not limited to the type of project, the level of administrative resources required, the finances or organizational structure of the funding recipient, the overall award size, and the structure of the award. The Foundation does not seek to match an organization's self-published rates or negotiated rates with other funders,



including any U.S. government rates, where such negotiated rates are greater than the rates identified above.

- A project or organization with a lower actual indirect cost rate should not increase the funding request to the maximum allowed, as the intent of this Policy is to fund indirect costs reasonably and not to generate financial surpluses.
- The rates and other parameters set forth in this Policy apply to the primary funding recipient and any sub-recipients (including but not limited to collaborators and contractors) based on their organization type. For example, if a tax-exempt non-profit organization engages a for-profit organization to perform as a subcontractor on a project, while the applicable indirect cost rate for the tax-exempt non-profit may be up to 25%, the indirect cost rate applied to payments to the for-profit subcontractor should be 0%.
- The Foundation reserves the right to request substantiation of any funding recipient's indirect cost rate.

#### **IV. Procedural Issues**

In all instances, the Foundation will assess the factual circumstances at the time of funding to reach agreement terms with the funding recipient that ensure the objectives of this Policy are met, while also recognizing and respecting legitimate interests of that funding recipient and other parties.

#### **V. Exceptions and Updates**

Exceptions to the foregoing provisions may be made by the CEO in accordance with oversight and approval from the Foundation's Trustees. The Foundation will continually monitor and update this Policy as appropriate.