

Applicant: Metropolitan Family Services  
Program Name: ACT Now  
Document Title: Appendix I FSCS Project Abstract  
Full-Service Community Schools Grant Application

**Full-Service Community Schools Program (FSCS)  
Project Abstract FY 2023**

**Applicant Name: Metropolitan Family Services**

**Project Title:** Expanding Full Service Community Schools in Rural Illinois

**Absolute Priority the Project Addresses:** (select all that apply)

- Absolute Priority 1 – Title IA Schoolwide Program Eligibility
- Absolute Priority 2 – Title IA Schoolwide Eligibility and Rural Districts – Small and Rural or Rural and Low-Income
- Absolute Priority 3 – Capacity Building and Development Grants
- Absolute Priority 4 – Multi-Local Educational Agency Grants
- Absolute Priority 5 – FSCS State Scaling Grants

**Competitive Preference Priorities the Project Addresses:** (select all that apply)

- Competitive Preference Priority 1—Meeting Student Social, Emotional, and Academic Needs
- Competitive Preference Priority 2—Strengthening Cross-Agency Coordination and Community Engagement to Advance Systemic Change
- Invitational Priority—Supporting Effective Transition Practices, Continuity of Services and Supports, and Aligned Instruction for Students from Preschool and Other Early Childhood Settings into Kindergarten and from Kindergarten into the Early Grades (K–3).

**Total number local educational agencies (LEAs) to be served by the project: 8**

**Total number of schools to be served by the project: 16**

**Total estimated number of students to be served by the project: 8,000**

**Brief description of proposed project, including project activities:**

Expanding community schools throughout Illinois will require extensive stakeholder collaboration and engagement and be implemented through the following strategies.

- a. Steering Committee

Applicant: Metropolitan Family Services  
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Full-Service Community Schools Grant Application

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Project Abstract FY 2023**

This project will include a steering committee to advise on the expansion of the community school strategies statewide. This group will include community-based organizations, teacher unions, early childhood stakeholders, school districts, evaluation experts, parent and youth voice, ISBE, and other state agencies that work with youth-serving organizations. We will leverage the existing ACT Now Community Schools Steering Committee in order to get this project up and running immediately.

This group will advise on identifying districts and community base organizations to collaborate with throughout the state. They will also advise on the finalized MOU. Further, this group will advise on strategies to support districts and will review evaluation data and provide advice on strategies for improvement.

b. Identifying Districts and Community Partners

ACT Now, in partnership with ISBE and the statewide steering committee, will identify school districts with which to partner in this project, including the districts named in its proposal. This project aims to identify six district partners and lead community partners agencies serving those school districts (“identified districts”) total with at least two schools in each district covering the entire state of Illinois. We will weigh the following factors in identifying school districts:

- Poverty rates
- Equity factors such as race and ethnicity
- Standardized test scores
- Kindergarten readiness
- Graduation rates
- Chronic absenteeism
- Dropout rates
- Homelessness rates
- Unemployment rates
- Health indicators
- Incarceration rates
- Rates of firearm violence

c. District Services

Each school district will identify at least two schools in which to implement the community schools model. As partners, each school will receive [REDACTED] to implement the following services:

- Hire a full-time community school coordinator

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Project Abstract FY 2023**

- Conduct a community needs assessment and develop an asset map
- Identify community partners and develop three MOUs
- Develop a community school advisory board for the school inclusive of, but not limited to, teachers, families, students, and community-based organization
- Implement services in all four community school pillar areas to address needs identified in the needs assessment

All identified school districts will receive community school coordinator coaching, training, and technical assistance support in addition to the grant funding.

Identified school districts will also participate in the statewide evaluation of the project and will monitor student outcomes and participation.

d. Technical Assistance and Training

ACT Now plans to establish a statewide center for technical assistance, training, and support for community schools. This technical assistance will offer specialized and individualized support to identified districts. However, ACT Now will also make available trainings and technical assistance to schools and community organizations statewide in order to expand the model. Further, ACT Now, in partnership with ISBE, will conduct outreach to districts and regional offices of education statewide in order to spread awareness about the value of the community schools model.

i. Statewide and Regional Trainings

ACT Now is the statewide expert in training and technical assistance for community schools and has conducted this work for the past four years. We plan to expand these efforts through this project.

ACT Now will offer a statewide conference on community schools. This will serve to provide a training and networking opportunity for districts and partners identified in this grant and those that are already conducting community schools work. Further, this conference will provide an opportunity for new districts to learn about the community schools model.

This project will also provide for quarterly regional meetings. These meetings will provide training tailored to the stakeholders' needs in those areas and networking opportunities. These training opportunities will be available for both identified districts, existing community schools, and districts and partners interested in learning about the community schools model.

ACT Now will also create an online selection of trainings and online learning community for community schools in its already existing online learning management system. This will allow trainees to earn certificates, track their training, and network with one another in between in person meetings.

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Project Abstract FY 2023**

Further, ACT Now will welcome community school stakeholders into its suite of existing trainings including those on STEM, SEL, the Illinois Statewide Afterschool Quality Standards, Family Engagement, Cultural Competency, Needs Assessments and Asset Mapping, Building Partnerships, Grant Writing and Management, and much more. In addition, stakeholders will also have access to enriching and engaging curricula and resources through ACT Now.

ii. Community School Coordinator Coaching

As part of this project, ACT Now will offer community school coordinator coaching to all community school coordinators identified by the schools in the partner school districts. Community school coordinators will meet monthly with training and networking opportunities covering the following topics: Needs Assessments and Asset Maps, Advisory Boards, Data Collection and Evaluation, Family and Community Engagement, and Community Organizing. All of the training sessions will be tailored to coordinators in a rural context. We will also survey community school coordinators about training needs during the grant term and develop new trainings to respond to those needs.

The Community School Coordinator Coach will also conduct monthly individual meetings with community school coordinators and site visits as needed. This individualized coaching will provide one-on-one support that addresses the needs and concerns of specific schools and districts. All community school coordinators will identify yearly goals with their Coach both professionally and for their school community. Throughout each school year, the Coach and community school coordinator will track progress to each of the goals.

iii. Outreach to New Districts

In addition to supporting community school implementation in the identified districts and supporting existing community schools, this project will also include outreach to districts statewide to spread awareness of the model and support in how to implement it through alternative funding sources. This outreach will be incorporated into the statewide conference efforts.

Further, ACT Now, in partnership with ISBE, will work to incorporate community schools in ISBE's strategic plan, the state ESSA plan, and present this information to regional superintendents. ISBE will incorporate information about community schools throughout its communication with educators and districts.

This project will include a statewide evaluation of implementing districts. We will use the data from the evaluation to present a report the legislature, ISBE, and school districts in order to advocate for additional districts to adopt the model.

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e. Evaluation

Throughout this project, ACT Now and ISBE will work with an independent evaluator to measure the success of this program. This evaluation will provide yearly progress reports and suggestions for improvement. This evaluation will utilize existing data reporting from school districts and the statewide report card in addition to family, student, and teacher surveys; student and family participation numbers; and referral tracking. ACT Now will publish evaluation data to share with districts statewide.

**Summary of project objectives and expected outcomes:** Objective 1: In participating school communities, ensure that at least 50 percent of children are ready for kindergarten, as indicated by Illinois KIDS data and the Erikson Institute’s Risk and Reach Report. Once a baseline is established, we expect to grow 10 percent in each year of the grant (e.g. if the baseline is 30 percent, year 1 goal = 33 percent). We will accomplish this through referrals to early childhood education programs and supports such as the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). Objective 2a: In schools served under the grant, increase academic achievement such that 50 percent of students meet or exceed their English Language Arts (ELA) achievement rates by the end of the five-year term as measured by the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR). Once a baseline is established, we expect to grow 10 percent from the established baseline annually. Objective 2b: In schools served under the grant, increase academic achievement such that 50 percent of students meet or exceed their math achievement rates by the end of the five-year term as measured by the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR). Once a baseline is established, we expect to grow 10 percent from the established baseline annually. Objective 3a: In schools served under the grant, increase academic achievement such that 50 percent of students meet or exceed their target growth rate in English Language Arts (ELA) by the end of the five-year term as measured by the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR). Once a baseline is established, we expect to grow 10 percent from the established baseline annually. Objective 3b: In schools served under the grant, increase academic achievement such that 50 percent of students meet or exceed their target growth rate in math by the end of the five-year term as measured by the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR). Once a baseline is established, we expect to grow 10 percent from the established baseline annually. For Objectives 2a through 3b activities will include tutoring, high-quality out-of-school time programs, and community and family supports. Objective 4: In schools served under the grant, decrease chronic truancy and chronic absenteeism by at least 10 percent, as indicated from data provided by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). Once a baseline is established, decrease chronic truancy and chronic absenteeism by two percent of the baseline annually. Objective 5: In schools served under the grant, increase positive results on the 5Essentials survey, especially around family involvement, leading to all schools in the grant being rated as “organized” or “well-organized” by the end of the five-year term. Once a baseline is established, increase the parent response rate to the 5Essentials survey by three percent of the baseline annually. Objective 6: As the collaborative entity for community schools in Illinois, develop a support

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hub for full-service community schools to train resource coordinators and provide technical assistance and support for full-service community schools across the state. All community school coordinators in schools served under this grant will attend at least 25 hours of ACT Now training annually. As a result of participation in training, and based on surveys and qualitative data, at least 90 percent of community school coordinators working in schools under this grant will feel confident implementing the full-service community schools model. Once a baseline is established, increase the percentage of community school coordinators indicating confidence in implementation by 10 percent of the baseline annually. Anticipated outcomes include building relationships with students, family, school staff and partners, developing and maintaining effective advisory boards, building and sustaining meaningful partnerships with community organizations, and aligning with the Community Schools Standards and the Illinois Statewide Afterschool Quality Standards. Objective 7: ACT Now will develop a statewide Steering Committee for community schools with participation from at least 10 stakeholder groups in each year of the grant. The Steering Committee will contain work groups to focus on aspects such as evaluation, implementation, health and wellness, family engagement, etc.

**Proposed location(s) of implementation (e.g., city, town, county, State(s)): Illinois**

**List all LEAs that will be partnering with this project, including rural designation under the Small Rural School Achievement (SRSA) program or the Rural and Low-Income School (RLIS) program if applicable:** We will determine all participating LEAs during the first six months of the grant. We are submitting this application in partnership with Vienna Public School District 55 and DuQuoin Community Unit School District 300.

**List all non-LEA organizations partnering with this project:** We will determine non-LEA organizations participating in this project during the first six months of the grant.