

StepUp Wilmington

Agency Mission:

To empower individuals to reach their potential and lead stable lives through satisfying work.

Project Summary:

***Asking for a \$20,000 WIN Grant**

StepUp Wilmington seeks a partnership with the Women's Impact Network to support the launch of a new youth empowerment program in 2022 called Restorative Opportunity Internships (ROI). This new program will work to fill a critical gap in services at StepUp Wilmington and within the larger Cape Fear community to low income, high-achieving and minority youth with paid and mentored internships that empower students' long-term college and career ambition and achievement. This program will also work to establish new connections between students and a wide range of local industries to open the door to long-term career opportunities outside of what would typically be accessible to these students due to family background, socioeconomic status, and limited networking opportunities.

SUW's ROI initiative will provide the business support needed to engage employers, and identify paid, after-school and part time roles for youth in their workplaces. SUW will then network opportunities to local schools and youth organizations, creating an equitable pathway for youth to access internships that match their career ambitions. Youth who submit applications to the ROI program will receive SUW's unique age and career level focused pre-employment training and talent management services. Applicants are referred to employers based on their strengths, demonstrated career interests, academic achievements, and employment needs. All youth not hired by the employer for their internship will continue working with ROI staff to create a short-term action plan of strategies and activities to strengthen their future applications. For youth who are hired into internships, the ROI program remains an integral partner. SUW

provides the interns and employers with bi-weekly curriculum of education, mentoring and youth development activities that ensure success on the job, in their education, and career development goals. Through SUW's ROI initiative, Cape Fear youth will have access to personalized career development support, and the paid, year-round internships that inspire, launch, and guide successful futures that will to end the generational cycle of poverty for many Cape Fear families.

ROI will provide interns with pre-internship coaching, mentoring support, and a work-based learning curriculum to help interns develop the professional networks, career knowledge, self-confidence, and resume experiences that will empower and guide their college and career journey. And our Student, Teacher, Employer, Parent assessment tool (STEP) ensures that every student has a community of support to overcome challenges, develop their strengths, and achieve their goals. As an intermediary organization, StepUp will act as a community internship provider to all schools, educators, and youth programs within a safe distance from each internship site, not simply the youth who currently engage with SUW programs.

SUW has secured partnerships with the Girls Leadership Academy of Wilmington (GLOW) and the Wilmington Housing Authority. On the employer side, we are working with the Wilmington Chamber, existing employer partners and others to provide 10 internships that match the career ambitions of candidates by June 30th; 50 internships in FY 22/23 and 100 internships in FY 23/24. A grant from the Women's Impact Network of NHC will support the growth and impact of ROI career development services.

Program Details:

In Cape Fear today, most low income and minority youth do not have the career development support they need to formulate their career goals. In NC high schools, counselors, tasked with providing college and career guidance have caseloads in excess of 386 students, making it difficult to adequately prepare students- especially low income and minority students who are more likely to depend on school counselors for college and career guidance. In the employment world, 99.3% of all employment for youth under 18 in Cape Fear is in the service industry. While these jobs meet an immediate economic need, they do little to provide career experience, networks, or the self-identity youth need to

successfully navigate and realize their college and career aspirations. As a result, most teens have little access to career relevant jobs that develop their career identity or aspirations.

Impact:

The near-term goals include 10 internships that match the career ambitions of youth candidates by June 30th; 50 internships in FY 22/23 and 100 internships in FY 23/24. These goals are part of SUW's larger goals of placing over 350 individuals a year into living wage employment.

Through a willingness to adapt our current models to fit the needs of a new generation of students, SUW is also working through the ROI program to build an emerging model of success that brings together the needs of local businesses with the talent of young people to create mutually beneficial and growth-focused results which support the entire community's economic growth and talent development.

Many youth internship opportunities directly support the children of business owners, or employees at large corporations. Without those "connections" many youths don't have access to internships at all, or jobs that provide more than just wages. ROI will change that narrative as more youth, who otherwise would not have the right "connections", will gain access to businesses, opportunities and learning that will impact their future education and earnings potential.