



Thrive from the Start
Prenatal-Three Homelessness and Housing Instability
State Capacity-Building Initiative

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

We are inviting proposals to participate in a state capacity-building initiative (grant funding and consultative support) focused on state policy/system change designed to reduce the number of PN-3 families experiencing homelessness and housing instability.

Background

A group of national partners (ZERO TO THREE, SchoolHouse Connection, Prevent Child Abuse America, and *Housing Is*) came together in 2024 to focus on the issue of prenatal to three (PN-3) homelessness and housing instability. Through input from other local, state and national leaders, they developed the [Thrive from the Start Initiative](#) with a [national policy agenda](#) focused on solving PN-3 homelessness and housing instability.



Why is this so important? The [data](#) tell us that children are at greatest risk for experiencing homelessness during their first year of life and the number of families in homeless shelters is rising. There is a high prevalence of housing instability and homelessness among pregnant people and families with young children and few policies/systems are designed to address the unique needs of PN-3 families experiencing these challenges. Despite this, few seem to be aware of these issues. We know that when families have safe, stable housing—safe shelter when they need it—access to high-quality early development programs, family-friendly policies and other [supports](#) that meet their needs, young children have a strong foundation to grow and thrive.

Capacity-Building Opportunity

ZERO TO THREE (ZTT), through its coordination of the Thrive from the Start Initiative and with its national partners, is offering funding and intensive consultation support to multi-sector state teams to focus on policy priorities impacting families from the prenatal period to age three who are homeless and/or experiencing housing instability.

The Thrive from the Start Initiative seeks to partner with statewide teams (existing or created through this opportunity) working to educate key constituencies in their state and localities about the impact of housing instability and homelessness on the PN-3 population and their families. This includes elevating evidence-informed programs and policies that create a [comprehensive system](#) that [supports families](#) and address the root causes of homelessness. This work should have a distinct focus on infants, toddlers and expectant parents experiencing homelessness and housing instability. These partnerships should be inclusive of leaders across multiple sectors including housing, homelessness, early childhood and health, among others.



By the end of 2025 we anticipate making approximately 10 awards of up to \$100,000 each¹ with each grant lasting for a period of 18 months and concluding in June 2027.

Funding can be used to implement new projects or to enhance existing work aligned with Thrive from the Start goals. Examples of allowable uses of funding include (but are not limited to):

- Staff support for PN-3 housing and homelessness team development, coordination and participation for core partners.
- Stipends to support engagement and partnership with families, practitioners and community leaders with lived experience.
- Development of a landscape analysis of state housing and homelessness early childhood policies, funding and services for the PN-3 population.
- Research on the potential impact of policies impacting housing security and homelessness for infants, toddlers and expectant parents in your state.
- Development and implementation of public/policymaker education and advocacy strategies such as a communications plan, infographics, fact sheets, policy briefs, etc.
- Other activities to build greater awareness of and action to prevent/address the impact of housing instability and homelessness on the healthy birth and development of young children, using the [Thrive from the Start resources and policy agenda](#) as guidance.
- Optional – State grantees have the option of carrying out a limited amount of lobbying activities (e.g. meetings with policymakers that include a legislative ask, communications asking the public to contact legislators about specific legislation) with grant funds if the state team determines it is an effective strategy for achieving its goals. See budget instructions for additional details on this option.

Additionally, participating states will receive consultation and support to develop/refine and make progress on agreed-upon project activities specific to their context. State team capacity-building activities will include:

- **A Bimonthly Community of Practice** designed for and with grantees of the project. Content will be facilitated by ZTT, driven by members and supported by the expertise of the national Thrive from the Start partners.
- **An In-Person Convening** for 3 - 5 members of each state team or broader coalition and Thrive from the Start national partners to learn together and share strategies and knowledge. This event is expected to occur in the spring of 2026. States will use their grants to cover their travel expenses.
- **Individualized, intensive support** facilitated by a lead ZTT technical assistance (TA) provider who can help identify strengths to build on and opportunities for growth, make connections to content experts from the Thrive from the Start partners, and provide services outlined below. Individualized consultation will be provided via monthly virtual meetings and email. In many cases, this support will be provided directly by your lead ZTT TA provider. In other cases, your ZTT TA provider will coordinate with other content experts within ZTT, Thrive from the Start

¹ Note amounts may vary based on scope and quality of submissions



national partners or with other external partners as appropriate to meet the request. Examples of support include:

- Assistance in team planning, expansion and integration activities.
- National overview presentations about a specific issue or topic.
- Assistance in developing family engagement strategies such as listening sessions.
- Assistance in using data for decision making and/or advocacy planning.
- Resources on exemplary models or practices in other states.
- Guidance in creating, expanding, or sustaining a state infant-toddler initiative or replicating another state's model.
- Assistance in identifying and inviting outside experts to participate in team or broader coalition calls to address specific needs.
- Reviewing and providing feedback on written materials developed by the state team or broader coalition.
- Arranging peer-to-peer calls among state teams when appropriate.
- Assistance facilitating and/or participating in work sessions, public events, etc.
- Assistance with messaging and communications strategies to draw attention to and support for the topic.

Each grantee will be required to determine and demonstrate a meaningful indicator of short-term progress towards building greater public and policymaker awareness and understanding of the need for policy solutions to address PN-3 housing instability and homelessness to ensure the healthy birth and development of young children by age three. These indicators will be specific to each state team's context and goals.

Application and Selection Process:

1. **ZTT will not make more than one grant in a single state.** We encourage potential applicants to talk with colleagues in your state in advance of submitting a Letter of Interest (LOI) to plan how you might approach this opportunity together rather than submitting multiple LOIs. If more than one organization from a single state submits an LOI, ZTT will contact all applicants in that state to recommend that they work together on a single application.
2. Interested organizations are encouraged (but not required) to join an **informational webinar on October 1, 2025 at 4:00 ET. Register [HERE](#).**

Registering for this event indicates your consent for ZTT to contact you if we identify a potential collaborative opportunity with other organizations in your state. This would facilitate the submission of a single, joint application. Webinar materials will be emailed to all registrants after

Award Timeline

October 1, 2025 – Informational webinar/Office hours

October 23, 2025 – Letters of Interest Due

November 10, 2025 – Select States Invited to Full Application Process

November and December 2025 – Virtual Interviews with Select States

December 19, 2025 – Notification of Awards to Successful Applicants



the event, so feel free to register even if you cannot attend live. Submit questions in advance to StatePolicy@zerotothree.org.

3. Submit a Letter of Interest (LOI) and budget by **October 23, 2025** to kcoburn@zerotothree.org.
 4. LOIs and budgets will be reviewed by ZTT and its Thrive from the Start partners. By November 10, 2025, ZTT will notify organizations that are invited to submit a full application.
 5. Priorities for consideration in successful LOIs and full applications include:
 - Participation of a broad-based multi-sector state team (e.g., coalition or network of coalitions) that is inclusive of housing, health, early childhood and other sectors. If such a group doesn't exist yet, this grant could be used to form a new group or broaden an existing one.
 - Participation of the voices of lived experience in the initiative.
 - Demonstration that this capacity-building initiative will add value to the state team's work.
 - Commitment to sustainability of efforts beyond the grant-period.
- Note: Selected states will represent a variety of geographic regions, capacity levels, and political landscapes.
6. Select states will be invited to participate in a full application process. In addition to a completed LOI, a full application will consist of:
 - A 90-minute interview with applicant and key partner(s) – interviews will be conducted November 17 – 21 and December 1-5, 2025.
 - Submission of required grant documents.
 7. ZTT will notify organizations of awards no later than December 19, 2025.

Who May Apply:

1. Lead applicant must be a 501(c)(3) public charity in good standing. Funding will only be awarded to one organization within the state team. Further distribution to other participating organizations will be the responsibility of awardee and should be noted in proposed budget and narrative.
2. This grant is intended to support a multi-sector collaborative effort within a state. Therefore, only one LOI per state will be considered. Applicants must demonstrate a track record of leadership in coalition building towards policy change at the state and/or local level in support of families with young children.
3. Because families in historically under-resourced communities are disproportionately likely to face economic security challenges, applicants must be able to demonstrate how impacted communities are centered in their approach.



Letter of Interest – Required Questions

Please submit a Letter of Interest that responds to the following questions. There are three narrative questions, each limited to 1000 characters as a signal to be brief.

1. State
2. Name of lead organization (or fiscal sponsor)
3. EIN
4. Organization's website
5. Organization's mission and/or vision
6. Project contact:
 - Name
 - Organization
 - Title
 - Email
 - Phone number
7. Alternate/secondary project contact:
 - Name
 - Organization
 - Title
 - Email
 - Phone number
8. Describe the current status of collaborative education and advocacy efforts in early childhood and specifically around **PN-3 housing instability and homelessness policies** and the proposed grantee organization's role in these efforts. (no more than 1000 characters)
9. Does your state consider or prioritize children experiencing homelessness in delivery of, or access to, PN-3 specific programs (early intervention, child care subsidies, etc.)?
10. While we will work with you to develop and define indicators of success at the beginning of the project, please share your initial thoughts about a potential short-term indicator(s) of success in building greater public and policymaker understanding of the importance of addressing and/or preventing PN-3 homelessness in assuring the healthy birth and development of young children by age three. (no more than 1000 characters)
11. How would your efforts be informed by the voices of those with lived experience, particularly those in communities that have been historically under-represented and under-resourced in your state? How would people with lived experience be engaged in or incorporated into your project? (no more than 1000 characters)



12. Please list the key collaborators (name, organization, sector, and project role) that will participate in the core team for this project and are part of the advocacy efforts described in previous questions. Note that participation in the initiative by organizations representing a multi-sector approach and the voices of lived experience will be prioritized.
13. Are there potential funders in your state that would be willing to provide additional financial support for this collaborative effort? If so, please provide the name of potential funders and note if you have had communications with them about this grant opportunity.
14. Budget and budget narrative. Please submit a proposed budget using the template included (budget narrative information can be included in the notes column or in a separate document. The budget should be for up to \$100,000 (90% paid at the time of contract signature, 10% paid after submission of final narrative and budget reports). Refer to the earlier section for potential uses of funds.
 - **Note:** Up to 10% of total award may be used for lobbying. Additional reporting will be required for these expenditures in the form of a quarterly form noting total lobbying expenditures to date.