Request for Proposal

Development of an Evaluation Protocol for Weave: The Social Fabric Project

June 8, 2023

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Terms of Reference

Project Background and Description:

Weave: The Social Fabric Project (Weave), a program of the Aspen Institute, was founded by NY Times writer David Brooks and the Aspen Institute in 2018, to address the crisis of trust in America that has led to a multitude of social problems across the socioeconomic landscape. Our mission is to uplift social trust by investing in hyper-local leaders who embody the values of trust, relationship-building, and mutual affection. These leaders, or weavers, are working every day to combat the crisis of eroding social trust, but often do not have the resources or recognition they need to maximize their impact. By connecting, inspiring, and uplifting these hyper-local trust-builders, Weave is investing daily in the strongest solution against the crisis of social trust, helping to build relationships based on equity, dignity, and mutual affection in unique community contexts, influencing a wider cultural shift.

Weave: The Social Fabric Project has three primary objectives that drive our implementation strategy:

- Objective 1: Connect weavers around the country to share knowledge, provide peer support, guide Weave's work and advocate for lasting change;

- Objective 2: Inspire new generations of weavers to weave inclusive communities;

- Objective 3: Lift up and advance weavers as leaders in the networks and systems of community change.

It is with this strategy in mind that Weave is now implementing a program called **Weavers in Education** in Wilkes County, NC. This project was developed using the tools and resources that go into designing many Weave programs and hence serves as a natural location to develop an evaluation protocol.

As natural brokers of social trust, curricular K-12 educators and non-curricular educators (i.e. librarians, after school program leaders, summer camp educators) across the education ecosystem have the potential to deepen their impact in two ways: by modeling community collaboration and trust in their work as educators, and by empowering young people to be more trusting and trustworthy individuals, community members, and leaders. Weave has been implementing this work with the Walton Family Foundation since July 2022 to demonstrate how members of the education ecosystem can come together around the shared values of supportive relationships and trust to create a more positive environment for student success.

Weave seeks several long-term outcomes, including but not limited to increased social trust within communities, the shifting of norms and narratives to value relationships and community over individual achievement, growing financial support for hyper-local work, and increasing numbers of weavers working together at the forefront of community solutions.

Data Sources

The Weave project team has been working with communities in Wilkes County, NC to foster greater social trust through relational and cognitive trust building methods and through our innovative awards program. These methods support local weavers and create a self-sustaining and self-reinforcing network for educators to extend their impact through connection. Weave has established and renewed local relationships and deepened our local engagement by hosting in-person listening sessions, reaching out to local leaders across the K-12 education

ecosystem, and holding a daylong gathering of 150 community members. Weave has purposefully built relationships with community members across education spaces and learned about the work they're doing to ensure that our programming is inclusive of learned spaces around the county and nontraditional forms of support that center students. Weave also has an established a free online community, with a resource center and a customized sub community for the Weave Wilkes weavers to host their local events, meet and share resources. The community members themselves, the online hub, our staff and our implementation protocol will be the main sources of information.

Management Purpose and Objective

Weave: The Social Fabric Project seeks a qualified evaluation consultant to support the project team in in two ways: 1) assessing the best strategies for evaluating Weave program outcomes and designing an evaluation tool that will be used in the future to internally evaluate project outcomes and 2) utilizing a research methodology such as "Most Significant Change' or similar assess the changes among and between community members and weavers to establish a basis for ongoing priorities and evaluation.

Weave requires a protocol containing a set of evaluation questions that can be asked of similar programming in the future. In order to understand the relevance of such an evaluation protocol, Weave must also understand the direct, indirect and/or unanticipated outcomes of the project through key informant interviews that inform us of the value the program has brought to communities, neighborhoods and individuals.

Weave is seeking a qualified consultant, familiar with the Most Significant Change methodology or similar, who will incorporate value seeking questioning to inform the program team and the overall evaluation protocol.

Evaluation Protocol and Weaver Outcomes Questions

- When examining the Weave Logic Model, how shall Weave best approaches evaluating Weave activities (Weave the People, relational gatherings, Weaver Awards, Community Resources Mapping)?
- What are the best approaches to evaluating Weave's outputs and outcomes?
  - What are the questions that the team must be asking at each major milestone during implementation?
- How does the project team ascertain short term outcomes vs. probability of achieving long term outcomes?
- Who are the best individuals or organizations to approach when evaluating?
- What were the most significant impacts or changes seen within the community as a result of the Weave project's programming.

Evaluation methodology

1. The assessment will adopt a participatory approach, engaging and collaborating with the Weave Director and project team in the design, data collection, and evaluation questionnaire design.
2. The assessment shall include key informant interviews which include a 'most significant change' or similar format to understand the changes, and variety of unanticipated outcomes or indirect impacts that the program did not anticipate and should be mindful of when designing and evaluating future programming. The methodology shall also adopt an approach that reflect on how power dynamics (perceived, implied or actualized) affect the intervention's implementation and its results.

3. Evaluator(s) visit Wilkes, NC and engage with local weavers and project participants and conduct MSC or similar evaluation.
4. Evaluation protocol is designed and results are shared with project team.

Necessary Elements

The evaluation protocol developed must address each of the following evaluative elements:

1) Relevancy
2) Efficiency
3) Effectiveness
4) Sustainability
5) Impact
6) Coherence
7) Lessons Learnt

The Consultant will have access to the Weave project team and to the Weave Wilkes weavers;

- The research methodology will include:
  - A desk review of relevant documents
  - Interviews with Weave staff involved in the implementation of the program.
- Review and analysis of the data to support the development of an impact assessment framework;

Deliverables

1. Inception report that includes methodology and approach to co-creation, timing, and data collection tools. (Any questionnaires that will be used with KIIs or FGDs will need to be approved before use). Inception report will include a detailed timeline of how the consultant plans to meet all deadlines.
2. Draft protocol full inclusive of all elements outlined above and informed by KII/FGD.
3. Draft weaver outcomes report (MSC or similar report)

4. Final evaluation protocol that can be internally or externally implemented to access the Weave program initiatives. This protocol will
    a. address each of the seven areas outlined in the methodology section of this document by including questions – which can be qualitative or quantitative in nature as appropriate – that will result in a nuanced understanding of project outcomes.
    b. Provide recommendations on sampling methods and sampling size

5. Final weaver outcomes report

Timing

- The consultant will have the between end June 2023 and August 15th 2023 to complete this evaluation.
- The inception report will be due not more than 5 business days after date of hire.
- The research methodology draft will be due no later than July 31st 2023.
- The weaver outcomes draft report will be due no later than August 7th, 2023

- Comments will be delivered to the consultant no more than 3 business days after submission.
- Final evaluation protocol and weaver outcomes report will be submitted no later than August 20th, 2023.

Budget/ Consultancy Fee

The total charge to be paid for the consulting assignment will depend on the technical proposal with a ceiling of USD 15,000. A technical and financial proposal based on the Terms of Reference outlined above must be provided. Hence most of the payments are entirely responsibility of the Consultancy firm/Consultant and invoice Aspen Institute as per the agreement.

Additional costs to be borne by the Aspen Institute but to not exceed $5,000:
- Economy air fare from home of record location to Charlotte, NC
- Hotel
- Car rental and fuel
- Meals, Incidentals and Expenses

Team Composition

The team that will support the consultant will include a core team of informants and reviewers from the Weave team.:

    Executive Director, Weave
    Director, Weave
    Sr. Manager, Weave
    Sr. Associate, Weave

The consultant will also have access to our Weave Wilkes liaison team in Wilkes, NC.

Skills and qualification required.

- lead consultant with a minimum of 10 years designing program evaluations
- Applied qualitative and quantitative research experience.
- Understanding of community driven organizing,
- Significant experience of undertaking desk reviews, as well as assessments and/or evaluations.
- Ability to provide evidence of producing high quality assessment/evaluation reports in English and working within tight timeframes.

Application Process

Interested individuals and companies should submit an application containing the following elements:

- Expression of interest outlining how the consultant(s) meets the selection criteria and their understanding of the ToR and methodology
- A proposed activities schedule/work plan with time frame
- CV of the consultant(s) who will undertake the evaluation
- One recent example of similar evaluation report written by the applicant
- Technical proposal
- Financial proposal detailing consultant(s) itemized fees

The Aspen Institute will evaluate technical and financial proposals and award the assignment based on technical and financial feasibility. The Aspen Institute reserves the right to accept or reject one or all proposals received without assigning any reason and is not bound to accept the lowest or the highest bidder.