



COUNCIL FOR A
STRONG AMERICA

*Utilizing Non-Traditional Voices to Promote the
Importance of Home Visiting in New Mexico*

Proposal Submitted to the New Mexico Early Childhood Funders Group

October 31, 2017

Project Description

COUNCIL FOR A STRONG AMERICA *NEW MEXICO* — through the unique voices of our law enforcement, military, business, and faith leaders — will work alongside the New Mexico Early Childhood Funders Group’s grantees and allies to educate and engage state policymakers, media, and the general public on the importance of home visiting as a critical component to early childhood education in New Mexico.

Goals

COUNCIL FOR A STRONG AMERICA *NEW MEXICO* will support New Mexico’s children, families, and communities by expanding evidence-based, high-quality home visiting programs in collaboration with local allies and advocates. We will educate our members on key policies related to home visiting and mobilize them to engage policymakers through face-to-face meetings, earned media highlighting our research, digital platforms, and policymaker staff engagement.

Activities

Between December 2017 and March 2018, with \$10,000 in support from the New Mexico Early Childhood Funders Group, COUNCIL FOR A STRONG AMERICA *NEW MEXICO* will:

1. *Educate Policymakers* — The key to our success resides in the ability of our powerful non-traditional voices to advocate on the behalf of vulnerable New Mexican youth, families, and communities. We will continue to educate key policymakers and members of the public about the need to invest in high-quality voluntary home visiting services.
2. *Recruit and Engage Members* — COUNCIL FOR A STRONG AMERICA *NEW MEXICO* seeks to firmly establish our members in the home visiting advocacy space. As such, we will strategically sustain and grow our statewide network of over 100 non-traditional messengers composed of influential law enforcement, retired admirals and generals, business executives, and faith leaders to educate policymakers and the public about the need for and benefits of quality home-visiting services for at-risk mothers and families. Specifically we will:
 - Recruit at least 5 new unexpected messengers, with a focus on being responsive to the changing political environment in New Mexico.
3. *Media Outreach* — Develop a compelling messaging frame which result in the production of op-eds and letters to the editor for local and state media outlets. These communications will encourage public awareness on the importance of home-visiting, and will also increase broad based support on the benefits as well. Specifically we will:

- Draft, pitch and publish two op-eds / letters to the editor promoting non-traditional support for high-quality home visiting services

Timeline

The project activities will take place from December 2017 to March 2018. By initially focusing on recruiting members and educating policymakers and the public, we have time to canvas the political landscape and think strategically about where our efforts will yield progressive outcomes, even as the legislative session comes to an end. We believe the work to be done in early 2018 will allow Council for a Strong America New Mexico to achieve future success past the initial grant period.

We recognize that real advocacy takes time and our commitment to our work in New Mexico does not end at the end of the session. Member and policymaker education will have to continue after the 2018 30-day session and into 2019 to ensure substantive wins for home visiting programs. Our hope is that with the support of future funders, we will:

- Create a nonpartisan New Mexico gubernatorial education campaign in which COUNCIL FOR A STRONG AMERICA members and staff will request meetings with major candidates ahead of the 2018 election;
- Continue to educate and build relationships with legislative leaders by coordinating innovative and strategic engagement opportunities that stress the importance of voluntary home visiting (ex: bring state senator(s) and law enforcement leaders together to learn about the benefits of home visiting programs through site visits);
- Build and educate COUNCIL FOR A STRONG AMERICA membership groups while strengthening ally relationships through additional member recruitment and engagement trips; and
- Embark upon a statewide media campaign, utilizing earned and social media to allow our members have further visibility in their communities.

Key Staff

Eoin Dillon, *Director of State Policy*, COUNCIL FOR A STRONG AMERICA; *Associate Director*, FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS — Eoin joined Council for a Strong America in August 2015. In his role as Director of State of Policy, he manages all state policy efforts in the 39 states where CSA does not have staff based in the state. Eoin also serves as Associate Director of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, where he mobilizes law enforcement leaders across the county to advance policies that steer kids away from crime. Previously, he held several positions in Chicago focused on advancing change for disadvantaged communities, including a term of service with AmeriCorps, a fellowship in the Chicago mayor's office, two local political campaigns, and several years at Chicago's food bank. Prior to that, he led a classroom of elementary school-aged children at an after-school center in Madison, Wisconsin. Eoin received his BA from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and his Masters of Public Policy from the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy.

Abby Ware, *Senior Associate*, MISSION: READINESS — Abby Ware joined COUNCIL FOR A STRONG AMERICA in July 2015 after completing a Master of Arts in Political Science with James Madison University (JMU) where she studied economic and social policy. In her role as a Senior Associate on the MISSION: READINESS team, Abby serves as a lead for the organization's retired admirals and generals in New Mexico, in addition to several other states that she leads in the western portion of the United States. Prior to receiving her master's degree and joining COUNCIL FOR A STRONG AMERICA, Abby spent time at the Partnership for Public Service where she researched federal government best practices and had work featured in Politico and Federal News Radio. She also led a program called JMU Teach as its Director of Course Development where she oversaw curriculum development and ensured high academic quality of student-led courses at the University, sparking her interest in education development and peer-to-peer learning. She has had the privilege of bringing her passion for advocacy to COUNCIL FOR A STRONG AMERICA, specifically in the education and health space.

Plan to Measure Results

COUNCIL FOR A STRONG AMERICA *NEW MEXICO* diligently engages in strategic actions to promote the most substantial, lasting impact we can by targeting key decision-makers at crucial times. We assess our progress by documenting our actions and the impact they have towards the outcomes we are working to improve. We act most effectively by maintaining flexibility to respond to unexpected threats, though we also plan ahead based on reauthorization schedules, announced priorities, and annual budgetary discussions.

A few of our basic evaluations include:

- Number of unexpected messengers recruited into each into each sibling organization;
- Number of written contacts between members and state policymakers;
- Number of in-person contacts between members and state policymakers;
- Number and reach of press clips, including media coverage of briefings and events sponsored by our membership organizations, as well as social media generated from the efforts;
- Receptivity of policymakers to the messages of the groups, including the extent to which they publically embrace and support those messages and recommendations, when such information is available; and
- Strengthened relationships with allies and other key stakeholders statewide.

Attachment

1. Project Budget
2. Organization Background
3. IRS Determination Letter