



Overview

Small Magic is seeking a partner to design an evidence-based, developmentally appropriate phonics and early literacy curriculum for three and four year olds. The curriculum will be implemented in a train the trainer model, with a trained literacy specialist delivering weekly sessions to parents for up to 24 weeks. The curriculum should be designed to equip facilitators with the tools and strategies to effectively coach parents without a formal literacy background to deploy and practice phonics strategies at home with their children. The budget available for this is up to \$45,000.

Small Magic supports the future stability and prosperity of our community by focusing on our most precious resource: our children. Our innovative programs embrace cutting-edge technology and the deep involvement of parents and teachers to ensure all the children in our community are prepared for kindergarten and a lifetime of economic mobility. Since 2019, Small Magic has served over 4,000 children through our innovative early language and literacy programs and initiatives.

Purpose and Background

In 2019, Small Magic established its flagship program, Birmingham Talks, focused on increasing interactive talk to boost early literacy development for children under 5. Birmingham Talks combines innovative education technology, tangible data, and direct coaching to impact kindergarten readiness and economic mobility. On track to serve 1,600 children this year, Small Magic has become the largest municipal implementer of this edtech in the country.

In response to caregivers in our community asking us for more opportunities, we piloted “Phonics Power” in 2023. This pilot program connected parents of preschoolers with literacy experts, high-quality phonics instruction, and supplemental videos to ensure their children arrive in kindergarten prepared to read. Despite Phonics Power having no formal curriculum during its pilot phase, participants in the most recent cohort demonstrated an 89% increase in letter-sound knowledge—evidence of the potential impact of this program.

As Phonics Power enters its third iteration this summer, Small Magic is seeking a partner to design a formal curriculum for the program. This is an opportunity to make a significant impact on the early literacy ecosystem. The final product should be playful, engaging, developmentally appropriate, accessible to parents, and facilitator/coach-supported.

Project Goals

We’re seeking a partner to design a comprehensive, user-friendly phonics curriculum that is grounded in the science of reading and developmentally appropriate for three and four year olds. This curriculum will be used in a “train the trainer” model, with a trained literacy specialist supporting parents in directly implementing the curriculum with their children at home.

The curriculum should include lessons focused on the development of the following skills:

- Broad and narrow sound awareness (i.e. rhyming, letter sound recognition)
- Syllable awareness
- Letter recognition

Parents will leave sessions from this curriculum feeling empowered, energized, and equipped to not only remember, but also understand and apply content from sessions in their home literacy environments.

Facilitators and coaches will be able to go into sessions feeling empowered and energized to equip parents with the tools and resources they need to support their children's early literacy development at home. They will use this curriculum to:

- Prepare for 21-24 weekly sessions focused on phonological and phonemic awareness for preschoolers
- Facilitate and direct/coach parents towards outcomes for each session in the guide
- Quickly assess participant mastery (adult and child) and bridge knowledge gaps
- Tailor strategies and approach to accommodate participant needs (adult and child)

Scope of Work

The selected partner will design a “train the trainer”, evidence-based, developmentally appropriate phonics and early literacy curriculum for three and four year olds. The curriculum will be implemented in a train the trainer model, with a trained literacy specialist delivering weekly sessions to parents enrolled in Phonics Power for up to 24 weeks. The curriculum should be designed to equip facilitators with the tools and strategies to effectively coach parents without a formal literacy background to deploy and practice phonics strategies at home with their children. The goal is to build caregivers' confidence and skills in supporting phonemic and phonological awareness at home by using playful, low-barrier, relationship building strategies.

Deliverables

We're looking for the developed curriculum to include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following deliverables:

- Facilitator/coach guide for a literacy specialist that includes guidance for facilitating the weekly curriculum to adult learners (who do not have a formal literacy background), complete with,
 - Scope & sequence of objectives
 - Weekly, scripted plans for 24 weeks of sessions
 - Tips for modeling strategies, with variations for three and four year olds
 - Progress monitoring tools (informal and formal) for tracking participant goals
- Parent facing lesson guidebook (for 24 weeks of curriculum), complete with,
 - Objectives and key takeaways for the week, along with embedded reflection questions
 - Clear instructions for home based extension activities that build on each week's objective
 - Facilitator prompts for notetaking during sessions
 - Parent-facing explanations (in common language)
 - Stretch strategies for advanced learners

Anticipated Timeline

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| RFP Released | June 17, 2025 |
| Deadline for questions | June 30, 2025 |
| Proposals due | August 29, 2025 |
| Interviews will be held in September, with a partner selected by | September 30, 2025 |
| Complete Phonics Power Curriculum by | January 16, 2026 |

Proposal Requirements

All proposals should include:

1. A brief executive summary.
2. A description of the applicant's phonics for emergent readers methodology, as well as the philosophy or perspective that guides your work.
3. A description of the applicant's experience working directly with young children or designing and creating inclusive materials for diverse learners.
4. A detailed description of the proposed process and likely methods to develop the curriculum, including:
 - a. A list of deliverables to be created with a detailed timeline for each deliverable and overall project completion.
 - b. A detailed and itemized budget. A total budget not to exceed \$45,000 available for curriculum development, including revisions and consultation through initial implementation.
 - c. Credentials and qualifications of essential personnel working directly on this project
 - d. References from two prior clients/partners
 - e. Prior curriculum or work sample (if available)

Proposals may not exceed 2 pages, single spaces, excluding prior work sample.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated on the following factors, but not necessarily be limited to:

- Demonstrated expertise in early childhood development and the science of reading
- Clear, thoughtful guiding emergent readers methodology/philosophy
- Depth and breadth of experience designing for/working with young children and/or creating inclusive, accessible materials for diverse learners
- Relevant, detailed timeline with clear, measurable deliverables
- Specific, clear budget that is aligned with deliverables. (Budget may be used as a tiebreaker for proposals of similar caliber.)

Submission Instructions

Please email your proposal and any supporting attachments with the subject line **Phonics Power Curriculum** by **August 29, 2025** to:

Raven Johnson
Program Director, Small Magic
programs@smallmagic.org

Google Drive/Dropbox links are acceptable in the event that attachments are too large. Questions may be submitted in writing to the same email by **June 30, 2025**.