

Dress for Success Rochester - Bivette Marie Stodghill

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Organization Profile

Organization Name	Mail Address
Dress for Success Rochester	47 State Street , Rochester, NY 14614

Exec. Name	Contact Name	Phone	Email
Bivette Marie Stodghill	Bivette Marie Stodghill	575-225-3377	Bivette@dfsrochester.org

Mission/Vision The mission of Dress for Success Rochester is to empower women to achieve economic independence by providing a network of support, professional attire and development tools to help women thrive in work and in life. Since opening our doors in 2015, Dress for Success Rochester (DFSR) has responded to a unique need in this community. DFSR is the only local nonprofit employment resource specifically for women. We envision a world where women receive equitable pay, are financially independent and have access to expanded workforce opportunities that directly impact their lives and professional growth for the better. We primarily serve low-income, job-ready women of all ages, ethnicities and cultures who are ready to begin their professional journey. Women receive our services, free of charge. We work specifically with referral partners who serve underemployed women and women of color. We seek funding opportunities and corporate partnerships that encourage the delivery of services designed to address the unique needs and challenges of building a diverse and equitable workforce.

Receive County Funds? no

Div. of Corp. N/A? yes

Proposal Information

Project Name Dress for Success Rochester: Road to Success

Summary DFSR provides women with coaching, professional attire, soft skills and computer skills training to make their job search and entry into the workforce a success. Dress for Success Rochester (DFSR) advances principles of equity in the workplace and uses a referral partnership model to advance community partnerships, serve clients in common, and use shared community resources. Operating since 2015, DFSR is the only not for profit career agency that specifically serves women. We found that the demands of transportation and time limited access to our downtown boutique and career center presented a barrier for women in need. Since the start of the public health crisis, we have operated with part time staff and part time hours. Our reach to women is limited by these options. We are requesting funding in the amount \$588,820 to support the ongoing operations of Dress for Success Rochester and to operationalize the Mobile Boutique and Career Center. This project is also designed to implement the sustainability plan set forth for Dress for Success Rochester for the future. Over the course of four years, this project will allow us to recruit more women, collaborate with more agencies, implement our sustainability plan and ultimately serve more women in Monroe County. Dress for Success Rochester will serve 500 women per year with opportunities and tools to help them find and retain employment and achieve economic independence.

Workforce/Economic?	Health/Safety?	Infrastructure/Sustainability?
yes	no	no

Description DFSR's Road to Success project advances the goal of workforce development and economic recovery to Bring Monroe Back. Our proposal addresses economic harms to households and the public sector that occurred as a result of the public health crisis. DFSR directly addresses the impact of women out of work, those facing employment change, and those with reduced access to tools and opportunities needed to improve their employable skills.

The Road to Success project is not possible in 2023 without American Rescue Plan Act funding. DFSR is a non profit organization that relies on public and charitable support. Since the start of the pandemic, opportunities for financial support are fewer and DFSR relied on government support to keep our small staff employed and to continue serving women. We kept our doors open and evolved our services and delivery.

ARPA funds will allow DFSR to continue operations with fidelity by directly supporting staffing and program costs. The funds will buttress mobile expansion of current programming, allowing us to reach more women in their communities and increase partnerships with community organizations. ARPA funds will support implementation of development and marketing activities, crucial to DFSR's sustainability plan. Taken in combination; strong program support, mobile expansion, and nonprofit development activities will ensure Dress for Success Rochester is sustainable beyond 2026.

DFSR's Road to Success project will remove barriers of access and transportation women frequently face when seeking employment services. DFSR will operate the downtown boutique with expanded hours and flexible times to better meet the needs of working and job seeking women. DFSR will further remove these barriers by offering mobile services in a beautiful and inviting 28 foot mobile boutique

and career center. Our digital skills program is designed to offer virtual coursework and to prepare women to seek and work in remote positions further reducing barriers to available employment. Our virtual programming includes skills assessment, coursework and scholarship opportunities. As well, women who are in need of a laptop can apply to our laptop program and receive a refurbished laptop and computer skills free of cost.

Dress for Success Rochester firmly addresses economic barriers experienced by women seeking employment and advancement by providing them with a professional interview outfit and a complete work wardrobe at no cost once they are employed. The requested funds will allow greater coordination and training of our volunteer network of professional women who give job seeking women coaching, professional mentorship opportunities, and soft skills.

The Road to Success project will expand upon proven, existing DFSS workforce development services and allow us to fully use resources at our brick and mortar boutique in downtown Rochester, NY and onsite at community locations. We will increase service accessibility for women by 1) providing services for greater numbers of women with the mobile boutique, 2) providing access to services with an expanded schedule and 3) engaging clients and community volunteers at community partner sites. In year 1 our goal is to serve 300 women with DFSS mobile and traditional services in Monroe County. We will expand our network of referral partnerships to engage clients and volunteers throughout the area. Without the barrier of geographic location, our mobile boutique and virtual career programming will deliver DFSS proven solutions, offering women a unique opportunity to break the boundaries of their current life situations. Women will overcome skills gaps with coaching, digital skills training, and support that will help them find and secure living-wage jobs with equitable pay. Women can increase their career prospects by using the tangible services of the mobile career and technology center or the downtown career center which include wi-fi service, laptop access, and printer/scanner service.

To track impact, DFSS will integrate a mobile software system to benchmark client progress through all service engagements. This system enables DFSS to efficiently quantify individual outcomes and goals as well as demonstrate overall economic impact to the community and to our funders and partners. DFSS will collect data on numbers of clients served, program participation, demographic, geographic, employment, and income. DFSS tracks the number of women who secure employment and their trajectory after entering the workplace. To gather these data, DFSS will conduct pre and post surveys, follow-up forms and coach reports. DFSS also collects client testimonials and experience stories. These data are collected and recorded by trained volunteers and program coordinators.

Project Outcomes and Measures:

DFSS will reach 500 women with career coaching, styling, and skills training. Reach will be measured by the number of women served by either of these services

DFSS will provide a continuum of services to at least 75% of women served to address skills gaps via coaching, work wardrobe after hire, and professional development opportunities. DFSS will collect data on the type of service and the number of services provided to clients in the DFSS continuum.

DFSS will provide services with the goal of 50% of women served reporting they are employed. DFSS will measure employment status via client survey at intake and follow up points.

DFSS will collaborate with community partners and increase engagement opportunities for volunteers in the nine county radius. DFSS will measure partner engagement by tracking partner referrals and volunteer engagement for mobile programming.

DFSS seeks to help women achieve financial independence by gaining living wage jobs with reliable income. DFSS will measure client income at intake and at service points.

Our activities are designed to support our clients who are 1) interviewing or new to employment and in need of appropriate attire and soft skills, 2) underemployed and in need of training and computer skills, 3) seeking to retain or grow in their jobs to create a career, and 4) overcoming cultural and educational barriers to employment and advancement. Women will require these services through 2026 and well beyond. The requested ARPA funds will place DFSS in a sustainable position to generate additional revenue and provide services after the ARPA 4 year funding cycle has ended.

Company Strengths Dress for Success Rochester is a female led organization, headed by an Executive Director and Program Coordinator of African American descent. DF SR's founder who started the organization in 2015, in part due to her own experiences as a female minority executive, continues to serve the organization on an all female board of directors that has 18% BIPOC representation. The Board includes professional women from banking, legal, business, medical, construction and other backgrounds who are bonded to the area and committed to bringing Monroe back with DF SR's Road to Success project. As a Dress for Success affiliate, DF SR has the technical, strategic, financial, and training support of Dress for Success Worldwide.

Since its inception, DF SR has relied on a strong group of volunteers from both our service partnership and employer communities to: assist with in kind donations, provide coaching, styling and mentorship. Our proposed expansion will strategically strengthen our volunteer relationships, further serving the community. In 2021 DF SR completed and published a sustainability plan, which included a feasibility study of other mobile units operating within DFS worldwide and gauged interest and support of local partners. The local response indicating need was overwhelmingly positive. The outcomes and experiences of other DFS mobile units in Cincinnati Ohio, Phoenix Arizona and other locations indicate they are thriving and providing revenue to the organizations, while maintaining services at no cost to job seeking women. DF SR has met with and has the support of several local agencies who are scheduling mobile service dates for the first quarter of the program.

Community Resources DF SR Program Partnerships work to serve and coordinate two populations, women in search of employment and employee groups seeking to serve the community. Regarding partnerships, DF SR has developed strong and effective partnerships with 1) community agencies for client referral and service delivery 2) local employers for training, coaching, and volunteer support. Community referral partners include education centers, employment agencies, and community service organizations. For example, DF SR receives referrals and provides direct services to women referred by Rochester Educational Opportunity Center, Rochester Works! YWCA, PathStone Corporation, Starbridge, and Monroe Community College, Bank of America, Rochester Rehabilitation, and SUNY Brockport to name a few.

Our services connect a pipeline of talented interviewees from impoverished and diverse backgrounds with the possibility of placement in jobs with living wages, benefits, and room for growth. DF SR has relationships with Monroe County employers, engaging women professionals at these companies to serve as volunteer coaches, instructors and mentors to our clients. In turn, these professionals educate their employers about the reality of this female employment seeking population – that they are smart, hard-working, and employable. Examples of placement sites include ESL, Maxim, Coopervision, Bank of America, Finger Lakes Occupational Therapy, Paychex, and Trillium Health.

Dress for Success Rochester has formed a partnership with Google called Black Women Lead to help women learn digital skills for their careers. Curriculum tracks specifically designed for job seekers, career changers, veterans, entrepreneurs, formerly incarcerated and retirees are presented to all women we serve. The lessons are also available in Spanish. Each year we recruit five women to earn a nationally recognized certificate in one of five categories, at no cost to them.

Earlier this year DF SR was noted by DFS Worldwide for successful implementation of digital skills programming with 188 course attendees and successful implementation of a private online community designed to support job seeking women with 148 new enrollees. Our evolution to provide computer and virtual skills in our downtown and mobile career and technology centers is a contemporary change that will sustain our services in the future.

In addition to our computer skills partnership with Google and Merit America, DF SR teamed up with Constellation Brands Inc. to provide pro-bono coaching (by women, for women). Constellation Brands has also made a \$35,000 in-kind donation of laptops for women in the program and more than \$30,000 in financial support. We look forward to sharing qualified Google Scholarship Certificate holders for consideration in technology roles with these community partners. Dress for Success Rochester has purchased and retrofit a 28-foot commercial trailer for \$10,000 (valued at \$80,000) to be used for this program. The demolition of the interior was done pro bono (valued at \$5,000), with supplies and build-out completion funded by Bank of America for \$25,000. Suter Foundation, Five Star Bank have also supported the project for a total of \$30,000 in financial support. A group of interested business owners have also provided in kind donations for design, materials, marketing, and event support.

Audience DFSR clients live below the self-sufficiency standard, are represented by all ethnicities and races, ranging in age from 18-65 years old; 70% are single mothers; 68% have at least a high school level education, and currently, 85% live within the City of Rochester. People identifying as transgender are an emerging audience. Of the women served last year, 54% were Black, 21% Latino and 22% White, 2% American Indian/Alaska Native, and 1% Asian or Pacific Islander. We anticipate comparable numbers for our future clients. DFSR clients can earn a nationally recognized certificate in one of five categories, at no cost to them. Technology experience is not necessary to participate; the certification program is flexible, and places women into the best starting point based on their current skill level. Certification will put women on a fast-track to jobs in IT support, data analytics, project management, UX design, or Android Development. A Google Career Certificate in one of these fields can be earned, free of charge by DFSR participants (typically \$400/person), in a self-paced, online program spread out over 10 hours or less per week for six months. The program curriculum includes coaching, resume building, and interview preparation. Candidates are also required to meet with a coach in the IT field, and complete goals.

After completing the Grow with Google certificate, the certificate holders are accepted into a career network and hiring consortium that accepts Google certificate holders and considers them for employment. Today, salaries in digital and computer fields start at an average of \$63,000 annually, with over 100,000 open positions as identified by the Google Team. When combined with the mentorship and support of DFSR's core programming, the Grow with Google Certificate has the power to elevate women to new careers and economic independence.

<i>Cost 1st Year</i>	<i>Cost All Years</i>	<i>Residents 1st Year</i>	<i>Residents All Years</i>	<i>FT Employees</i>	<i>PT Employees</i>
\$147,215.00	\$588,820.00	500	2,000	1	4

Volunteers

40

Staffing DFSR's Road to Success Project will provide direct employment for 5 persons at Dress for Success Rochester to support the project. At DFSR a Program Coordinator, Mobile Coordinator, and Development/ Marketing Coordinator will each work under the supervision of the Executive Director. In addition, a per diem driver will also be hired for the Mobile program services. The Executive Director and Program Director hold Master's degrees and Bachelor's degrees respectively. DFSR will seek to hire a Mobile Coordinator and Development Marketing Coordinator to deliver services and implement the sustainability plan. We seek coordinators with at least two years experience working in the community and a minimum of two year degree with a four year degree preferred. We require the appropriate CDL license and background driver's license and insurance coverage check for the per diem truck driver required to haul the 28 foot mobile boutique. When program or project requirements arise for DFSR to subcontract with other providers for conference preparation, meals, events, advertising, printing or other service needs, we will make every effort to seek and contract with WBE, MBE's and dually certified businesses. The DFSR Board of Directors is made of professional women with vast experience and knowledge of workforce development and operations in Monroe County. Dress for Success Rochester's Founder, Alyssa Whitfield continues to support the organization as a Board and Advisory member.