Urban League of
the State of Arkansas, Inc.

STEPS TO SUCCESS 2027

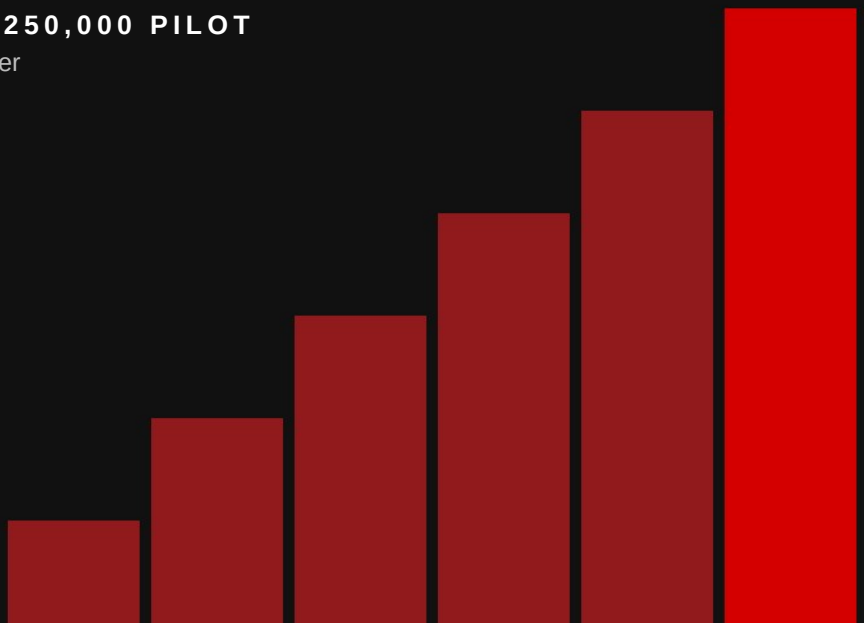
Emotional Intelligence & Conflict Resolution Initiative

A community-based youth violence prevention and leadership development program for young people in Little Rock and Central Arkansas.

STEPS TO SUCCESS: THE NEXT MOVE
Think Before You React. Choose Your Next Move.

A PARTNERSHIP PROPOSAL | $250,000 PILOT

Presented by Scott Hamilton, Chief Executive Officer
Urban League of the State of Arkansas, Inc.
ulark.org



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

Every time we wake up to another shooting involving young people in Little Rock, I ask myself what we, as community leaders, could be doing differently. We can continue talking about the problem, or we can begin investing in solutions that reach young people before these tragedies occur.

Too many of these incidents begin with a disagreement, an emotional reaction, or a moment of embarrassment that escalates. Through our Steps to Success program, the Urban League of the State of Arkansas will address something that is often overlooked: how young people understand and manage their emotions, respond to conflict, and make decisions under pressure.

We do not want to create another program where teenagers sit in a room listening to adults tell them what to do. We want to engage them, understand them, build relationships with them, and help them recognize when a moment of anger could lead to a lifetime of consequences. We invite you to invest in this work with us.

Scott Hamilton
Chief Executive Officer, Urban League of the State of Arkansas, Inc.

PROGRAM AT A GLANCE	
Who We Serve	100–150 young people, ages 12–17
Where	Little Rock and surrounding Central Arkansas communities, building a model for statewide expansion
Pilot Length	12 months, with a 12-week core curriculum delivered in community-based cohorts
Mentors	20–25 screened and trained volunteer mentors
Investment	$250,000 pilot budget (about $2,000 per enrolled participant)
Lead Organization	Urban League of the State of Arkansas, Inc., an affiliate of the National Urban League

THE CHALLENGE

Across Little Rock and Central Arkansas, shootings, violent confrontations, and tragic incidents too often begin with disagreements and emotional reactions that escalate unnecessarily. In an environment where firearms are accessible, social media amplifies disagreements, and young people feel compelled to defend their reputations, a seemingly minor confrontation can quickly become a life-changing tragedy.

The problem is not simply that young people experience conflict. It is that too many lack the emotional tools, trusted relationships, and support systems needed to manage anger, embarrassment, rejection, peer pressure, and disagreement before those moments escalate.

The moments we prepare young people for

- Arguments that escalate through social media
- Conflicts involving romantic relationships
- Bullying, humiliation, and embarrassment
- Anger associated with family circumstances
- Peer pressure and the perceived need to defend one's reputation
- Impulsive reactions when confronted or disrespected
- The influence of firearms and the consequences of violent retaliation

"You cannot always control what happens to you, but you can learn to control how you respond."

THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE OF THE INITIATIVE

Our goal is not to teach young people to tolerate mistreatment. It is to help them see that walking away, asking for help, and choosing not to retaliate are demonstrations of strength.

OUR APPROACH: REACH. CONNECT. EQUIP.

This is a practical, community-based initiative, not another traditional classroom program. Our objective is to influence how young people respond in the moments when their emotions could lead them to make life-altering decisions.

FIRST
Reach Them
Engage young people who might never join a traditional program, through experiences they genuinely enjoy.

SECOND
Connect With Them
Build authentic relationships with trained mentors and trusted adults who show consistency, respect, and genuine concern.

THIRD
Equip Them
Teach practical emotional intelligence and conflict resolution skills young people can use in everyday life.

Four elements working together

Element	What It Means
1. Attraction	Engage young people through entertainment, recreation, social experiences, and activities they genuinely enjoy.
2. Connection	Establish meaningful relationships with trusted adults, trained mentors, and credible community voices.
3. Development	Provide practical instruction in emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, communication, and decision-making.
4. Continued Engagement	Maintain relationships through mentorship, digital communication, peer support, and ongoing activities.

WHO WE SERVE

The pilot will serve 100–150 young people ages 12–17, recruited through three or four community-based cohorts in Little Rock and surrounding communities. Participation is voluntary, with parent or guardian consent.

We will intentionally recruit a diverse mix of participants: young people who show leadership potential, those experiencing challenges, and those simply seeking positive relationships and opportunities. This keeps the initiative from being seen as a program only for "troubled youth."

Listening first

Before investing heavily in curriculum, we will hold a **Youth Listening and Assessment Phase** of small-group discussions, confidential questionnaires, and professionally facilitated conversations. We will ask young people what makes them angry, what disrespect means to them, what makes it hard to walk away, and who they trust when they are upset. The goal is not to diagnose or label anyone, but to design a program around their real experiences.

A **Youth Advisory Group** of 8–12 teenagers will help shape activities, communications, and recruitment, because adults cannot assume they know what will attract and retain teens.

Community partners in recruitment

Potential Partner	Proposed Contribution
Little Rock School District and neighboring districts	Student referrals, counselors, school-based engagement
Boys & Girls Clubs and youth organizations	Access to established youth networks
Churches and faith-based organizations	Family engagement and trusted community relationships

Potential Partner	Proposed Contribution
Community centers and recreation programs	Locations for activities and youth recruitment
Juvenile diversion and prevention programs	Referrals for youth needing additional support
Neighborhood associations	Identifying communities and interested families
Parents and guardians	Referrals, encouragement, and continued support

THE NEXT MOVE: EXPERIENCES YOUTH WANT

Young people are unlikely to give up their weekends for lectures about emotional intelligence. So we will not market this as a conflict resolution class. Instead, participants join **Steps to Success: The Next Move**, a series of engaging youth experiences with one message: *Think Before You React. Choose Your Next Move.*

Activity	Purpose
Youth music and entertainment events	Introduce the program in an attractive environment
Basketball and recreational tournaments	Encourage engagement and teamwork
Gaming and esports competitions	Attract digitally engaged teenagers
Youth discussion nights	Facilitate authentic conversations
Social media challenges	Reinforce positive decision-making
Athlete and community leader conversations	Introduce relatable role models
Youth leadership experiences	Build confidence and responsibility
Mentor meetups	Develop consistent relationships with trusted adults

> **THE KICKOFF IS THE FRONT DOOR, NOT THE PROGRAM**
>
> A youth-centered kickoff with music, food, games, and respected community voices will recruit participants, introduce mentors, and register young people for ongoing activities. Success is not 200 teenagers at one event. It is turning that interest into sustained participation.

TRAINED MENTORS, LASTING RELATIONSHIPS

Mentorship is central to the initiative. We will recruit **20–25 trained volunteer mentors**, both men and women, including younger adults who relate directly to teens' experiences. Mentors will come from:

- Corporate employees and professional associations
- African American fraternities and sororities
- Educators and retired teachers
- Coaches and youth development professionals
- Community and faith-based leaders
- College students and young professionals
- Individuals with credible personal experience overcoming adversity

Mentor preparation: 12 hours minimum, plus monthly coaching

Training Module	Focus
Understanding adolescent development	Emotional, social, and behavioral changes
Emotional intelligence	Recognizing and managing emotional responses
Conflict de-escalation	Helping youth respond safely to confrontation
Trauma-informed engagement	Recognizing the effects of adversity without attempting to provide therapy
Communication and active listening	Building trust and understanding
Mentorship boundaries	Appropriate relationships and professional conduct
Youth safety and safeguarding	Reporting obligations, crisis protocols, and participant protection
Cultural awareness	Understanding young people's lived experiences

What mentors commit to

- Two structured engagement opportunities per month
- One monthly group activity or workshop
- Regular check-ins through approved, monitored communication channels
- Monthly mentor support meetings

SAFETY COMES FIRST

Every mentor is background-screened, reference-checked, trained, supervised, and accountable. Training is developed or reviewed by qualified youth development and behavioral health professionals. Mentors are not therapists, investigators, or substitute parents: they build consistent, positive relationships, reinforce lessons, and connect young people to qualified help when needed.

THE 12-WEEK CORE CURRICULUM

Weekly 60–90 minute sessions are interactive, scenario-based, and designed specifically for teenagers.

Week	Topic	Learning Objective
1	Understanding Myself	Recognizing emotions and identifying personal triggers
2	Anger and Emotional Control	Managing frustration without reacting impulsively
3	Respect and Disrespect	Understanding how perceptions of disrespect escalate conflict
4	Think Before You React	Creating space between emotions and decisions
5	Communication Skills	Listening, expressing concerns, and handling disagreements
6	Social Media Conflict	Avoiding online confrontations and retaliation
7	Peer Pressure	Making independent decisions despite group expectations
8	Empathy and Understanding	Recognizing other people's feelings and perspectives
9	Conflict Resolution	Practicing negotiation, de-escalation, and safe exits
10	Decisions and Consequences	Understanding how impulsive actions can change lives
11	Personal Leadership	Building confidence, accountability, and positive influence
12	My Next Move	Developing a personal plan for handling future conflict

LEARNING THROUGH REAL SCENARIOS

Someone posts an embarrassing video of you on social media. Your friends are laughing. Another person tells you that you need to confront the person who posted it. **What do you do?**

Instead of lecturing, facilitators help participants name their emotions, weigh the consequences, explore safer alternatives, and role-play different outcomes. When weapons, threats, or immediate danger are involved, young people learn to get to safety and seek help first.

STAYING CONNECTED BETWEEN SESSIONS

A simple, mobile-friendly digital platform will keep young people engaged between meetings. It will supplement, never replace, in-person relationships. Features may include:

- Short educational videos and interactive decision-making activities
- Moderated discussions and weekly challenges
- Program announcements and event registration
- Communication with program staff and access to approved support resources

EXAMPLE: THE 60-SECOND DECISION CHALLENGE

A participant watches a short video of a conflict that pauses just before it escalates. The question: **What should happen next?** They choose a response and see its likely consequences, reinforcing the skills from that week's session.

Because participants are minors, the platform will include privacy protections, parental consent, active moderation, and safeguards against bullying or unsafe private interactions. This is an ideal area for a technology partner to contribute expertise and tools in addition to funding.

THE 12-MONTH PILOT

We will start with two cohorts of about 25 participants each, then expand based on attendance, staffing capacity, and early feedback, reaching 100–150 young people over the year. No activities involving minors will begin until staffing, safeguarding, supervision, and insurance are in place.

Phase	Timeline	Activities
Program development	Months 1–2	Establish partnerships, hire coordinator, engage professionals, finalize curriculum
Mentor recruitment	Months 2–3	Recruit, screen, and train volunteer mentors

Phase	Timeline	Activities
Youth recruitment	Months 2–4	Listening sessions, outreach, school referrals, kickoff events
Initial cohorts	Months 4–6	Launch first 12-week program cycle
Second cohorts	Months 7–9	Recruit additional youth and deliver second cycle
Continued engagement	Months 4–12	Mentoring, events, digital activities, family engagement
Evaluation	Months 10–12	Assess outcomes, gather feedback, refine expansion plan

Implementation team

Role	Responsibility
Urban League CEO	Executive leadership, partnerships, fundraising
Program coordinator	Daily administration, youth recruitment, mentor management
Youth development specialist	Curriculum development and workshop delivery
Behavioral health partner	Professional guidance, referrals, crisis protocols
Volunteer mentors	Relationship-building and ongoing engagement
Community partners	Recruitment, facilities, activities, and support
Evaluation partner	Measurement, reporting, and program improvement

A licensed behavioral health partner experienced in adolescent trauma, emotional regulation, and violence prevention will guide a clear process for identifying concerns and making referrals when a young person needs more than mentorship can provide.

MEASURING SUCCESS

We will be accountable to our funders, partners, and community with five first-year performance targets.

100–150	75%	20–25	70%	80%
young people enrolled	complete the core curriculum	trained volunteer mentors	of assessed completers improve conflict resolution skills	of assessed completers report a trusted adult connection

We will also track attendance, mentor retention, participant satisfaction, and whether young people respond better to realistic conflict scenarios, using consistent pre- and post-program assessments and structured exercises. These are proposed targets, not predicted outcomes.

OUR COMMITMENT TO HONEST RESULTS

We will not promise that a pilot of this size will reduce shootings by a set percentage; that would be difficult to establish. We will demonstrate measurable gains in the skills and relationships associated with safer decision-making, and lay the groundwork for a larger, longer-term evaluation of violent incidents and disciplinary referrals.

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

We are seeking **$250,000** to launch and evaluate the 12-month pilot. Rather than ask one organization to carry the full cost, we invite partners to choose the level and focus that best fits their priorities.

Partnership levels

FOUNDING PARTNER **$100,000**	Core program operations and launch.
LEADERSHIP PARTNER **$50,000**	Curriculum, mentor training, and youth development.
COMMUNITY PARTNER **$25,000**	Youth activities and recruitment.
SUPPORTING PARTNER **$10,000**	Transportation, materials, and engagement.
IN-KIND PARTNER **Varies**	Facilities, technology, volunteers, food, and professional services.

Or invest in a specific need

Partners may also direct support to a component of the pilot budget.

Budget Category	Estimated Annual Cost
Program coordinator and related personnel costs	$75,000
Youth engagement events and activities	$35,000
Curriculum development and professional facilitators	$30,000
Mentor recruitment, screening, and training	$20,000
Transportation and participant support	$20,000
Evaluation and outcome measurement	$20,000
Facilities, materials, insurance, and administration	$20,000
Digital engagement and communications	$15,000
Contingency and program adjustments	$15,000

Budget Category	Estimated Annual Cost
Total Pilot Budget	**$250,000**

Figures are preliminary planning estimates and will be refined based on staffing, insurance, transportation needs, and services contributed by community partners. At a target enrollment of 125 young people, the budget is about $2,000 per enrolled participant.

> **MORE THAN A CHECK**
>
> The business community can play a powerful role beyond financial support by contributing mentors, technology, professional expertise, and community relationships.

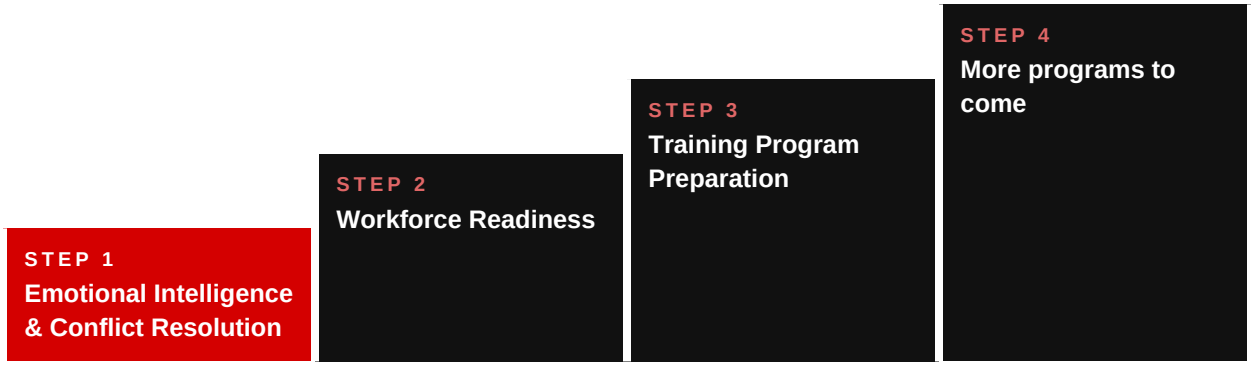
WHY THE URBAN LEAGUE

The Urban League of the State of Arkansas has a longstanding mission of helping people overcome barriers and create opportunities for successful lives. Many organizations already provide mentoring, counseling, recreation, and education. What is missing is an integrated effort that connects these resources around one objective: helping young people develop the emotional skills and relationships needed to prevent conflict from becoming violence.

The Urban League brings the leadership, coordination, accountability, fundraising, and community engagement to bring these resources together. We will build on evidence-informed practices, evaluate carefully, and grow a model that can serve communities throughout Arkansas.

Part of the Steps to Success 2027 portfolio

This initiative is the first in a portfolio of Steps to Success programs, each addressing a distinct community need. Partners can support one program or invest across the pathway.



STEPS TO SUCCESS 2027

Our young people deserve this investment.

We cannot guarantee that one program will eliminate youth violence. But we can commit to building a serious, measurable intervention that gives young people more tools, more support, and more opportunities to choose a different path.

Our communities cannot afford to wait.

PARTNER WITH US

Scott Hamilton, Chief Executive Officer
Urban League of the State of Arkansas, Inc.
[Phone] | [Email] | ulark.org

Urban League of
the State of Arkansas, Inc.

