

## State-Level Strolling Thunder (Federal Focus) RFP – 12/9/2025

### Opportunity Overview

This year marks the tenth anniversary of *Strolling Thunder*, ZERO TO THREE’s flagship advocacy event that brings families from all 50 states and DC to Capitol Hill, in person and virtually, to tell Congress what babies and families need to thrive. Our national *Strolling Thunder* events on Capitol Hill, along with state organization-led *Strolling Thunder* activities, have demonstrated the power of visible, family-centered events to build momentum for policies that support babies and their families.

**Building on these successes, ZERO TO THREE is piloting a new, federally focused Strolling Thunder model within lawmakers’ communities.** Through this Request for Proposals (RFP), ZERO TO THREE invites organizations whose goals align with the Strolling Thunder campaign to host a Strolling Thunder activation in their own community, focused on influencing the federal policy conversation. The selected partner will receive a mini-grant of **up to \$50,000**, along with planning, communications and logistics support from ZERO TO THREE to design, implement and host a public-facing Strolling Thunder event **to be held between July 1 and September 8, 2026**. Examples of such an event include, but are not limited to, a stroller march or rally at a state capitol or in a key congressional district, a community festival, or another high-visibility event with a federal policy focus that centers families with infants and toddlers, strengthens relationships with federal policymakers and lifts up policy solutions for the prenatal-to-three period that promote good health, strong families and/or positive early learning opportunities.

### Eligibility and Priority Considerations

Eligible applicants include state and local nonprofit organizations, coalitions and fiscally sponsored projects working on early childhood, family well-being or related issues. Applicants must be able to receive and manage grant funds.

Priority will be given to applicants that:

- Operate in or in close partnership with high-priority federal states/districts , such as states/districts represented by Members of Congress who are in leadership or key committee roles (Chair/Ranking Member), who may be particularly persuadable, or are influential to federal legislative outcomes but not yet consistent champions of prenatal-to-three priorities.

- Demonstrate a strong track record in coalition building, communications, and/or public policy engagement.
- Center families with lived experience especially those in historically under-resourced communities.
- Show clear potential to implement a feasible, high-impact event within the proposed timeframe.

### Expectations of Selected Partner

The Selected partner will:

- Plan and cohost one public-facing Strolling Thunder event focused on infants and toddlers in a priority state or congressional district.
- Participate in planning calls with ZERO TO THREE to refine the concept, targeting and messaging.
- Co-develop with ZERO TO THREE a written plan outlining event goals, targets, partners, roles (including ZERO TO THREE’s role) and timeline.
  - Include a storytelling component that collects and elevates parent/caregiver stories (e.g., story collection, preparation and amplification through the event and follow-up).
  - Adhere to *Strolling Thunder* branding and core messages, with room to tailor to meet local context.
- Join ZERO TO THREE in a close-out conversation and submit a financial report after the event.

### Application and Selection Process

Interested organizations should submit a short proposal (no more than 2–3 pages), plus budget attachment responding to the questions below. Proposals should be sent by email to [Jared Busker, Senior State Advocacy Specialist, [JBusker@zerotothree.org](mailto:JBusker@zerotothree.org) with the subject line “Strolling Thunder Federal Mini-Grant – [State/Organization Name].”

Recipients will receive a confirmation email within 48 hours – if you do not receive it, please resubmit.

Required application components:

1. Applicant information: state; organization name (and fiscal sponsor, if applicable); EIN; website; project contact (name, title, email, phone).

2. Organizational overview: mission/vision; brief description of your work with infants, toddlers, and families and any relevant advocacy/communications experience.
3. Federal target and location: proposed location of the event (including community, state, congressional district); proposed primary federal policymaker(s) of focus (e.g., specific Member(s) of Congress) and how you will engage and follow up with them; why this target and location matter now.
4. Event concept: concise description of your proposed Strolling Thunder event, including approximate date, format, who will participate, what you hope will happen before, during and immediately after the event, anticipated storytelling component and how your event will advance good health, strong families, and/or positive early learning opportunities for infants, toddlers and their families.
5. Families and lived experience: how you will recruit, support and compensate parents/caregivers of infants and toddlers (see linked resources in the Applicant Resource Guide for guidance on best practices for equitably compensating families for their time and participation; how their stories and priorities will shape the event; and how you will ensure the inclusion of families from historically under-resourced communities.
6. Partners and coalition: key partners you will engage (e.g., other early childhood organizations, health providers, parent leaders, advocacy coalitions) and how roles and responsibilities will be shared.
7. Media and communications: your plan for inviting media, generating coverage, leveraging social media; and how you will coordinate with ZERO TO THREE on messaging, branding, and amplification.
8. Timeline: anticipated planning milestones and target date(s) for your event (events are expected to be held between July and early-September), including any important policy hooks.
9. Budget and amount requested: a completed budget using the provided template for the amount requested (up to \$50,000) and a brief narrative explaining major cost categories. Please refer to the instructions tab on the budget template for details on indirect cost limits and other guidance. Note any additional funding or in-kind support you expect to leverage. Mini-grant funds may be used for reasonable, project-related costs such as family stipends and supports (e.g., transportation, child care, food, gift cards); staff time for planning and coordination; communications and materials; facility costs; and basic event logistics. Up to 100% of the mini-grant budget may be allocated to lobbying-related expenses, consistent with applicable law and the applicant's organizational tax status. Please note that all lobbying expenditures must be tracked, as actuals will be requested at the end of the project.

ZERO TO THREE will review proposals based on:

- alignment with federal targets and Strolling Thunder goals,
- strength and feasibility of the event concept,
- meaningful centering of families with lived experience and potential for media impact, federal policymaker engagement and longer-term relationship-building with key partners and federal policymakers.