



MERRICK
Community Services
Growing. Stronger. Together.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

August 2023

SUMMARY

Merrick Community Services is seeking a Strategic Planning Consultant to guide Board, Staff, and other stakeholders through the Strategic Planning process from planning and retreat facilitation to drafting a Strategic Plan document. This will also include revisiting and confirming the Mission, Vision, Values, and Strategic Goals of the organization.

ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW HISTORY & MISSION

Merrick Community Services was founded on Saint Paul's East Side in 1908, as the Christ Child Society of Saint Paul, in the tradition of an early 20th Century Settlement House that provided essential services to new arrivals and immigrants and economically disadvantaged individuals and families. Today, Merrick Community Services (MCS) stands as one of the oldest nonprofit social service agencies in Ramsey County, with a history of being steadfast in assisting individuals and families overcome poverty and become self-sufficient. The agency is a one-stop shop, helping individuals and families meet their basic needs and gain the skills or knowledge they desire to create a better future for themselves, their family, and their community. The core programs of MCS are *Nutrition and Senior Services*, *Employment and Career Services*, and *Family and Community Services*.

In 2013, Merrick left its old Community Center at 715 Edgerton Street (where it operated for over 50 years), due to a deteriorating building and prohibitive building rehab costs. In 2017, Merrick Community Services relocated to 1669 Arcade Street North, where it currently operates.

Merrick's staff members connect with people in need to ensure its neighbors struggling with poverty are able to connect with its programs and develop self-sufficiency. This has resulted in increased connectivity to community-based groups, area schools and leaders, and has proven the value of partnerships and collaboration. This change of location has taught Merrick's staff and leadership essential lessons about the value of the people and community surrounding its 115-year old organization. Public agencies, community schools, local companies, neighborhood organizations, and community advocates have been pulled into Merrick's services, to help strengthen the effectiveness of its programs.

Merrick Community Services has a dedicated and committed Board of Directors, composed of up-to 21 Board Members. Board Committees include the Executive, Finance, Governance/Nominations, and Development & Fundraising Committees. Merrick's staff consists of 21 FT and PT employees and a handful of independent contractors. In addition, over 250 individuals have volunteered for MCS in Fiscal Year 2022-23.

COMMUNITY NEEDS

Merrick completed Community Needs Assessments in 2011, 2015, and 2023 to assess the East Side's changing demographics, better understand its socioeconomic conditions and trends, and identify growing disparities. The most recent analysis indicates that our community remains strikingly diverse, with our BIPOC population growing since 2015 data were reported. Over 58% of residents self-identify as BIPOC, with Hmong/Asian representing nearly a third of the population at 32.28%.

Within Merrick Primary Service Area, about 30% of households are within 150% of the federal poverty line (\$30K for a family of four). Though this has stayed relatively constant over the last decade, County-wide data shows a wide disparity in poverty by race, with several races and ethnicities reporting between two to more than four times the poverty rate of white residents.

Similarly, while employment status has been wildly volatile over the last five years for nearly all populations, the disparity in employment and wages by race is stark, as well, with some members of BIPOC communities reported at two to nearly three times the unemployment rate of white residents. Among those who are working full-time, wages are significantly lower for our Black, Latinx/o/a, Hmong and Somali neighbors as compared to white workers.

Housing stability has become one of the clearest problems facing the region, and our service area in particular. The City of Saint Paul data shows that about 18% of households are cost-burdened for housing; and, within the MCS PSA, more than one-third of all households (about 36%) are cost-burdened. Among renters alone, more than half (54% are cost-burdened).

Food Insecurity is at about 10% in Ramsey County - relatively higher than all surrounding metro counties. This is, at its core, an issue primarily driven by lack of income, low-wages, inflation/cost of food, and related conditions of poverty. And, we believe this rate is higher within our Primary Service Area.

Merrick's primary goal is to reduce poverty by guiding individuals and families to be self-sufficient and independent through its wraparound programs and services. Merrick seeks provisions from a variety of community partners to support its programs that help to stabilize, strengthen, and nurture the lives of those who are struggling with poverty on Saint Paul's East Side.

Mission

Merrick Community Services supports individuals and families to navigate life transitions, find health and stability, and promote independence.

Vision

Families and individuals access support and find opportunities, overcome challenges, and contribute to create an East Side community which is celebrated as vibrant, healthy, and welcoming.

Values

- **Individuality, Diversity & Dignity:** *We meet people where they are at; honor each person's unique culture, needs, and abilities; and work with them to recognize their strengths and utilize their power to create change.*
- **Integrity:** *We act with sincerity and transparency within the community and within our organization.*
- **Partnership:** *We partner with community volunteers, organizations, and institutions to increase community engagement and impact.*
- **Stewardship:** *We utilize, maximize and leverage resources in a responsible manner.*
- **Responsive:** *We listen to the community, and adapt our organization's talents, skills, and resources to identified needs.*

Equity Statement

Merrick Community Services (MCS) recognizes the reality of historically marginalized and socioeconomically disadvantaged persons are the result of systemic and institutional racism and other biases. Since racism and other forms of discrimination have no place in our society, MCS is committed to being a diverse, inclusive, and equitable organization, where all participants, staff, volunteers, and partners feel valued and respected and experience a sense of belonging, regardless of their gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, citizenship status, age, sexual orientation, education, or disability (seen and unseen).

We embrace an equitable and nondiscriminatory approach with our programs and services and provide equal opportunity for employment and advancement. We respect, value, and celebrate diverse life experiences and heritages and ensure that all voices are valued and heard.

Strategic Plan Refresh Goals (2022-23)

- A Strong Integrated Program Model Responds to Emerging Needs in the East Side Community.
- Merrick Builds Human Capital Through Equitable and Inclusive Practices.
- A Diverse Revenue Portfolio Results in a Sustainable Business Model.

PROJECT SCOPE

The objectives of the Strategic Planning process include the following:

- Revisit MCS' Mission, Vision, and Values and determine what (if any) changes should be considered.
- What is our agreed upon value proposition?
- Are the current Strategic Goals and Strategies relevant and appropriate? What should remain and what should be replaced or enhanced?
- What does successful operational and programmatic growth look like?

- Review of current programming offerings and viability/sustainability and recommendations for any changes, if necessary.
- How do we embed/operationalize our commitment to Equity across the organization?
- Identify key measurable outcomes, aligned with Strategic Goals.

MCS seeks the expertise of a consultant to achieve the objectives of the planning process. Identified consultant responsibilities include:

- A. Initial planning meeting with the Executive Director
- B. Review of recent external and internal assessments and conduct an environmental landscape assessment, including input from various Stakeholders (Board, Staff, Participants, Volunteers, Peer Agencies, Funders, and/or Community-At-Large)
- C. Integration of key themes from assessment results into planning process and/or Retreat Facilitation
- D. Planning meeting with Executive Committee and/or Strategic Plan Design Team
- E. Facilitation of Board Retreat
- F. Facilitate Staff Retreat on integration of proposed strategies into Annual Work Plans
- G. Written report of key themes from Retreat, including (if necessary) Revised Mission, Vision, Values, Goals and Strategies
- H. Presentation of Draft Strategic Plan to Staff and Board of Directors

SELECTION CRITERIA

Proposals will be reviewed and evaluated by the Strategic Plan Design Team. Criteria for selection will include a 50-point scoring system:

- Overall Quality of Proposed Project and Work Plan (10 points)
- Demonstrated knowledge, skills, and experience in conducting successful Strategic Planning for other human services nonprofit organizations (10 Points)
- Demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and successful experience working with traditionally under-served and under-represented communities (10 Points)
- Demonstrated skills and experience in communications and group facilitation with diverse communities (10 Points)
- Competitiveness of cost proposal/hourly rate (10 Points)

HOW TO SUBMIT A PROPOSAL

Interested candidates should email the following to Daniel A. Rodriguez, Executive Director, Merrick Community Services (drodriguez@merrickcs.org):

- A Narrative and/or Work Plan that contains methodology, timeline, and deliverables for the Project
- A Project Budget
- Exclusions or exceptions
- Description of qualifications and/or resume of consultant involved in Project
- Reference and contact information of three nonprofit organizations that have utilized strategic planning services in the last 18-24 months
- Work Sample of at least one recently completed Strategic Plan

*Applications should be received by **August 31, 2023**.*

QUESTIONS

If you have any questions, contact Daniel A. Rodriguez at drodriguez@merrickcs.org or 651-219-5533.