



**Thames Valley Council
for Community Action, Inc.**

Partnering for Prosperous Communities Since 1965

Strategic Planning Consultant

Request for Qualifications

August 2019

Introduction

Thames Valley Council for Community Action, Inc. (TVCCA) is launching a strategic planning process that will begin November 2019 and guide the organization's direction for the next three to five years. The planning process will grow out of a thorough community assessment and will follow guidelines set out by TVCCA's oversight agency, the Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS), as well as the Office of Head Start.

Through this RFQ, TVCCA seeks proposals from qualified consultants/firms to assist the agency in developing and conducting its strategic plan. The consultant will work closely with the agency's Senior Director of Marketing & Development, the Board of Directors, and a committee of staff and customers to carry out this work. The process will include many stakeholders with varied perspectives and will be inclusive and collaborative. A completed plan must be approved by the Board at its March 24, 2020 meeting.

TVCCA

TVCCA's mission is to increase self-sufficiency and economic security for low income individuals and families in Eastern Connecticut through a broad spectrum of community based collaborations, promoting community awareness, and providing comprehensive, quality services. We believe that we can accomplish this mission only when our activities are directed by and inclusive of people with low incomes. Our efforts are developed in response to local needs, conducted with an awareness of national trends and policies, organized within strong community-wide partnerships, and respectful of and sensitive to the diversity and strengths of all community members.

TVCCA is the federally-designated anti-poverty agency for New London County in Connecticut. The agency also provides some services, specifically senior volunteers and senior nutrition, in Windham and Tolland Counties. TVCCA is a financially sound and mature organization with around 300 staff and an annual budget of \$27 million that serves over 24,000 people a year. Currently TVCCA offers services that address basic needs (e.g. Energy Assistance, homelessness prevention, case management, access to public benefits), early education and family support (e.g. Head Start/Early Head Start, Little Learners Early Education, WIC), senior nutrition (e.g. Meals on Wheels, congregate meals), employment and training (e.g. Workforce Investment and Opportunity Action, Jobs First Employment Services, Manufacturing Pipeline), and also supports key community mobilizations and collaborations that address conditions of poverty and access to services.

The agency's current community assessment, internal assessment, and planning document are available at <http://www.tvcca.org/aboutus>. The agency considers the assessment represented in this document to be strong, and the portions related to planning to be weaker. The agency seeks to develop priorities and plans that will provide more direction than the current plan contains.

Relevant federal and state regulations

All Community Action Agencies follow the Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) management cycle that is required in the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act, under section 676(b)(11), which requires states to “secure from each eligible entity [Community Action Agency] in the State, as a condition to receipt of funding” a community action plan inclusive of a community-needs assessment. Further, the CSBG organizational standards contain requirements and guidance related to community assessment and strategic planning for Community Action Agencies. The standards related to the strategic planning process are attached as Appendix A. Additionally, the community assessment and planning process must satisfy the requirements of the Head Start Performance Standards, which is attached as Appendix B. The chosen consultant will be expected to become familiar with and follow the CSBG and Head Start requirements.

Purpose of project

The purpose of the strategic plan is twofold: to meet the requirements of the CSBG Act and CSBG organizational standards, and more importantly, to position the agency in the best possible way to meet its mission and provide high quality services responsive to the needs of our constituents. The plan will articulate priorities and goals based on community needs, building on agency and community strengths. It will include a process for assessing progress toward goals and regularly re-evaluating strategic position and priorities.

Scope of Work

The consultant or consulting firm will work closely with and report to the Senior Director of Marketing & Development and Executive Director throughout the planning process. The Senior Director will assist with logistics (e.g. recruiting committee members, use of space for meetings, access to IT systems, etc.) and will compile the final planning document for submission to DSS using components drafted by the planning consultant and other staff.

- Within parameters set by DSS, plan methodology for strategic planning process with agency leaders, including Steering Committee and Board, and document chosen methodology.
- Prepare agendas for and facilitate regular meetings of Steering Committee and up to three sub-committees (tied to data gathering from staff, community partners, and participants) charged with oversight of various parts of the planning process, and ensure that minutes are taken.
- Conduct SWOT analysis or equivalent with Leadership Team and Board of Directors and document.
- Plan and facilitate a Board-staff retreat in January 2020 to:
 - Review needs assessment and internal assessment data and identify priority areas for the agency to address in the next three to five years.
 - Determine which of these priorities the agency will address, how, and by when, either directly or in partnership with others (i.e. create a strategic plan). This will include a funding strategy as well as a plan and systems for continuously evaluating and reviewing the strategic plan.

Deliverables

- Written overview of chosen methodology.
- SWOT analysis or equivalent with Board and Leadership Team
- Written summaries of group processes and decisions related to priorities, goals, and objectives

- Facilitation of focus groups, Steering Committee, and Board-staff retreat.
- Contributions to final planning document presented to DSS, as determined with Senior Director of Marketing & Development.

Timeline

- Bids in response to this RFQ will be accepted until September 13, 2019.
- Work on the formal planning process will commence in November 2019 at the latest.
- All deliverables should be complete by February 28, 2020.
- The consultant will participate in presenting the completed assessment and plan to the Board of Directors in March 2020.
- The exact implementation schedule will be worked out with the consultant, the Senior Director of Marketing & Development, and other key players within the agency.

Compensation

Under this contract, TVCCA will compensate the successful bidder up to \$15,000, inclusive of all expenses including travel. Bids should indicate costs related to specific activities and deliverables within the scope of work and timeframes for completion.

Location of performance

Assessment and planning activities will take place at venues throughout the agency's service area of New London County. The Senior Director of Marketing & Development is based at the agency's office in Jewett City, but can also be available to meet at the Norwich or New London offices.

Qualifications

- Experience developing strategic plans and options for funding strategies.
- Experience facilitating inclusive, collaborative processes including direct experience working with Boards of Directors and staff members of non-profit organizations and engaging community members to initiate and execute strategic planning.
- Experience building consensus among constituents with varying perspectives and opinions.
- Strong written and oral communication skills.
- Strong analytical skills and tools.
- Demonstrated ability to work collaboratively with a diverse group of stakeholders.
- Demonstrated ability to organize complex tasks and complete them in a timely manner.

Proposal submission requirements

Responses to this RFQ should be submitted by September 13, 2019 via email or mail to:

Megan Brown, Senior Director of Marketing & Development
1 Sylvandale Rd., Jewett City, CT 06351
megan.brown@tvcca.org

Submissions should include:

- Brief history of qualifications, including:
 - Background and number of years in business; Description of credentials and experience of consultant;
 - Experience working with Community Action Agencies, customer base, and funding source knowledge;
 - Identify any sub-consultants performing the work in conjunction with your proposal.
- Work Plan/Methodology: Please provide a description of the approach, methodology, instruments, and strategies you will employ to perform the Scope of Services.
- Work Sample: Provide at least one sample of a complete report, which the consultant has prepared for a similar project.
- A minimum of three references from similar projects.
- Review and consideration of proposals will begin immediately after the deadline for submission and will include interviews with qualified respondents, at the discretion of TVCCA.

RFQ-related questions to:

Megan Brown, CFRE, NCRI, Senior Director of Marketing & Development

megan.brown@tvcca.org; 860-425-6514

Terms and Conditions

When choosing the bidder, TVCCA will base its decision on several factors, including responsiveness of bid; how reasonable and realistic the quote is given the proposed activities; demonstrated reputation for excellence and timeliness in performance; qualifications and capacity of consultant(s); and understanding of and ability to meet TVCCA's needs and align with its values.

TVCCA shall not be liable for any costs associated with the development, preparation, transmittal, or presentation of any proposal or material submitted in response to this RFQ.

Upon award, TVCCA and the successful bidder will enter into a formal Contract based on the factors described in this RFQ. The services to be provided will begin and end on specific dates to be negotiated by the parties. Terms of payment will be negotiated with the successful bidder and included in the contract. Any and all parameters set forth in the RFQ are negotiable.

The successful bidder will indemnify and hold harmless Thames Valley Council for Community Action, its directors, officers, employees, agents, and members from any and all liability resulting from the performance of the services provided under any Contract issues.

The contractor will not use any confidential or proprietary information for their own or any third party's benefit and will not disclose this information to any person who does not have a need to know.

Appendix A

CSBG Organizational Standards

Category 6 Standards

Establishing the vision for a Community Action Agency is a big task and setting the course to reach it through strategic planning is serious business. CSBG eligible entities take on this task by looking at internal functioning and at the community's needs. An efficient organization knows where it is headed, how the board and staff fit into that future, and how it will measure success in achieving what it has set out to do. This agency-wide process is board-led and ongoing. A "living, breathing" strategic plan with measurable outcomes is the goal, rather than a plan that gets written but sits on a shelf and stagnates. Often set with an ambitious vision, strategic plans set the tone for the staff and board and are a key leadership and management tool for the organization.

Standard 6.1 The organization has an agency-wide strategic plan in place that has been approved by the governing board within the past 5 years.

Standard 6.2 The approved strategic plan addresses reduction of poverty, revitalization of low income communities, and/or empowerment of people with low incomes to become more self-sufficient.

Standard 6.3 The approved strategic plan contains family, agency, and/or community goals.

Standard 6.4 Customer satisfaction data and customer input, collected as part of the community assessment, is included in the strategic planning process.

Standard 6.5 The governing board has received an update(s) on progress meeting the goals of the strategic plan within the past 12 months.

There are several other Standards that relate to strategic planning that the review team should consider to coordinate with work on other categories of the Organizational Standards. Including:

Standard 1.1 The organization demonstrates low-income individuals' participation in its activities.

Standard 1.2 The organization analyzes information collected directly from low-income individuals as part of the community assessment.

Standard 1.3 The organization has a systematic approach for collecting, analyzing, and reporting customer satisfaction data to the governing board.

Standard 4.1 The governing board has reviewed the organization's mission statement within the past 5 years and assured that: 1) the mission addresses poverty; and 2) The organization's programs and services are in alignment with the mission.

Standard 4.3 The organization's Community Action plan and strategic plan document the continuous use of the full Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) cycle or comparable system (assessment, planning, implementation, achievement of results, and evaluation). In addition, the organization documents having used the services of a ROMA-certified trainer (or equivalent) to assist in implementation.

Standard 9.3 The organization has presented to the governing board for review or action, at least within the past 12 months, an analysis of the agency's outcomes and any operational or strategic program adjustments and improvements identified as necessary.

A detailed description of these standards can be found at: <http://bit.ly/2yGuSgU>

Appendix B

Head Start Standards

Program Management and Quality Improvement

Management system, 45 CFR § 1302.101

(b) Coordinated approaches. At the beginning of each program year, and on an ongoing basis throughout the year, a program must design and implement program-wide coordinated approaches that ensure:

- 1) The training and professional development system, as described in § 1302.92, effectively supports the delivery and continuous improvement of high-quality services;
- 2) The full and effective participation of children who are dual language learners and their families;
- 3) The full and effective participation of all children with disabilities, including but not limited to children eligible for services under IDEA, by providing services with appropriate facilities, program materials, curriculum, instruction, staffing, supervision, and partnerships, at a minimum, consistent with section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act; and,
- 4) The management of program data to effectively support the availability, usability, integrity, and security of data. A program must establish procedures on data management, and have them approved by the governing body and policy council, in areas such as quality of data and effective use and sharing of data, while protecting the privacy of child records in accordance with subpart C of part 1303 of this chapter and applicable federal, state, local, and tribal laws.

Achieving program goals, 45 CFR § 1302.102

(a) Establishing program goals. A program, in collaboration with the governing body and policy council, must establish goals and measurable objectives that include:

- 1) Strategic long-term goals for ensuring programs are and remain responsive to community needs as identified in their community assessment as described in subpart A of this part;
- 2) Goals for the provision of educational, health, nutritional, and family and community engagement program services as described in the program performance standards to further promote the school readiness of enrolled children;
- 3) School readiness goals that are aligned with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five, state and tribal early learning standards, as appropriate, and requirements and expectations of schools Head Start children will attend, per the requirements of subpart B of part 1304 of this part; and,
- 4) Effective health and safety practices to ensure children are safe at all times, per the requirements in §§ 1302.47, 1302.90(b) and (c), 1302.92(c)(1), and 1302.94 and 1303 subpart F, of this chapter.

(b) Monitoring program performance.

- 1) Ongoing compliance oversight and correction. In order to ensure effective ongoing oversight and correction, a program must establish and implement a system of ongoing oversight that ensures effective implementation of the program performance standards, including ensuring child safety, and other applicable federal regulations as described in this part, and must:
 - i. Collect and use data to inform this process;
 - ii. Correct quality and compliance issues immediately, or as quickly as possible;
 - iii. Work with the governing body and the policy council to address issues during the ongoing oversight and correction process and during federal oversight; and,
 - iv. Implement procedures that prevent recurrence of previous quality and compliance issues,

including previously identified deficiencies, safety incidents, and audit findings.

- 2) Ongoing assessment of program goals. A program must effectively oversee progress towards program goals on an ongoing basis and annually must:
 - i. Conduct a self-assessment that uses program data including aggregated child assessment data, and professional development and parent and family engagement data as appropriate, to evaluate the program's progress towards meeting goals established under paragraph (a) of this section, compliance with program performance standards throughout the program year, and the effectiveness of the professional development and family engagement systems in promoting school readiness;
 - ii. Communicate and collaborate with the governing body and policy council, program staff, and parents of enrolled children when conducting the annual self-assessment; and,
 - iii. Submit findings of the self-assessment, including information listed in paragraph (b)(2)(i) of this section to the responsible HHS official.

(c) Using data for continuous improvement.

- 1) A program must implement a process for using data to identify program strengths and needs, develop and implement plans that address program needs, and continually evaluate compliance with program performance standards and progress towards achieving program goals described in paragraph (a) of this section.
- 2) This process must:
 - i. Ensure data is aggregated, analyzed and compared in such a way to assist agencies in identifying risks and informing strategies for continuous improvement in all program service areas;
 - ii. Ensure child-level assessment data is aggregated and analyzed at least three times a year, including for sub-groups, such as dual language learners and children with disabilities, as appropriate, except in programs operating fewer than 90 days, and used with other program data described in paragraph (c)(2)(iv) of this section to direct continuous improvement related to curriculum choice and implementation, teaching practices, professional development, program design and other program decisions, including changing or targeting scope of services; and,
 - iii. For programs operating fewer than 90 days, ensures child assessment data is aggregated and analyzed at least twice during the program operating period, including for subgroups, such as dual language learners and children with disabilities, as appropriate, and used with other program data described in paragraph (c)(2)(iv) of this section to direct continuous improvement related to curriculum choice and implementation, teaching practices, professional development, program design and other program decisions, including changing or targeting scope of services;
 - iv. Use information from ongoing monitoring and the annual self-assessment, and program data on teaching practice, staffing and professional development, child-level assessments, family needs assessments, and comprehensive services, to identify program needs, and develop and implement plans for program improvement; and,
 - v. Use program improvement plans as needed to either strengthen or adjust content and strategies for professional development, change program scope and services, refine school readiness and other program goals, and adapt strategies to better address the needs of sub-groups

Education and Child Development Program Services

Purpose, 45 CFR § 1302.30

All programs must provide high-quality early education and child development services, including for children with disabilities, that promote children's cognitive, social, and emotional growth for later success in school. A center-based or family child care program must embed responsive and effective teacher-child interactions. A home-based program must promote secure parent-child relationships and help parents provide high-quality early learning experiences. All programs must implement a research-based curriculum, and screening and assessment procedures that support individualization and growth in the areas of development described in the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five and support family engagement in children's learning and development. A program must deliver developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate learning experiences in language, literacy, mathematics, social and emotional functioning, approaches to learning, science, physical skills, and creative arts. To deliver such high-quality early education and child development services, a center-based or family child care program must implement, at a minimum, the elements contained in §§ 1302.31 through 1302.34, and a home-based program must implement, at a minimum, the elements in §§ 1302.33 and 1302.35.

Education and Child Development Program Services

Parent and family engagement in education and child development services, 45 CFR § 1302.34

(a) Purpose. Center-based and family child care programs must structure education and child development services to recognize parents' roles as children's lifelong educators, and to encourage parents to engage in their child's education.

(b) Engaging parents and family members. A program must offer opportunities for parents and family members to be involved in the program's education services and implement policies to ensure:

- 1) The program's settings are open to parents during all program hours;
- 2) Teachers regularly communicate with parents to ensure they are well-informed about their child's routines, activities, and behavior;
- 3) Teachers hold parent conferences, as needed, but no less than two times per program year, to enhance the knowledge and understanding of both staff and parents of the child's education and developmental progress and activities in the program;
- 4) Parents have the opportunity to learn about and to provide feedback on selected curricula and instructional materials used in the program;
- 5) Parents and family members have opportunities to volunteer in the class and during group activities;
- 6) Teachers inform parents, about the purposes of and the results from screenings and assessments and discuss their child's progress;
- 7) Teachers, except those described in paragraph (b)(8) of this section, conduct at least two home visits per program year for each family, including one before the program year begins, if feasible, to engage the parents in the child's learning and development, except that such visits may take place at a program site or another safe location that affords privacy at the parent's request, or if a visit to the home presents significant safety hazards for staff; and,
- 8) Teachers that serve migrant or seasonal families make every effort to conduct home visits to engage the family in the child's learning and development.

Federal Administrative Procedures

Basis for determining whether a Head Start agency will be subject to an open competition, 45 CFR § 1304.11

(b) An agency has been determined by the responsible HHS official based on a review conducted under section 641A(c)(1)(A), (C), or (D) of the Act during the relevant time period covered by the responsible HHS official's review under § 1304.15 not to have:

- 1) After December 9, 2011, established program goals for improving the school readiness of children participating in its program in accordance with the requirements of section 641A(g)(2) of the Act and demonstrated that such goals:
 - i. Appropriately reflect the ages of children, birth to five, participating in the program;
 - ii. Align with the Birth to Five Head Start Child Outcomes Framework, state early learning guidelines, and the requirements and expectations of the schools, to the extent that they apply to the ages of children, birth to five, participating in the program and at a minimum address the domains of language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge, approaches toward learning, physical well-being and motor development, and social and emotional development;
 - iii. Were established in consultation with the parents of children participating in the program.

Family and Community Engagement Program Services

Family engagement, 45 CFR § 1302.50

(a) Purpose. A program must integrate parent and family engagement strategies into all systems and program services to support family well-being and promote children's learning and development. Programs are encouraged to develop innovative two-generation approaches that address prevalent needs of families across their program that may leverage community partnerships or other funding sources.

(b) Family engagement approach. A program must:

- 1) Recognize parents as their children's primary teachers and nurturers and implement intentional strategies to engage parents in their children's learning and development and support parent-child relationships, including specific strategies for father engagement;
- 2) Develop relationships with parents and structure services to encourage trust and respectful, ongoing two-way communication between staff and parents to create welcoming program environments that incorporate the unique cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds of families in the program and community;
- 3) Collaborate with families in a family partnership process that identifies needs, interests, strengths, goals, and services and resources that support family well-being, including family safety, health, and economic stability;
- 4) Provide parents with opportunities to participate in the program as employees or volunteers;
- 5) Conduct family engagement services in the family's preferred language, or through an interpreter, to the extent possible, and ensure families have the opportunity to share personal information in an environment in which they feel safe; and,
- 6) Implement procedures for teachers, home visitors, and family support staff to share information with each other, as appropriate and consistent with the requirements in part 1303 subpart C, of this chapter; FERPA; or IDEA, to ensure coordinated family engagement strategies with children and families in the classroom, home, and community.