

# Request for Proposals

Consultant to implement a Community Needs Assessment for the Southern Worcester County region with accompanying data visualizations and community action plans

Requested by

Worcester Community Action Council



Proposals must be submitted by: June 30, 2023

Proposals should be sent to:

Charla Hixson, Chief Impact Officer [chixson@wcac.net](mailto:chixson@wcac.net)

## 1. Summary and Organizational Background

Collaborations with other community-serving and social service providers in the region are essential to the community assessment process. Through a collaboration with a key community partner in the Southern Worcester County region, YOU, Inc., WCAC is jointly conducting the assessment with YOU, Inc.'s Southbridge Family Resource Center and Southbridge Community Connections programs, both of whom connect deeply with residents and caregivers in the targeted communities.

WCAC, the Southbridge Family Resource Center, and Southbridge Community Connections convened diverse partners from the region to kick off the assessment. All partners are committed to the outcomes of the assessment. A smaller group of these partners convened as a Steering Committee to oversee the implementation of the assessment: Greater Worcester Community Foundation, Central MA Housing Alliance, the YMCA, Open Sky Community Services, MassHIRE Central Region Workforce Board, the Kiva Center, Town of Webster Health Department, Old Sturbridge Village, Parent/Professional Advocacy League, and the Office of Senator Ryan Fattman.

The Steering Committee is issuing this RFP to prospective consultants to coordinate the assessment, bring experience and expertise to design and methodology, aggregate data, and provide a report with accessible data with the use of visualizations, for example.

## 2. Proposal Guidelines

This RFP is an open and competitive process. Any interested bidder is welcome to submit materials by the guidelines provided herein. All bids received by June 30, 2023 will be given full consideration.

Proposals must be submitted in digital format: MS Word, PDF, and/or MS Excel (for budgets). Any intended subcontractors or designated vendors must be included. A successful bid will include all expenses, relevant experience, and approach to conducting the community needs assessment. The Steering Committee will be mindful of the resources available for the project as bidder responses are reviewed.

Contract terms and conditions will be negotiated upon selection of the winning bid.

## 3. Project Purpose and Description

### Pressing Issue

- The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing barriers the most vulnerable people in our community experience.
- Since the start of the crisis, organizations across Worcester County have reported greater demand for services such as for emergency food, critical necessities, housing, and homelessness prevention, heating assistance, health and wellness, and access to public benefits. Organizations are also seeing an increased demand from first time applicants as the COVID-19 crisis persists.
- These hardships have been felt disproportionately along socio-demographic lines, with low-income, minority populations and women bearing the greatest burden.

### Response

- In response to this pressing issue, Worcester Community Action Council, Inc. (WCAC) and partners applied for and were awarded a 'Reimagine' grant from the Greater Worcester Community Foundation. This project focuses initially on Southern Worcester County with an emphasis in Southbridge and Webster:
  - Our goal is to reimagine a new system of coordinated care of shared clients to ease navigation of our respective programs and services while focusing on supporting true economic self-sufficiency. By better

coordinating access to resources and deepening referral systems, we will improve relationships and understanding of each other's strengths, resulting in more efficiently and effectively moving consumers along a holistic approach from crisis to thriving.

- This project will establish a blended coordination of care by leveraging resources, referrals and interventions among organizations in Southern Worcester County to streamline access to services.
- Partners will work to identify internal barriers that negatively impact a client's ability to easily understand and navigate services, and subsequently work to establish solutions to those barriers through policies, processes, and practices so these barriers can be broken down.
- Aim is to create a learning and sharing opportunity between partners.

### **Community Needs Assessment**

- As a first step in the project, partners convened in September 2021, resulting in agreement to conduct a comprehensive and *collaborative community needs assessment* for the region inclusive of:
  - A Social Determinants of Health Framework
  - Use of local, relevant secondary data
  - A wide range of stakeholders in the region
  - Residents as key stakeholders
  - An equity lens
  - A strength-based perspective
  - An action-oriented use of data

### ***How will we accomplish a comprehensive and collaborative assessment?***

#### **A Client-Centered Approach**

Consumers and frontline staff will be critical stakeholders in the design approach. Both stakeholders will be reflective of the community served to incorporate cultural competency into the design. Resident voice will be a key component in the methodology, engaging partners to reach as many community members as possible and ensuring input can be gathered in an accessible format for all.

#### ***Partner Participation***

The assessment will require a substantial commitment of time and resources from organizations willing to dedicate staff, stakeholders, clients, and board members who can commit their time and provide input about the design, methodology, and progress at regular meetings. Our approach will require buy-in from frontline staff, managers, and leadership, and most importantly, clients.

### **Assessment Partners**

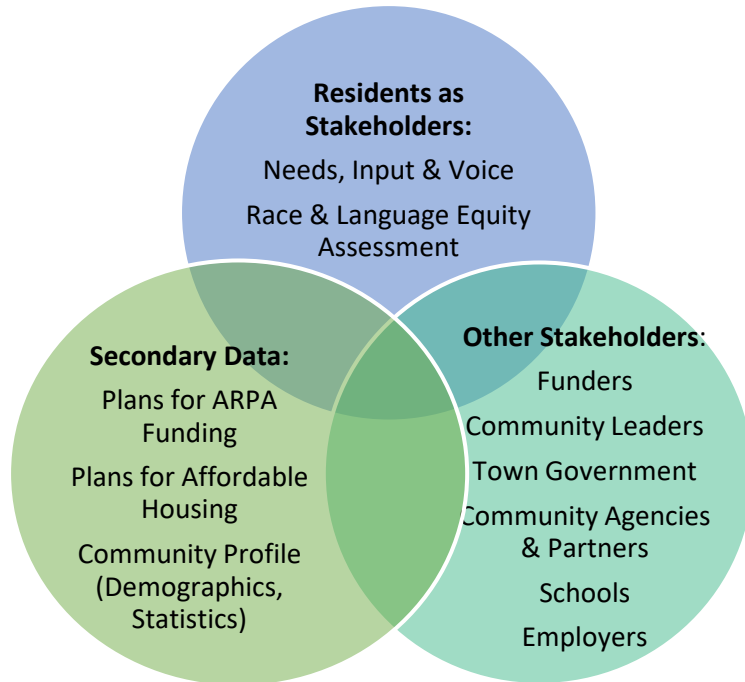
WCAC is pleased to be the convening partner, organizing the assessment, hiring a consultant, coordinating communications and regular meetings, monitoring progress, and facilitating the sharing of data. The Southbridge Family Resource Center and Southbridge Community Connections, programs of You, Inc., an affiliate of Seven Hills, are confirmed as lead collaborators. Additional interested partners so far have footprints in Southern Worcester County and include *Open Sky Community Services, Family Health Center of Worcester and Southbridge, and the organizations that participate as steering committee members of Southbridge Community Connections.*

### **Bringing More Partners to the Table**

Department of Transitional Assistance; RCAP Solutions; Quinsigamond Community College; MassHire in Southbridge; Center for Hope in Southbridge, Boys and Girls Club in Webster/Dudley; Blackstone Valley Chamber; childcare providers including Kennedy Donovan Center Southbridge, and YMCA of Central MA and Tri Community; Catholic Charities in Southbridge; New Hope, Inc.; Spectrum Health Systems; Renaissance Medical Group; Southbridge Public Schools; Webster Public Schools; Harrington Hospital

#### 4. Project Scope

WCAC is seeking to contract with a consultant who can lead and coordinate a community needs assessment inclusive of a Social Determinants of Health framework, use of local relevant secondary data, a wide range of stakeholders, residents as key stakeholders, an equity lens, a strength-based approach, and an action-oriented use of data.



Below is a *sample methodology and timeline*. Alternative suggestions for a timeline are welcomed within the bidder response.

Who	Purpose	When	Form of Collection	Comments
	Research, vet, and hire a consultant	Summer 2023		Reimagine Grant partners with SCC input
	Secondary Data Review & Community Profile created; Asset Mapping	Fall 2023	Gather and review relevant data sources	Plans for ARPA Funding Affordable Housing Plans Demographics & Statistics Local Data-Family Health Center
Community/Resident Focus Groups	Resident needs, input & voice	Winter/Spring 2023-2024	Facilitated Focus Group	
Community/Resident Surveys	Resident needs, input & voice	Winter/Spring 2023-2024	Online and hard copy surveys; use of volunteers to connect with residents in their own languages	Consider how and where to distribute surveys: community events, grocery stores, door knocking,

				through our collective agencies
Race & Language Equity Assessment				
Community Leader Focus Group	Needs, gaps in services in the community	Winter/Spring 2023-2024	Facilitated Focus Group	Hold multiple focus groups combining towns?
Key Stakeholder Interviews	Needs, gaps in services in the community	Winter/Spring 2023-2024	Virtual; one-to-one	Town Officials Schools Faith-Based Leaders Partner Agencies Fundors
Stakeholder Survey	Needs, gaps in services in the community	Winter/Spring 2023-2024	Online	Partner Agencies-EDs, Board Chairs, key staff
Analyze Data/Trend Analysis	Determine trends, top needs, does resident voice match with municipality plans?	Summer 2024		
Create Data Visuals to Share Community-Wide/Conduct Community Forums	Develop action items such as cross-training for organizations	Fall 2024		

*Additional deliverables* other than those listed above in the sample methodology and timeline include raw data sets, a slide deck(s) of the assessment methodology and key findings with data visualizations, and a gap analysis.

**5. RFP Timeline**

*RFP Distributed:* June 1, 2023

*RFP Open Period:* June 1, 2023-June 30, 2023

*Completed RFP Bids Due:* June 30, 2023

*Steering Committee Period of Review:* July 1, 2023-August 11, 2023

*Consultant Selected:* August 11, 2023

*Contract Negotiation and Award:* August 14-31, 2023

*Preferred Start Date:* Please provide the earliest start date in the response.

*Milestones and specifics of project timeline will be according to contract.*

**6. Proposal Structure**

Please submit all proposals in digital format (MSWord, PDF, and/or MS Excel for budgets) to Charla Hixson, Chief Impact Officer, through email [chixson@wcac.net](mailto:chixson@wcac.net).

The proposal should include:

- Brief history of your company, personnel and expertise.
- Itemized budget, including supplies, subcontractors, vendors, services, training, and/or equipment needed. Please include as many details as needed to explain your costs.

- Information about your project manager and any technical lead(s) on the project.
- Description of relevant experience conducting community needs assessments, particularly those with cross-sector partnerships.
- (2) References from relevant clients.
- Knowledge of the area preferred
- Describe how a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion lens was incorporated into previous projects or community need assessments.
- Provide a clear example of how challenges were overcome in a previous project. Ex) engagement with stakeholders, ensuring data was returned from the community (survey responses, ensuring attendance at focus groups)

## **7. Evaluation and Selection**

The Steering Committee will evaluate and select the winning bid based on several criteria:

- Total Cost
- Understanding of Social Determinants of Health
- Experience
- Familiarity with the Southern Worcester County region
- Use of a race and equity lens
- Data analytics
- Facilitation skills with diverse stakeholders
- Presentation development and skills
- Process for project management, timeline, methodology-representative cross section of South County, approach to process
- Integration of community voice
- Portfolio of previous projects, successes, and how challenges were met
- References

## **8. Questions**

Questions may be submitted to WCAC during the RFP Open Period to: Charla Hixson, Chief Impact Officer, through email [chixson@wcac.net](mailto:chixson@wcac.net).