



STRATEGIC PLANNING CONSULTANT REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Statement of Purpose

Greater Newark Conservancy seeks a seasoned strategic planning consultant with extensive experience working with not-for-profit social service organizations to facilitate a process that will create a strategic plan that will drive the next three years (2025-2028) of the organization's operations. Ideal candidates should be familiar with the New Jersey/Newark social service and philanthropic communities, have particular insight into New Jersey's urban communities, especially Newark, and be willing to partner with the Board and staff leadership to facilitate the creation of a strategic plan.

Organizational Background

Greater Newark Conservancy (GNC) fosters collaboration in our community at the intersection of environmental, food, and racial justice to promote the health and well-being of Newark residents. Our programs seek to reverse the long history of systemic racism to improve social determinants of health by expanding access to green spaces, nutritious food, wellness education, and youth development.

Founded in 1987, the Conservancy has pursued its mission through the following interrelated program areas: environmental education,

community greening and urban agriculture, environmental justice, and job training for Newark's urban youth.

Located in downtown Newark, NJ, we own the Judith L. Shipley Urban Environmental Center. The center includes: the Prudential Outdoor Learning Center, a 1.5-acre demonstration and learning garden; a greenhouse; a converted post office building that serves as our administration building; and a partially renovated historic former church/synagogue building that is our education building with classrooms, meeting rooms, and a kitchen. Substantial fundraising has been completed for renovation of the remaining portions of the education building but further programming and architectural design is on hold until the strategic plan is completed. Possible uses of the building have included a place for educational gatherings and presentations, community events, culinary programming, and an event space that could generate revenue for other operations. We also operate the Hawthorne Avenue Farm in the southwest section of Newark. The 2.5-acre farm offers community garden plots for local residents, an orchard, and production crops for food distribution to local residents and farmers markets. Adjacent to a public elementary school, the farm also provides farm-to-school and nutrition curriculum to students.

Our current programs revolve around three major initiatives.

- Education: Since 2004, we have hosted over 40,000 children for environmental education learning experiences at our Urban Environmental Center. In addition, we currently operate several programs throughout the City of Newark, including farm-to-school programming in seven schools serving 1500 students annually; Newark Grows School Gardens Support Network in 23 schools; field trips to the Shipley Urban Environmental Center, with 2800 first-grader visits in 2024; family programs with planned weekend and monthly activities; and internships for high school and college students via volunteer and paid opportunities through the year.
- Healthy Food in Newark Schools (HiNS): Funded by a 3-year grant from Novo Nordisk and led by Greater Newark Conservancy, HFiNS is dedicated to transforming the Newark Public School District food system, ensuring access to fresh, healthy, and culturally relevant foods for all students throughout the district. Initiatives under the HFiNS Coalition will provide more FoodCorps service members supporting Newark area schools, distribution of thousands of produce boxes to elementary-aged students, increased logistical capacity for the delivery of fresh local produce

to Newark schools, and a holistic culinary training approach for food service professionals. Coalition partners include the Newark Board of Education, The Common Market, FoodCorps NJ, Newark Beth Israel Medical Center/RWJBarnabas Health, United Way of Greater Newark, the Urban Agriculture Cooperative, and more.

- Urban Farming and Community Greening: We operate a 2.5-acre production farm and a hydroponic growing system, generating nearly 7,500 pounds per year of nutritious vegetables to feed 2,000 low-income Newark residents and distribution to local farmers markets. Our farm also provides "Plot It Fresh" raised beds, supplies, and materials and technical consultation to more than 260 community gardeners. Our urban agriculture department operates our own licensed farmers market and mobile farmstands that move throughout Newark neighborhoods, a free spring seedling distribution program, and a subscription-based community supported agriculture (CSA) program. To exponentially increase the impact of our mission we started the Newark Urban Growers School in 2024. The school offers a curriculum of sustainable organic agriculture techniques and landscape design and planning courses free of charge to individual homeowners, community gardeners, and other urban farmers in Newark and surrounding urban areas.

Additional information on Greater Newark Conservancy is available at www.citybloom.org.

Theory of Change and Strategic Plan

In recent years, the board and staff have had discussions related to reorienting our strategic focus and program goals from urban greening, youth development and training, and food access and education to how to use innovative sustainable urban agriculture and training, food education, and community partnerships to realize environmental justice and better health outcomes for urban communities. In 2023, board and staff held a retreat to articulate our organizational theory of change. Having completed the theory of change exercise, the board of directors has decided that we now need to create a strategic plan that will serve as a guide for future organizational, programmatic, and development activities and enable our organization to most effectively realize our mission.

Project Scope

Greater Newark Conservancy is soliciting proposals from qualified strategic planning consultants to assist the Board and its strategic planning committee with the creation of a strategic plan. The selected consultant will:

- Meet regularly with the strategic planning committee of the board ("the Committee") to review strategic planning progress and address issues as they arise;
- With the Committee, design a work plan for compiling underlying relevant research and data;
- Conduct or direct historical analysis, as necessary, of programming, finances, development and fundraising, governance, and capital planning, with a particular emphasis on cost-benefit analyses of current programs and how they support our mission and theory of change;
- As appropriate, design and delegate or conduct surveys, interviews, etc., with critical stakeholders, including internal and external constituents;
- With the Committee, determine the appropriate timing, structure, and content of a strategic planning retreat for the board, should such a retreat be desirable;
- Lead, facilitate, and complete the crafting, drafting, and editing of the strategic plan document with the support of the Committee.
- Assist in formulating a strategic plan implementation plan and defining organizational benchmarking goals; and,
- Be available for periodic in-person presentations to the Board of Directors through the strategic planning process.

Required and Desirable Skills and Experience, Anticipated Outcomes, and Performance Standards

- Demonstrated expertise in non-profit organization strategic planning
- Experience working with non-profit boards of directors, executive leadership, staff and stakeholders and constituents
- Skill in understanding an organization's mission, mandates and values and challenges and developing and articulating an organization's long-term vision/theory of change and strategies
- Experience in SWOT analysis, environmental scan, and/or situational analyses

- Ability to identify, prioritize and resolve issues and obtain data from stakeholders
- Expertise in facilitating board and staff dialogue and consensus
- Ability to define long and short term goals and benchmarks for an organization or project
- Excellent organizational and communication skills
- Track record of meeting deadlines and adhering to schedules
- Experience in non-profit budgeting, accounting, financial tracking, reporting and analysis
- Ability to provide independent perspective, willingness to challenge thinking, and offer constructive direction and advice regarding, but not limited to, program, finance, governance, and staffing.
- Skill in creating and managing highly collaborative processes with all interested parties and encouraging full engagement and buy-in of key participants
- Responsive to Committee requests and available for consultation during the process
- Familiarity with New Jersey's/Newark's non-profit and philanthropic environment, prior experience working with multicultural organizations and experience with and connections to Newark's community development organizations preferred

Deliverables

- Detailed plan and schedule for the strategic planning process
- Records of committee meetings and action items
- Reports of analyses (program, operating and capital finances, governance, community positioning) as required
- Drafts or reviews of drafts
- Upon completion of the strategic planning process, the consultant will deliver a written strategic plan document. The plan will include but may not be limited the following:
 - Rearticulation/affirmation of organization's theory of change and mission
 - Statement of strategic vision and objectives
 - Recommended sequencing and schedule for implementation of strategic plan tactics
 - Benchmarks and metrics to evaluate results against strategic plan objectives

Schedule/Term of Contract

Since we have already completed our theory of change exercise, we anticipate that the strategic planning process should take approximately four months. We are open to feedback from the consultant on this timetable, though.

The strategic planning process is scheduled to begin in mid-August, 2024 and be completed by December, 2024.

Fee Proposal and Billing

The proposal should include a lump sum fee for professional strategic planning services and terms for approved reimbursable expenses.

Consultant will submit bills to client by email on a monthly basis based upon the percentage of the work completed. The final payment will be contingent upon client's acceptance of the final written Strategic Plan document(s).

Contractual Terms and Conditions

- Shepherd an open and inclusive process with no sidebar or off-the-record negotiations
- Maintain complete confidentiality of all data collected about Greater Newark Conservancy and the final Strategic Planning documents in perpetuity.
- Comply with all applicable laws and statutes.
- Observe all sensitivities, as appropriate.

Proposal Submission Guidelines and Requirements

Proposals should demonstrate the following:

- Experience with organizations of comparable scale or larger.
- Skill at facilitation of inclusive and participatory team processes
- Clarity in writing and presentation of information
- Experience with multicultural organizational development, organizational management and change management.
- Knowledge of qualitative data analysis/participatory research and ability to apply that to both internal processes and external research, information collection.
- Skill at designing processes for the facilitation of focus groups,

- listening sessions.
- Knowledge of the latest thinking in social change organizing

Proposals must include the following:

- Firm name, address, contact information and website address.
- Proposed principal consultant for the project with title, resume and contact information.
- Firm description
- Resumes of all proposed project staff
- Resources available to support and/or enhance the strategic planning process
- Availability for in-person or virtual interviews with the Committee
- Proposed scope of work, including an outlined approach and strategy to complete the requested scope of work
- Draft work plan for the strategic planning process, including key milestones, the timetable for completion of specific tasks, the personnel needed to complete tasks, and expectations for support and assistance from Greater Newark Conservancy. The work plan should include regular consultation with Committee and key staff starting with an initial meeting to present the strategic plan design and make any necessary adjustments. Proposals may also include other activities deemed necessary by the consultant and specified within the work plan.
- Proposed fee for completion of the scope of work and compensation terms for project related supplies and expenses.
- List of at least three non-profit board client references with contact information and description of work completed.
- Sample completed non-profit strategic plan (redactions accepted)

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation of each response will be based on the organization and completeness of the proposal as well as demonstrated experience and expertise in strategic planning for non-profit organizations. The responses will be scored based upon the following:

- Approach, thoroughness, and completeness of the proposal (30%)
- References and past performance with multicultural organizations engaged in strategic planning (35%)
- Principal and staff expertise in strategic planning and managing

participatory processes (25%)

- Fee (10%)

Selection Process Timeline

- All questions and inquiries must be made in writing via email to no later than August 2, 2024. Phone inquiries will not be accepted.
- Proposals must be submitted to RFP@citybloom.org no later than August 7, 2024 at 5 PM.
- In person interviews of finalist applicants will be conducted on August 9, 2024 to August 12, 2024 at 32 Prince Street, Newark, NJ.
- The selected finalist will be notified on August 13, 2024.
- The strategic planning process will begin on August 19, 2024.

Contact Information

We encourage inquiries in writing. Please submit any questions to RFP@citybloom.org at any time up until August 2, 2024. Answers to all questions will be sent by e mail to all invited proposers on August 3, 2024. Phone inquiries will not be accepted.

