



---

**Mill City Farmers Market & Charitable Fund**  
Request for Proposal for Strategic Planning Services  
July 31, 2024

**Mill City Farmers Market & Charitable Fund (“MCFM & CF”) is now accepting proposals to provide strategic planning services for our organization commencing, starting December 2024 with anticipated completion no later than July 2025.**

### Project Objective

We seek a partner to lead a process that produces a clear, compelling strategic plan to guide the organization over the next three years. We understand that this work will include board, staff, and external stakeholders. We hope this process will result in: an assessment of progress on any current plans; review and adjustments of vision, mission and values; identification of strategic priorities for the next three years; creation of measurable strategies related to priorities; and an operating plan to align the chosen priorities with MCFM & CF’s human and financial resources.

### Organization Overview

The Mill City Farmers Market, a 501c4 organization, and the Mill City Farmers Market Charitable Fund, a 501c3 charitable and grant-making organization that strive to grow a more just, local and sustainable food system, together are embarking on a strategic planning process to help guide the 18 year old organization into its next chapter of strategic growth, innovation, and impact. Together, we are:

- A leader in local food economy since 2006: 100% of farm products are grown or harvested locally, all baked goods and prepared food made with a minimum of 25% local ingredients
- A trusted destination for local, seasonal produce, groceries + homegoods for 175k annual local and global visitors (10K+ weekly during summer) with \$3M annual market spend
- A strong reputation among our 115 annual rotating farmers market vendors (farmers, makers and artists) as a springboard to success for local businesses
- Deployed \$400,000 in grant funding to support local and sustainable farmers and food makers in MN and WI with plans to reach “next stage” of business growth
- Distribute 13,000 pounds of local produce annually to food insecure residents

- A total operating budget of \$514K for the two organizations: \$221K for MCFM, a 501(c)4 organization, and \$293K for MCFM-Charitable Fund, a 501(c)3 organization
- Solid foundation to support growth, including 6 months of operating reserves.

Additional information about MCFM & CF can be found at [millcityfarmersmarket.org](http://millcityfarmersmarket.org)

## Purpose and Intent

MCFM & CF is at a critical stage in its organizational development. After 18 years in operation and following the transition to new executive leadership following the retirement of a founding executive director, MCFM & CF board and staff leadership is now positioned to support the development and implementation of a new strategic plan to guide the priorities and investment of this organization's next chapter. Our vision for this organization goes unchanged: support the diverse cadre of farmers and food businesses that enrich our regional food system by stewarding the land, cultivating sustainability-grown food, and catapult locally-owned and operated food brands. The plan's application is intended to coordinate and validate the activities our market and charitable fund are prioritizing for the coming three years, help leadership implement strategy-driven actions, and deprioritize expenses and investments that do not lead to the systemic changes elevated by the organization and its leadership.

The Strategic Planning Committee, composed of key staff and board leadership, have identified the following critical strategic questions and guiding thoughts to help set the stage for the strategic planning process:

- What is the need for farmers markets in the Twin Cities and what is MCFM & CF's unique contribution within the local food movement?
- What is the need for supporting diverse, sustainable farmers and food businesses in Minnesota and Wisconsin? What is our unique contribution in this area? What about climate change, local sourcing, community building, and food access?
- Do we need to re-evaluate or reimagine MCFM & CF's goal/mission/response in light of the generational transfer of farmland occurring in the next decade?
- How can MCFM & CF plan for a future emergency response? What amount of hardship funds for farmers are sufficient?
- What role should MCFM & CF play in policy-advocacy?
- Identify and revisit how our legal structure affords us unique advantages? Disadvantages?
- How do we define impact? What programs should we continue, grow, or stop?
- What is the right mix of vendors at the market? Do we want to expand?

- How might a shift in focus/ mission, rather than purely market operations affect future fundraising?
- What is a realistic expectation for how much money MCFM & CF can expect to raise in the future? What key partnerships do we need to cultivate in order to make a bigger impact? Should we consider more City, State, and Federal monies?
- Are our operations, processes and procedures lean/streamlined in such a way to support the strategic plan through the next 3 years? How can we innovate around the logistical issues that we face? Are there areas where technology could advance our mission without increasing headcount?

## Schedule of Activities

The following steps to launch and complete MCFM & CF's 2025–2028 Strategic Plan have been identified (and completed):

Date	Action
June 2024	Strategic Planning Committee of the Board and Leadership staff formed
July 2024	Timeline, key milestones, and desired deliverables drafted
July 2024	An initial set of questions to be answered in the strategic planning process drafted
Wednesday, July 31, 2024	RFP issued
Friday, August 30, 2024	<a href="#">Intent to Apply intake form</a> is due, pre-qualification review begins
Friday, September 6	Invitations to apply are sent to qualified service providers
Friday, September 20, 2024, 5:00 p.m. CT	Proposals are due
Week of September 23 - Week of September 30th	Strategic Planning Committee evaluates proposals and due diligence begins
Week of October 7, 2024	Top 3-4 service providers identified for initial interviews
Week of October 14, 2024	Hold initial interviews with service providers
Week of October 21, 2024	Strategic Planning Committee identifies top 1-2 service providers for final interviews
Week of November 4, 2024	Conduct final interviews with top 1-2 service providers
Week of November 11, 2024	Final selection and appointment of consultant
December 2024 - January 2025	Begin working with strategic planning consultant
July 2025	Finalize Strategic Plan
Fall-Winter 2025	Develop and approve budget to operationalize new strategy
January 2026	Operationalize new strategic plan

## Scope of Work & Deliverables

We are seeking a strategic plan that provides both an overarching vision for the organization, as well as a roadmap for how to get there with operational recommendations. The selection committee is looking for the consultant to design and manage an interactive strategic planning process that engages MCFM & CF staff, the Strategic Planning Committee, the full Board of Directors, and key external stakeholders. Their process should include the following:

- Comprehensive assessment of progress on current plans, including alignment of and shared commitment to MCFM & CF's organizational direction and priorities
- Stakeholder engagement (e.g., board, staff, clients, donors)
- Organizational structure analysis, environmental scan and market analysis in order to elevate potential areas for differentiation and reconcile with end deliverable
- Review and revisit adjustments to vision, mission and values based on the external scan and an internal assessment
- Define MCFM & CF's organizational direction for the next three years (2025-2028), including identifying strategic initiatives, organizational goals and outcomes, and the key performance indicators to evaluate impact and success for the two organizations
- Creation of metrics and evaluation framework
- Outline the financial, operational, programmatic, and human resources required to achieve the strategies and goals outlined in the plan for the two organizations
- Implementation plan to align the chosen priorities with MCFM & CF's human and financial resources for the two organizations

The consultant will be responsible for the following key actions and activities:

- Conducting research and gathering information
- Facilitating
- Drafting
- Providing guidance and feedback to the client
- Finalizing and presenting deliverables

The consultant will be responsible for providing the following deliverables throughout the course of the engagement:

- Develop a detailed work plan and timeline for strategic planning process
- Provide a preliminary assessment following stakeholder engagement, organizational legal structure analysis and environmental scan activities
- Draft and present the framework for the strategic plan
- Strategic plan final written report
- Executive Summary presentation, suitable for distribution to staff, Board, and external stakeholders
- Impact evaluation framework, including KPIs for measuring success
- Financial framework and key areas for investment and further resource development
- Implementation and communications plans

#### Proposal Submittal Requirements

We will invite qualified firms and independent consultants to submit a written proposal and supporting documentation for the facilitation of a strategic planning process and the creation of a five-year strategic plan.

The Proposal should describe the methodology to be used to accomplish the project objectives and complete the tasks and deliverables outlined above. Please note that this Request for Proposal cannot identify each specific, individual task required to implement this project successfully and completely. MCFM & CF relies on the professionalism and competency of the Proposing Firm or Consultant to be knowledgeable of the general areas identified in the Scope of Work and of adequate competence to include in its proposal all required tasks and subtasks, personnel commitments, person hours, direct and indirect costs, etc.

Amendments to proposals are allowed prior to the proposal due date and must be made to the Submittal Contact in writing via email. A vendor may withdraw its proposal at any time prior to the proposal due date by notifying the Submittal Contact in writing.

We request applicants submit their proposal electronically to [ella@millcityfarmersmarket.org](mailto:ella@millcityfarmersmarket.org), subject "Strategic Planning Proposal - Your Name". Proposals will be accepted until Friday, September 20, 2024 at 5:00pm CT. Late proposals will not be considered. The selection committee is actively seeking applicants from diverse backgrounds. MCFM & CF reserves the right to reject any and all proposals received under this RFP.

Prior to submitting a proposal, all interested applicants should [complete this Intent to Apply intake form by Friday, August 30, 2024](#) to express their interest in submitting a formal proposal to the RFP. Any questions regarding this RFP should be directed to MCFM & CF Executive Director, Ella Daniels, at [ella@millcityfarmersmarket.org](mailto:ella@millcityfarmersmarket.org).

All of the following documents and relevant information must be submitted as part of the response to this RFP:

**INTENT TO APPLY, STEP 1:**

#	Category	Inclusion
1	<a href="#">Intent to Apply/Prequalification form</a>	a. The form includes firm name, contact person, address, telephone number, and email of primary contact, several pre-qualification questions, and a nondisclosure agreement.

**IF INVITED TO APPLY; STEP 2:**

#	Category	Inclusion
1	Firm Organization:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Type of ownership - individual, partnership, or corporation</li> <li>b. Number of years in business.</li> <li>c. Listing of primary disciplines and services provided.</li> <li>d. Size of firm.</li> <li>e. Highlight your firm’s community involvement, commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, as well as your philanthropic endeavors.</li> </ul>
2	Project Team:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Provide an overview of team structure.</li> <li>b. Identify key personnel proposed for this project including their roles, number of years at the firm, and bios with relevant skill sets and experience on comparable projects.</li> <li>c. Outline how the firm will ensure a consistent project team and consistent level of experience over the course of the project.</li> </ul>

#	Category	Inclusion
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. Identify subconsultants, if any, to be utilized and include resumes showing their experience on comparable projects.</li> </ul>
3	Qualifications and References:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Provide a minimum of three examples and references for similar work performed for other organizations.</li> <li>b. Highlight prior work for nonprofit organizations and prior work engaging diverse communities.</li> <li>c. Provide some examples of how you or your practice strives to drive and measure impact for your clients, in your work, or in your community.</li> </ul>
4	Understanding of Project Requirements and Specifications:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Demonstrate understanding of the task and services requested.</li> <li>b. Describe your approach to meet the objectives.</li> <li>c. Provide examples of sample deliverables.</li> <li>d. Provide a proposed project schedule including milestones and project completion.</li> </ul>
5	Fees:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Provide a detailed fee proposal that reflects the project phases and/or milestones. The fee structure should include all anticipated reimbursable expenses as a separate line item, and the charge rates of the people who would perform the work (please identify tasks to be performed by subconsultants). MCFM &amp; CF will award work on a fixed fee basis for service.</li> <li>b. The proposal fee structure should not exceed \$50,000.</li> <li>c. All quotes shall be held firm for a minimum of ninety (90) days after the proposal due date.</li> </ul>
6	Timeline:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Expected timing and completion of the strategic planning process by phase. citing specific dates or ranges, milestones</li> </ul>



#	Category	Inclusion
		or check-ins, and the expected delivery of the final strategic plan document.
7	Other Requirements and Additional Information:	a. The final Strategic Plan document shall be delivered in 1 PDF copy.  b. The working papers shall be retained for at least 7 years after submission of the final Strategic Plan document and shall be made available upon request to MCFM & CF or its authorized representative.

### Proposal Evaluation

Once the qualified firms have been determined, MCFM & CF may interview selected firms to clarify specific matters presented in the proposals and to obtain additional pertinent information. The top firms will be presented to MCFM & CF’s Strategic Planning Committee for review, discussion and approval. Interviews may be scheduled to meet with the Strategic Planning Committee if necessary.

We will evaluate proposals based on the following factors (not ranked):

- Understanding of nonprofit strategic planning
- Relevant experience and expertise, especially with organizations in the food, agriculture, sustainability, food access, or climate-related sectors
- Proposed methodology and approach, including an expressed commitment to apply a diversity, equity and inclusion lens to the proposed strategic planning process
- Cost and value
- References and past projects to highlight

###