Request for Proposals:
Testing, Evaluating and Communicating Impacts of Community Greenspace Action to Advance Health Equity

August 30, 2017

Groundwork USA seeks an evaluation consultant to work with Groundwork USA practitioners and researchers to conduct an evaluation of Groundwork practice by (1) developing a theory of change which will help define greenspace interventions related to our desired impact of improved community health; (2) designing an evaluation and determining which 3-5 Groundwork communities are most appropriate for evaluation; (3) evaluating selected interventions in those communities; and (4) sharing our findings with other practitioners, researchers and national partners.

The project will clarify a conceptual framework for understanding and strengthening urban greenspace interventions in marginalized communities and will help define best practices. It will provide preliminary data on our approach of engaging with communities in deep and meaningful ways to increase access to and activate green space and improve health. A major communications element will be integral to the project.

*Background: Groundwork USA*

Groundwork USA is the only network of local organizations devoted to transforming the natural and built environment of low- and moderate-income communities -- a national enterprise with local roots, working at the intersection of the environment, equity and civic engagement. Local Groundwork organizations, called “Trusts,” transform neglected land and waterways into community assets, increasing environmental, social and economic well-being while building community capacity. Their projects often take many years to complete, and Groundwork strives to foster and maintain long-term community engagement. The Groundwork USA network was launched in the late 1990s through a partnership between the National Park Service, the US Environmental Protection Agency and a national steering committee, modeled on a network working in post-industrial British cities since the 1980s. Background on Groundwork USA can be found at [https://groundworkusa.org/](https://groundworkusa.org/). A blog at [https://groundworkusa.org/the-new-commons/](https://groundworkusa.org/the-new-commons/) discusses our greenspace work.
The Project

This project will enable GWUSA to put its years of project and community engagement experience to the test by, for the first time, working with an evaluation team to determine the impact of our holistic, grassroots work on the health of communities. Following are the main activities and approach for each component.

1. Theory of Change Development: The selected consultant will collaborate with a working group of Groundwork practitioners to catalogue network greenspace improvements and associated community processes. Recurring interventions will be defined to encompass both physical changes and related processes that affect health and well-being in low-income and historically marginalized communities. The consultant will support development of a theory of change and logic model that captures multiple interventions and health impacts. It will be informed by practitioners across our network and a group of researchers we are convening as a Groundwork USA Healthy Communities Advisory Board. The researchers will complement the expertise of the evaluation consultant and the experience of Groundwork practitioners with in-depth knowledge of national data, academic literature, and health impact assessment. The process of developing the theory of change will begin building evaluation capacity in our network through sharing of information between the researchers and practitioners, a convening at the Groundwork USA National Assembly and Youth Summit on October 13-14, 2017, and a series of conference calls.

2. Evaluation Plan Development and Pilot Selection: Having defined our theory of change, we will work with the evaluation consultant to identify 3-5 Groundwork communities presenting the best opportunities for evaluation. We will select both recently completed interventions that have unfolded over past years and current interventions that are underway. Evaluating current projects provides the opportunity to include community engagement and participatory planning methods, while completed projects will allow us to look at longer-term impacts at the neighborhood and population level. The evaluation team will then develop measures -- short term, intermediate and long term – to be used by Groundwork Trusts.

3. Evaluation Testing: To engage Groundwork participants as participatory action researchers, the consultant and Groundwork USA staff will conduct a virtual training with Groundwork staff/participants/community leaders at 3-5 sites identified in the evaluation plan development phase. The training will build evaluation capacity so leaders can engage in surveying and interviewing participants at each site. The consultant team will conduct some site visits to support the data collection process to be led by the community leaders. We will conduct an evaluation of the interventions in the Groundwork communities that draws on available quantitative data on community conditions as well as qualitative data that reflects participants’ and residents’ experience of change in their lives and neighborhoods.
4. **Training, Reporting and Communications:** Groundwork USA and the consultant will convene Groundwork practitioners, youth, the evaluation consultants and the Healthy Communities Advisory Board at our National Assembly and Youth Summit in October 2018 for a presentation and discussion of evaluation results, a testing of the theory of change against those results, and training in evaluation methods. The consultant will produce a final report making the case for investment in green space interventions, to be featured on our website, social media and newsletter. A primary responsibility of the consultant will be to produce an article for a peer reviewed journal. The consultant will also support a significant Groundwork USA communications effort to reach multiple audiences: equity and sustainability funders, public health advocates and practitioners and community health interests; community development and sustainability advocates and practitioners; and parks advocates and departments.

**Deliverables**

Groundwork USA seeks a consultant who, working collaboratively with our staff and network, can effectively complete the following deliverables:

- Work plan
- Survey of current network greenspace interventions and evaluation methods
- Workshop at GWUSA National Assembly, October 13 or 14, 2017, and follow-up conference calls
- Theory of change, logic model reflecting Groundwork network input
- Plan for evaluation, including data sources and methods
- Training of Trust cohort and support for Groundwork USA staff in beta test of recommended methods
- Beta test of evaluation methods in 3-5 Groundwork communities
- Training at GWUSA National Assembly to full network, fall 2018
- Final report, examining theory of change and beta test including 2-page summary; materials for Trust staff to use in implementing evaluation methods
- Webinar and/or presentations to targeted audiences
- Article submitted to peer reviewed journal

The contract amount will not exceed $100,000, inclusive of consultant’s travel expenses.

**Evaluation Criteria**

Groundwork USA will evaluate responses to this RFP using the following criteria:

1. Qualifications (30 percent of score): overall expertise in evaluation; experience in developing evaluation methods with/for community-based organizations; experience with environmental or place-based programs, particularly those serving marginalized communities and/or involving community development;
demonstrated ability to support implementation of evaluation data systems; demonstrated ability to produce high quality deliverables for comparable projects.

2. Proposed approach (30 percent of score): A plan for effective and collaborative execution of the project as outlined above, explaining any proposed modifications in the process, describing means of working effectively with the Groundwork USA staff and network and demonstrating an ability to meet the project timetable.

3. Project management (20 percent of score): Assignment of personnel with demonstrated history of effective and efficient project management and ability to attain project goals while collaborating with stakeholders.

4. Cost-effectiveness (20 percent of score): A budget for economically and effectively staffing and completing the project and producing high-quality deliverables.

Proposals

Your proposal should include a narrative organized according to the above outline of evaluation criteria, with a preferred maximum length of ten pages. Resumes of key staff should be appended to the narrative. The proposal should also include names of references from past clients who can attest to your effectiveness in working with community-based organizations, with telephone numbers and email addresses. We prefer quality over quantity -- longer proposals and/or additional attachments are welcome to the extent they thoughtfully address the evaluation criteria, explain your project approach, and demonstrate your overall strength as a partner in this project.

Submission, Review, Selection and Contracting

Questions may be submitted to proposals@groundworkusa.org by September 8, 2017. Responses to all questions will be provided by September 12, 2017, both to those who have submitted questions and to any others who, by email to same email address by September 8, 2017, have requested the questions and responses.

The deadline for proposals is September 22, 2017. Proposals should be submitted to the same email address, in Word or PDF format, in one file. Proposals submitted before the deadline will be reviewed on a rolling basis as they are submitted.

Groundwork USA may request clarification or additional information, by email or telephone, before selecting a firm or organization with whom to negotiate a contract. We expect to notify the successful firm or organization no later than October 2, 2017.

Groundwork USA strongly encourages submission of proposals by firms led by people of color, women’s business enterprises, and small businesses.