



MINNESOTA COUNCIL  
ON FOUNDATIONS

# REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP): RURAL URBAN BRIDGING INITIATIVE CONSULTANT

## Purpose of Request

A recent retreat of MCF member CEOs revealed a deep concern about the rural-urban divide in Minnesota. This divide is experienced in politics, economics and worldview, and reveals itself as misunderstanding of others and underappreciation of difference. It is exacerbated by low philanthropic resources providing support to rural communities. Philanthropy is uniquely positioned to bridge divides, build connections across sectors, and direct resources toward promoting an urban/rural interdependence designed to strengthen Minnesota in general, and rural communities in particular. The Minnesota Council on Foundations has launched the Rural Urban Bridging Initiative (RUBI) and seeks a lead consultant to work with philanthropic leaders as they learn, assess and plan for their role in bridging Minnesota's urban-rural divide.

Lead consultant activities and deliverables will include:

1. Design and deliver learning opportunities for 16-member steering committee, comprised of representatives of foundations through Minnesota, and MCF staff.
2. Collect input from community members throughout Minnesota to inform process.
3. Synthesize data to inform strategies.
4. Engage community members and partners in exploring community-led solutions to address urban-rural divide.
5. Develop a blueprint for action to draw on philanthropy's unique role and opportunities.
6. Engage and oversee additional consultants as needed.

Prospective consultants are welcome to contact MCF vice president Paul Masiarchin for further information and discussion of the opportunity. He can be reached at [pmasiarchin@mcf.org](mailto:pmasiarchin@mcf.org) or 612-335-3418.

Please deliver proposals to MCF Vice President Paul Masiarchin at [pmasiarchin@mcf.org](mailto:pmasiarchin@mcf.org).

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## RFP TIMELINE

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<b>May 15, 2023</b>	RFP announced
<b>June 16, 2023</b>	Proposals due
<b>June/July 2023</b>	Review of proposals, interviews and reference checks
<b>July 14, 2023</b>	We aim to select the consultant on or around July 14
<b>August 1, 2023</b>	We hope the consultant will be available to start by August 1
<b>December 31, 2023</b>	Expected conclusion of consulting engagement/deliverables due

*May 2023*

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## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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The Minnesota Council on Foundations (MCF) is an association of grantmakers working to advance prosperity and equity through connecting, strengthening and mobilizing the field of philanthropy in Minnesota. The organization's 150 members represent grantmaking throughout the state, annually providing millions of dollars and non-financial resources to nonprofits. Members include family and independent foundations, community foundations, grantmaking public charities, and corporate foundations and giving programs.

In 2022, MCF hosted a CEO retreat which led to the development of the Rural Urban Bridging Initiative (RUBI). MCF is launching RUBI in 2023 with a goal of developing a blueprint for action that will guide philanthropy's role in bridging Minnesota's urban-rural divide and fostering a sense of interdependence designed to strengthen Minnesota in general, and rural communities in particular.

MCF is guided by: a strategic framework, adopted by the Board of Directors in 2022; Principles for Philanthropy, developed in 2021; and a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism, updated and codified in 2020.

RUBI is led by a statewide steering committee representing various foundation types, sizes and strategies, and is supported by consultant Diana Anderson and MCF staff Vice President Paul Masiarchin, and President Susie Brown.

Possible outcomes of the Rural-Urban Bridging Initiative:

- Learning opportunities to strengthen philanthropy's role in promoting urban/rural interdependence, including practice and evaluation tools
- Strategic connections to new institutional and community partnerships
- Data and guidance to inform and evaluate rural funding needs and strategies
- Resources for philanthropic thought leadership and awareness raising, including narrative change
- Opportunities for collective action, including legislative advocacy and pooled funds
- Optimizing philanthropy's unique role as a convener and broker of non-partisan community building

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## QUALIFICATIONS + SERVICES REQUESTED

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MCF seeks a consultant who brings the following to this engagement:

- An interest in philanthropy, and its role and relationships in the community.
- Experience supporting community-led systems change to advance equity, inclusion, and belonging in communities across geographic difference.
- Understanding of the issues facing rural and urban communities, and the drivers of regional division.
- Experience in: diversity, equity and inclusion; intercultural competency; and/or anti-racism work in organizations.
- Comfort using a wide range of tools and approaches to discuss and develop strategy.
- Experience respectfully engaging marginalized communities and collecting input through interviews, focus groups, surveys, and other methods, or partnership with another consultant able to do so.
- Excellent facilitation skills and ability to carry them out both in-person and in remote settings.
- Ability to engage with people and groups who represent a variety of roles, including staff, the board of directors, members/grantmakers, and community stakeholders.
- Skilled at process development and ability to work with the steering committee and MCF staff to align this process with organizational timelines and resources.
- Ability to engage and supervise the work of additional consultants as needed to carry out the full scope of the project.

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## PROPOSAL SUBMISSION AND EVALUATION PROCESS

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MCF staff and members of the steering committee will review proposals and engage in further discussion with those that seem to be best aligned with the organization's needs. They seek to understand the following information from prospective consultants, which can be presented by answering these questions directly and in this order, or another way, if preferred. Answers may be any length that best represents interest and experience. Proposals can be delivered in a word or pdf document, or a short video, attached to an email. Those who have barriers to providing their response in one of these formats may contact Paul Masiarchin at [pmasiarchin@mcf.org](mailto:pmasiarchin@mcf.org) to discuss alternatives.

1. Why are you interested in working on the RUBI project at this time?
2. Tell us your approach to working with an organization's leader, staff and volunteers on developing strategy.
3. Describe your experience gathering stakeholder input using varied tools, or your relationship with a partner whose experience you will rely on for this engagement.
4. Explain your relationship with and/or understanding of philanthropy today, and in particular its capacity to build bridges across difference.
5. Share your experience working on: diversity, equity and inclusion; intercultural competence; and/or anti-racism, in organizations.
6. Share the ways you bring diverse thought, perspectives and/or lived experience to this engagement, particularly in the areas of: race/ethnicity; gender; sexual orientation; ability; rural geography.
7. Tell us how you will structure your fees for this project and, given the expectations of this engagement, what you estimate the cost to be. Note—the maximum budget for this engagement is \$90,000, which may include compensation of other consultants to carry out some of the work, depending on the skills and capacity of the primary consultant.
8. Feel free to add anything else that you wish to have considered.

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## SELECTION CRITERIA

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Proposals will be evaluated by members of the MCF staff and steering committee. All proposals will be evaluated using the same criteria, as follows:

- **Ability to Be Successful** — MCF will consider the answers to common questions, and any other material prospective consultants wish to submit for consideration, to determine the ability to be successful in this engagement.
- **Diversity** – MCF seeks diversity of lived experience, thought and perspective in all roles, including consultants and vendors, particularly in the areas of: race/ethnicity; gender; sexual orientation; ability; rural geography. MCF also values experience working with organizations on: diversity, equity and inclusion; intercultural competence; and/or anti-racism.
- **References**— For those consultants most aligned with the needs of this project, we will contact three references provided by the prospective consultant. We may consider reputation, knowledge of prior work, and informal feedback from peers, when applicable.
- **Interviews**—MCF may conduct interviews as part of the selection process.

The decision to engage a particular consultant to work with MCF will be based on many factors detailed in the request for proposal. No single factor will determine the final decision.

The Minnesota Council on Foundations connects, strengthens and mobilizes Minnesota’s vibrant philanthropic community to advance prosperity and equity. Learn more at [mcf.org](https://mcf.org) **#WeAreMCF**

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*May 2023*