



Request for proposals: consultant to conduct an equity assessment

Background

MAYA Organization is a Swissvale-based 501(c)(3) that works to empower, educate, and advocate for birthing people and individuals whose lives have been touched by the criminal justice system. Incorporated in 2009, MAYA initially operated as a volunteer-run organization serving adoptive and birth parents. By 2016, we had grown to incorporate a paid staff, and shifted our focus to include counseling for women incarcerated in Allegheny County Jail and perinatal services for local birthing people.

In April, 2023, MAYA created new mission, vision, and values statements, foregrounding our investment in racial equity and our wish for systems change in the birthing world. Our new mission, “to empower BIPOC and marginalized birthing people and birthworkers, and to create positive change in the systems that impact them,” responds to the dire outcomes faced by Black women giving birth in Pittsburgh. We strive to live up to our mission by:

- Training and hiring staff from the communities we serve;
- Offering all of our perinatal services in English and Spanish, and responding to the particular needs of the hispanic immigrants who make up approximately one third of our client base;
- Collaborating on citywide projects to improve maternal-infant outcomes for Black birthing people in Pittsburgh;
- Practicing the JJ Way®, a model for birth care proven to improve outcomes and reduce racial disparities;
- Working to center the needs and voices of our majority (~38%) Black clientele.

Soon after the adoption of our new language, an opportunity arose to systematically implement the values that we uphold. The Jewish Healthcare Foundation, administering federal Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds provided through the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, issued a call for proposals for innovative projects to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity and/or support new families in Pennsylvania. MAYA proposed to conduct an organizational equity assessment, design and implement improvements, and document a replicable model for racially equitable birth care, to be shared with partner organizations across the state.

We were awarded a year-long grant and embarked upon an inquiry into our attitudes and practices surrounding race and race equity. However, through our initial work on the grant, MAYA’s leadership team has come to the conclusion that we will need the support of a qualified consultant to perform at least the assessment portion of the grant, and possibly additional phases. This will ensure the neutrality of the process and preserve team members’ already limited time.

Project

MAYA is requesting proposals from consultants to perform an equity assessment on the organization. The job may be extended to include strategizing and designing improvements, and documenting the resulting model.

Scope of Work

Budget: \$15,000

The project begins once a contract is signed, and ends within four months, with the possibility of an extension if additional activities are included. The consultant will perform the following activities:

- Assess the following facets of MAYA's programming and operations for equity, with a focus on race:
 - Hiring, pay, and benefits practices
 - Organizational hierarchies
 - Grievance procedures
 - Daily functioning of the organization
 - Interactions between staff
 - Knowledge of, and ability to practice racially equitable behavior among staff, leadership, and board members
 - Policies protecting people of color
 - Clients' experiences and outcomes
 - Other relevant components of organizational functioning
- Identify and outline data collection and evaluation needs for effective continued assessment of MAYA's success practicing race equity.
- Gauge MAYA's work and reputation in the field of racial equity as perceived by clients, staff, community partners, board members, and other relevant parties.
- Provide a written summary of guidelines for improvement, including short- and long-term items
- All work should consider the specific contexts of pregnancy, birth, and parenthood, and the role of obstetric and other forms of systemic racism as they affect birthing people and birth workers.

Optional:

- Guide MAYA through the process of implementing and trouble-shooting short-term solutions
- Collaborate with MAYA staff to document the resulting model for anti-racist birth care

Proposal format

In a page or less, please address:

- Your background, qualifications, and relevant experience (that is, to both birthwork and racial equity work)
- The question, “what makes an organization equitable?”
- How you would determine the various facts and facets that contribute to MAYA’s state of equity
- An outline of the activities that you might undertake as part of your assessment and the role you expect MAYA staff and leadership to play in them

Please include your resume with your proposal.

Submission & selection

Deadline for submission of proposals: Friday, February 23, 2024

Please submit your proposal to Christy Cozby at christy@mayaorganization.org with the subject line “Equity assessment.”

For questions regarding the proposal, please contact Kate Pendlebury at katy@mayaorganization.org or (412) 628-2938.

Proposals will be assessed during the week of February 26, and the winning candidate notified on Friday, March 1, 2024.

BIPOC consultants are strongly encouraged to submit.