

## Columbus Metropolitan Library (CML) Vision 2020 Projects – Phase 1 Outreach and Inclusion Initiative

### Overview

Columbus Metropolitan Library is in the midst of an aspirational building plan to rebuild or renovate 10 branches identified as most in need of transformation. With nearly \$100 million worth of projects in the planning phase, CML has embarked on one of the largest capital improvement programs (CIPs) in its history.

CML aspires to implement an outreach and inclusion program that goes beyond percentage targets to more actively address root causes that have limited minority participation on capital construction projects in the past. The program will involve the entire community in design professional oversight services (such as material testing and commissioning) and the facility construction process.

Outreach and inclusion programs have been made necessary on public construction projects due to barriers in the bidding and construction process, which have resulted in a lack of participation by Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs) and Women Business Enterprises (WBEs) in the design and construction industry. Much of this lack of participation is due to the way that design and construction projects bid and award work; a process that creates a self-reinforcing business cycle.

Businesses that have difficulty competing for work are challenged to develop the skilled staff needed to compete on the next project, and so the cycle repeats. This repetition reinforces the shortage of skilled trades and limits participation by such businesses. Real inclusion is difficult to achieve and will require thoughtful measures and extra effort that get at the difficult root issues which prevent inclusion in the building design and construction process.

We seek to ensure meaningful involvement of all interested businesses to actively participate in the design and construction process, including job creation in the field. The end goal is to create a level of involvement in CML projects that mirrors the makeup and diversity of the central Ohio region, and that includes the involvement of local businesses in the creation of new public facilities for their communities and neighborhoods. It should be noted that the use of a construction manager at risk (CMR) delivery model will have a significant and positive impact on the ability to fully consider all aspects of bid proposals.

This inclusion plan was developed to ensure that local residents served by CML have the opportunity to take full advantage of the contracting opportunities in a highly competitive market. This plan will help provide a structure that allows MBEs and WBEs to successfully navigate the contracting opportunities and lead to greater workforce diversification on these projects.

The parties to this plan are united, where commercially viable, in the desire to present MBEs and WBEs with maximum opportunities to be involved in significant ways throughout these projects. CML believes that historically underutilized businesses and the people served by the library should share in the prosperity generated by the projects and be a part of the engine for economic development. CML is committed to actively promoting the goals of this plan to every contractor engaged in the project.

Our core values guide us to an inclusion plan that will benefit the residents of Franklin County.

They are:

**Respect** – *We are open to all and honor the diverse nature of those we serve.*

**Trust** – *We demonstrate character and integrity to our customers, associates and community.*

**Excellence** – *We strive for the ideal outcome in everything we do.*

**Passion** – *We are dedicated and passionate about changing lives*

### **EEOC Policy**

We embrace and celebrate individuality. We develop practices that recognize and respect all people and the spectrum of their points of view. We foster an atmosphere of dignity and encourage exploration of new ideas in a positive, safe environment.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Design**

Recommendation: Urge architects for each CML location to consider subcontracting work (i.e., construction documents, code analysis and pre-planning) to MBE and WBE small architectural firms.

#### **Prequalification**

Recommendation: Review prequalification requirements for flexibility and appropriate modification for contracts under a specific amount (i.e., \$500,000) or type of work. Conduct information session specifically on prequalification requirements and what is expected, including any exceptions (see information sessions below). Under the CMR delivery model, CML will have input on and approval of bidder pre-qualification requirements to be used in bidder pre-qualification.

#### **Bid Strategies**

Recommendation: Provide adequate advance notice and program status updates to the minority contracting community so that they can be prepared when bid documents go public. In addition, break up bid packages based on availability of contractors. A communication plan will be required for all subconsultants and subcontractors.

#### **Selection of Contractors**

Recommendation: Review of each potential awardee's subcontractor utilization plan by outreach team prior to award to eliminate front companies, pass-throughs, or companies that otherwise thwart the intent to be inclusive and to provide input for determining "responsible bidder with the lowest responsive bid."

## **Prompt Pay/Bonding/Insurance**

Recommendation: Set up a system to pay invoices no later than 30 days from receipt of invoice with the ability to pay disadvantaged contractors 15 days from receipt of invoice. Conduct a series of training sessions on how to complete pay applications so that every awarded contractor has the opportunity to participate (see information sessions below).

Adequate cash flow and bonding capacity is key in the construction industry. It is common for contractors to carry many costs for at least 60 days prior to payment. Incorporating funding assistance measures into construction contracts will reduce the “carry cost” associated with procuring raw materials and covering payrolls. Such a program would allow contractors with a better funding capacity/ability (like the construction manager at risk) to carry the cost of raw materials such as concrete and steel and would identify means of shortening the time from invoicing to payment on labor. This approach would significantly reduce the financial burden on smaller subcontractor businesses and would allow them to better compete in providing skilled labor while lessening concerns about cash flow.

## **Apprenticeship/Internship Program**

Recommendation: Partner with ABC’s Ohio Construction Academy and Columbus City Schools’ Project Lead the Way STEM internship program.

In response to the scarce supply of qualified construction apprentices, in September 2013, the Central Ohio Chapter of Associated Builders & Contractors opened the Ohio Construction Academy, a charter school approved by the Ohio Department of Education. Graduates will have credits to advance to the second or third year of a paid four-year apprenticeship program, which will include hands-on training in skills such as electrical work and carpentry.

Project Lead the Way is a summer internship program run by Columbus City Schools to support the development of future engineers and STEM professionals. It provides each student studying the Project Lead The Way curriculum with the academic knowledge, commitment and skills required to succeed in post-secondary education and careers. Internship partners host interns for a paid six-week summer internship for a minimum of 120 hours. Students are compensated at \$10 per hour.

## **Employment**

Recommendation: Partner with The Central Ohio Workforce Investment Corporation (COWIC); those expressing interest in working on CML’s construction projects will be referred to COWIC. COWIC will work with construction management companies, contractor’s, and subcontractor’s to place these individuals when possible.

COWIC is the premier workforce one-stop resource center for central Ohio. With support from the U.S. Department of Labor through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Franklin County, and the City of Columbus, COWIC works with community partners to serve more than 20,000 job seekers each year. The Agency provides skills training and will organize, publicize and conduct hiring events as well job matching activities. In addition to the majority of services being free of charge, COWIC also assists with identifying and obtaining federal wage subsidy and tax credit dollars. An existing partnership between COWIC and CML is established.

## **Advertisements**

Recommendation: Participate in diverse advertisements; for example, minority radio station announcements and newspapers, and local diversity building organizations. In addition, this document shall be attached to all advertisements and RFPs. The project team will use grass roots outreach, technology (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, email) and traditional communication methods to ensure residents are aware of job opportunities as they occur. The team will make affirmative outreach efforts to publicize training, employment and subcontracting opportunities. With the assistance of the City of Columbus EEOC office, notices and invitations will be distributed to City and State certified contractors, elected officials, trade and business associations as well as to training organizations for community forums that will provide information on job opportunities. The team will also work with City and County funded Community based organizations to accomplish goals and outreach.

## **Information Sessions**

Recommendation: Conduct information sessions for potential bidders and awardees to help improve project communication and improve relationships with the small business community.

- (1) Prequalification – Review each prequalification requirement detailing the expectations and identifying any exceptions. This session should not only promote a better understanding of the requirements, but also offer an opportunity for subcontractors to voice their concerns, which could, with consideration, lead to possible modification of the requirements.
- (2) Pay Applications – Prompt pay is the #1 issue facing small contractors but incorrect pay applications can cause significant delay. A review of how these pay applications are to be completed, is warranted.
- (3) Library Support Services for Small Businesses – A demonstration of how the Library can support small business (free meeting space, computer access, etc.).

## **Kick-Off Event**

Recommendation: Bidding for building construction on the remaining eight locations will not begin until November/December; a kick-off event to announce these projects should be held at Columbus Metropolitan Library in November 2014 for both general contractors and subcontractors in order to encourage matchmaking.

This event will be more than just the typical announcement and mingling of contractors. It will be substantive and demonstrate real commitment to diversity and inclusion. This is an opportunity to report on the successes achieved on the first two projects (Driving Park and Whitehall) and the design phase for the additional locations (architects, engineers, printing, testing, art commissioning, etc.). A partnership with the City of Columbus Equal Business Opportunity Commission will help to publicize the event and the project's intent to be inclusive.

In addition to the CMR's agenda for presenting the details of the project, the following topics are suggested for 30-minute breakout sessions or tables:

- 1) City of Columbus MBE/WBE certification
- 2) Project Prequalification Requirements
- 3) Library Support Services for Small Businesses
- 4) COWIC Services for Businesses and Job Seekers

## **Goals**

It is the intent of this document to serve as a framework and model for inclusiveness and community building by maximizing inclusion through all stages of contracting. The most important goal is to build resources for the future. The State of Ohio Construction Compliance Participation Goals is 6.9% for woman (statewide), and 10% for minorities (Columbus). We will attempt to meet the State's goals throughout the entire stages of this process and seek to exceed where possible. The intent is to address the structural barriers to inclusiveness, not just focus on percentages.

## **Summary**

There are many factors that contribute to neighborhood development. No plan is able to describe every aspect of an outreach and inclusion strategy, but this is an opportunity to improve the business climate and provide resources to support local business. Columbus Metropolitan Library is committed to inclusion, and in partnership with the City of Columbus, neighborhood groups, and the construction industry, this plan leads us in the right direction.