Background:

“Here, our dreams are not diluted or beat down by the white noise of reality. Here, they can be set free.”
-826 MSP Young Author, Tala, grade 10

826 MSP is an educational and arts nonprofit dedicated to amplifying youth voice and cultivating the next generation of Twin Cities writers, artists, and leaders. Our mission is to empower underserved students in grades K-12 to think creatively, write effectively, and succeed academically alongside a community of caring volunteers. To help close educational opportunity gaps caused by systemic racism, 826 MSP empowers diverse communities of K-12 writers in the Twin Cities with free in-school, out-of-school, and distance learning programming. We believe that young people need literacy and communication skills to be successful, and our world needs the ideas and words of the diverse youth leaders we are helping to create. The core of the 826 model is using creative writing not only as academic skills-building, but as a tool for processing experiences, building community, and changing the world.

Scope of Work:

826 MSP is at a critical juncture in its trajectory: over the past four years, we have moved our office from St. Paul to Minneapolis and built a youth writing center in the Seward neighborhood and a Writers’ Room at South High, grown from one full-time staff member to five, joined the 826 national network of youth writing centers, increased our annual operating budget from 200k to 425k, built out a more robust board and committee structure, and completed a four-year strategic plan. Additionally, this summer our organization felt called to deepen our commitment to anti-racism in all aspects of our organization, and we are still in the midst of organizational change and transformation. We believe we stand ready to broaden and deepen our programmatic outputs, and boldly create a new vision for our organization.

Therefore, 826 MSP invites proposals from strategic planning consultants to support 826 MSP’s staff/board in completion of a comprehensive strategic planning process and the creation of a three year strategic plan by Dec 31, 2021. We look for a consultant to:

- Design a strategic planning process that results in a cohesive set of goals, strategies, and actions that will guide and focus 826 MSP’s work for the next three years.
- Prioritize principles of equity and anti-racism in the project design and facilitation.
- Ensure stakeholder feedback is key to the planning process through centering the voices of the students and families 826 MSP serves.
- Fully integrate the 826 MSP stakeholders into a culture of collaboration and participation throughout the planning process so that board and staff—and, by extension, students, families, funders, and the broader 826 MSP community—are excited and engaged in these goals.
- In-person or virtually depending on public health recommendations regarding COVID-19, facilitate board and staff planning discussions
- Document and share findings in a transparent and accessible way.
**Project timeline:**

We anticipate an all-day planning session for the board (12) and staff (5) that would occur in mid-September 2021, and additional meetings or engagements based on the process outlined by the consultant. We expect the process and all project deliverables to be completed, submitted, reviewed, and approved by the Board by the end of 2021. The consultant will work closely through the duration of the project with 826 MSP leadership, including a strategic planning committee (6) composed of board and staff leadership.

**Desired Qualifications:**

- Local to the Twin Cities with a deep understanding of the communities 826 MSP serves including BIPOC communities, immigrant populations, and youth/school communities.
- An approach to facilitation that prioritizes equity by disrupting power dynamics.
- Familiarity with anti-racist organizational and educational principles and student-centered processes.

**Submission Details:**

Please include the following in your proposal:

- General information about your firm/organization, as well as specific qualifications on the individual(s) providing the consulting services.
- A description of your general approach to inclusive and equity-focused strategic planning.
- A work plan outlining your proposed project design, activities, and timeline, including any options for us to consider.
- A representative client list and 2-3 references for similar work.
- A work sample from previous strategic planning initiatives or other comparable projects.
- A proposed fee structure and payment schedule. Please note, at this time we do not anticipate the budget for this project to exceed $10,000.

Please contact 826 MSP Executive Director Samantha Sencer-Mura for questions about the proposal at Samantha@826msp.org or by phone at 612-239-1398. Proposals should be sent via email by February 26, 2021 to Samantha@826msp.org. We aim to select a consultant by late March 2021.