



Benedict Center • SISTERS PROGRAM

Compassion • Justice • Action • Transformation

**SISTERS
PROGRAM
SOUTH
COLLABORATORS**

Ascension
Lutheran Church

School Sisters
of St. Francis

Sinsinawa
Dominicans, Inc.

Sisters of
St. Francis of Assisi

Sisters of St. Joseph
of the Third Order
of St. Francis

Alderman Tony Zielinski
200 East Wells Street, Room 205
Milwaukee, WI 53202

July 25, 2016

Dear Alderman Tony Zielinski,

We are excited to formally invite the City of Milwaukee to join our partnership efforts to ensure that women who are involved with street prostitution (for survival or coercion) have sufficient resources and opportunity to change their circumstances and that the community has adequate resources to respond to this issue.

There are no known funds dedicated to this population at either the County or City level despite the persistent needs of the women and growing concern of the community. A partnership with and matching funds from Milwaukee County and City of Milwaukee are critically needed.

Our private group of funders has joined the efforts of the Benedict Center, through their Sisters Diversion Program, to address this issue and have committed at least half a million dollars over the next three years. Initial meetings and conversations were started early this year with your office by Tammy L. Rivera, Executive Director of Southside Organizing Committee (SOC). The Benedict Center has been in a strategic partnership with SOC for a little over a year to support the program expansion to the South Side and to provide city-wide coordination of the project launch.

We request that you join this historic opportunity to show how private, community, and public partnerships and funds are innovatively leveraging resources to address critical issues.

Please have your office contact me by Friday, August 8th, 2016 to coordinate a meeting and feel free to contact either of us with any questions. See the attached Matching Partnership Request and Sisters Program information sheet.

Sincerely,

Linda Szocik
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Attachments:

Matching Partnership Request
Sisters Program Information Sheet

cc: Jeanne Geraci, Executive Director – the Benedict Center
Tammy L. Rivera, Executive Director – Southside Organizing Committee (SOC)
Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele (James Mathy and Hector Colon)
City of Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, Common Council President Ashanti Hamilton,
Alderman Cavalier Johnson, Alderwoman Milele Cogg, Alderman Robert Donovan,
Alderwoman Chantia Lewis, Alderman Jose Perez, Alderman Khalif Rainey, Alderman
Russell W. Stamper, II, (Steven Mahan, Rafael Acevedo, and Matthew Balistreri)

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MILWAUKEE COUNTY AND CITY OF MILWAUKEE PARTNERSHIP REQUEST FOR: THE SISTERS DIVERSION PROGRAM OF THE BENEDICT CENTER

Rationale

There are no known funds dedicated to the population of women involved in street prostitution at either the county or city level despite the persistent needs of the women and growing concern of the community.

A partnership with and matching funds from Milwaukee County and City of Milwaukee are critically needed to ensure that the community has an adequate response to this issue and that the women have sufficient resources to change their circumstances.

A private group of funders has joined the effort to address this issue and is requesting the county and city join the partnership to ensure sufficient attention and resources.

This is an enormous opportunity to show how private, community, and public partnerships and funds are innovatively leveraging their resources to address critical issues beginning with the first half a million dollars already committed over the next three years.

Background

The issue of street prostitution is longstanding and continues to be a growing concern in our area - to the point of receiving negative national attention. The current system for addressing the issue has centered on arresting the women, giving them a ticket, and then releasing them. In more recent years, there have been efforts to also arrest solicitors. This system does not work for the women, law enforcement, or the community.

The Sisters Diversion Program of the Benedict Center offers a collaborative solution to addressing the issue based on a public health, evidenced-based model in partnership with the Medical College of Wisconsin. The collaboration includes elected officials, the District Attorney's Office, the Milwaukee Police Department, municipal court, and neighborhood organizations (see attachment for more information on the program).

Milwaukee Police Districts 2 and 3 contain 75% of the prostitution related arrest. A successful launch on the South Side will lead the way to a city-wide program. Preliminary indicators of the pilot program phase on the North Side of Milwaukee showed very hopeful data and the program is now expanding to the south side of city.

From the year 2011 to 2014:

- 71% of women who accepted the diversion (45 women) completed the diversion program and stayed engaged beyond the required six months.
- Only 18% of women incurred a new prostitution charge in the year following enrollment.

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In the year 2015:

- Street Outreach Workers connected with 131 women a total of 849 times.
- 84 women were served in the Drop-In Center, including 41 new participants.
- 31% of women in the program reported quitting the sex trade
- 55% of women achieved at least one key case management goal within six month of the program

This year, 2016:

- 81 women have already been served in the Drop-In Center compared to 84 for all of last year

Currently, the Benedict Center operates a front-line drop in center on the North Side, but only during business hours due to limited resources. A private group has committed minimally half a million dollars over the next three years to ensure the opening of a South Side site. Law enforcement has been very vocal about needing increased hours of operation. Milwaukee County and City of Milwaukee matching funds are critically needed to expand the capacity of each center and to address the fundamental resource needs of housing and other crucial services (street outreach, AODA, mental health, physical health, case management, etc.).

Private Partnership

A group comprised of faith-based donors and foundations are partnering with the Benedict Center to ensure this issue is addressed holistically and that the response to the need is adequate and sustainable. They have signed a memorandum of understanding with the Benedict Center to partner on the program including providing a minimum of half a million dollars over the next three years. This is the first-time this group is coalescing to combine their resources, provided resources to this realm of service, and are requesting a match from public resources.

Matching Funds Process and Guidelines

The partners suggest the process include the following and welcome any feedback that would meet other entity's needs:

1. Request - submission of the matching funds request to relevant Milwaukee County and City of Milwaukee leadership with a request for a meeting to discuss the opportunity
2. Meetings - Individual meetings with both levels of public service. If desired, a collective meeting would be welcome as an initial or subsequent meeting as well. The meeting would be an opportunity to explore what options are feasible to finalize partnerships with the County and City.
3. Formalizing - formalizing any agreements with relevant documentation.
4. Public announcement – partners develop and implement a collective communications plan and materials
5. Ongoing partnership - a schedule of partnership meetings to provide continued development and oversight of partnership and program.

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The guidelines include the following:

- D. Partnership - this issue requires a full partnership from each major sector to ensure it is addressed holistically and that that efforts are made to insure it will be sustained. A partnership with both levels of public service is requested that would include engagement with key leadership and departments from the County and City as well as the matching funds. Funds are to be matched to half a million private dollars committed over the next three years.
- E. Match - matching funds from both levels of public service are critically needed to meet this need. Matching cash funds are primarily needed, however, in-kind contributions that are budget item replacements will be considered, for instance, in-kind facility provision that replaces facility lease budget item.
- F. Timeline - finalizing matching partnerships and funds are requested for no later than this September 2016. The South Side drop in center is scheduled to open before year's end and before winter arrives. Current partners have provided early funds to hire a Program Director and to secure a site.

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