

# **MMLA Racial Equity Strategic Planning Process and Consultant Engagement**

## **Background**

Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid (MMLA) is committed to including an explicit focus on racial equity and inclusion in its workplace and dismantling white supremacy culture, wherever it may exist. In 2016, following its decision to make investments in racial equity training through the Shriver Center's Racial Justice Institute for the benefit of MMLA's organizational health, MMLA's Management Committee convened two committees to advance this work: [1] a racial equity committee to develop plans and activities to ensure that MMLA's commitment is shared by all staff and realized in work performed on behalf of clients, and [2] a racial justice committee to focus on MMLA's internal policies and practices, with a broad goal of strengthening MMLA's organizational capacity through increased racial diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Both committees have been striving to help MMLA be a more welcoming and competent workplace and to help staff dismantle racism and its effects on the people MMLA serves. In furtherance of the committees' charges, efforts, and goals, MMLA's Management Committee has unanimously and enthusiastically signed the National Legal Aid and Defenders Association (NLADA)'s Fight Against Implicit Bias and Racial Inequality (FAIR) pledge. MMLA's Management Committee has committed to taking over leadership of MMLA's organizational efforts to fulfill the FAIR pledge commitments, as well as the tenets of MMLA's Racial Justice Values Statement and the racial equity planning engagement outlined in this document.

To guide and strengthen all of the above-noted efforts, MMLA's Management Committee seeks to engage a consultant with deep and proven expertise in racial equity and inclusion to help develop an organization-wide racial equity strategic plan. MMLA is seeking a consultant who has helped develop and shepherd these plans through other similarly situated organizations. MMLA wants to move beyond traditional methods of diversity awareness and "color-blind" or race-neutral activities, but rather seeks guidance in applying a racial equity lens that compels the organization to identify, talk about, and manage the inherent power dynamics of white culture and how it permeates policies, practices, behavior, workplace operations, and the lives of the people MMLA serves. MMLA seeks help looking at how diversity, equity, and inclusion can be truly embedded in all of its work with accountability.

## **Racial Equity Strategic Plan**

Specifically, MMLA is interested in a racial equity plan that includes an articulated paradigm of racial equity/justice – starting with our existing racial justice values statement and expanded to articulate how this paradigm impacts how we operate as an organization and how we serve our clients. This should include MMLA's vision, goal, and strategies with regard to racial equity.

The plan should enable MMLA to effect institutional change so that our racial equity paradigm is embedded and lived out throughout our organization and how we serve our clients, including the following areas of our internal operations and externally focused work:

- Recruitment and opportunity

- Hiring
- Retention
- Evaluations
- On-boarding
- Supervision
- Staff support/training
- Improving organization-wide cultural competency
- Expanding organization-wide awareness of implicit bias
- How our clients reach us
- Case selection
- Case review
- Case handling
- Case outcomes and measurement
- Resource development

The plan should include measurable short-term and long-term goals, timelines, and accountability plans. It should also include plans to increase MMLA's capacity internally to sustain this work moving forward. The plan should focus on inclusivity across the organization and include multiple entry points/ways of engaging folks across the spectrum of previous engagement with racial equity work.

### **Proposed Scope of Work, Budget, and Request for Proposals for Engagement**

#### **1. Help identify needs**

Using input from organizational sources (survey data, management and staff conversations, *etc.*), the consultant will help identify organizational needs and any potential barriers to progress.

#### **2. Develop a plan**

The consultant will work with a small team at MMLA to develop a racial equity strategic plan that outlines specific goals, strategies, and activities for the organization and its staff as described above. The organization is interested in guidance that supports building a vibrant workplace, strengthens intercultural competence, creates safe spaces for reporting concerns, encourages new voices in leadership, invests in racial equity tools and supports, and creates accountability. MMLA is a large organization with several offices and units; any plan should take into account the system-wide needs of the organization and how to include and reach all offices and units.

#### **3. Build out a timeline for the plan**

Developing and implementing a racial equity strategic plan that will authentically transform and deepen MMLA's commitment to racial equity will be an investment in time and resources. This work should likely occur over a multi-year period and would benefit from a consultant's expertise on how to build and approach a timeline for the work. We would need explicit dates and deadlines for setting and meeting benchmarks.

#### **4. Assist MMLA in implementing the plan**

This could include:

- Assistance identifying and meeting training needs
- Referrals to other professionals as necessary
- Help building accountability and measurement tools and check-ins and ways to celebrate success
- Assistance developing tools to ensure MMLA both [1] continues to deepen its commitment to racial equity and [2] sets and works toward ambitious racial equity goals

#### **5. Contract details**

- We seek a contract for an engagement for an initial term of one year, renewable for an additional one-year term at the sole option of MMLA's Management Committee. We expect to negotiate a start date for the work as soon as is practicable following selection of the consultant for the engagement.
- We expect to make monthly payments based on invoiced work under a mutually agreed work plan for the consultant, up to a total of \$50,000 annually for this engagement.

#### **6. How to submit a proposal**

Please submit the following no later than September 30, 2019, to Drew P. Schaffer, Executive Director, and Lisa Cohen, Deputy Director Operations, via e-mail to [dschaffer@mylegalaid.org](mailto:dschaffer@mylegalaid.org) and [lcohen@mylegalaid.org](mailto:lcohen@mylegalaid.org):

1. A technical approach, which describes how you will carry out the tasks outlined above.
2. A summary of your recent and relevant projects.
3. A firm estimate of the fees to be charged (including the basis for calculating them, *e.g.*, flat fee, hourly, project-based) and an estimate of expenses that would be incurred.
4. Resumes of all consultants who would be involved in the project.
5. Names, phone numbers, and email addresses of individuals at three nonprofit organizations who have been your clients during the last eighteen months and whom we can contact as references.

We will hold interviews with finalists during the month of October 2019. If you have questions, please email them to [dschaffer@mylegalaid.org](mailto:dschaffer@mylegalaid.org) or [lcohen@mylegalaid.org](mailto:lcohen@mylegalaid.org).