

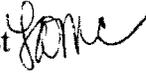
HHS COMM ITEM #2.1
April 24, 2015

Worksession

MEMORANDUM

April 22, 2015

TO: Health and Human Services Committee

FROM: Linda McMillan, Senior Legislative Analyst 

SUBJECT: **Anti-Poverty Proposal from A Wider Circle**

On March 26th, Councilmember Berliner sent a memo to HHS Chair Leventhal and Councilmember Rice sharing conversations he had been having with Dr. Mark Bergel of A Wider Circle about solutions to ending poverty. Councilmember Berliner shared the proposal for A Wider Circle's "Comprehensive Neighborhood Support Program." Councilmember Berliner asked that the HHS Committee discuss this proposal and indicated that he recommended funds to support implementing this model in two neighborhoods.

At this session, the HHS Committee will have an opportunity to discuss this proposal. While the Committee will have just reviewed certain Council and Executive Community Grant proposals, this is not a Community Grant. If the Committee recommends funding, it would be added to the reconciliation list for the Department of Health and Human Services.

Overview of Proposal (March memo © 1-9)

The Comprehensive Neighborhood Support Program's goal is to lift people out of poverty by helping them gain independence, primarily through employment, but also through initially making sure other basic needs are met, such as stable housing, food, clothing, and school supplies.

- It is neighborhood-based and the identification of appropriate neighborhoods would include among other things a review of poverty indicators, such as income and employment rates, FARMS rates, neighborhood crime statistics, and housing quality. While not in the memo, Dr. Bergel has discussed with Council staff that a neighborhood

may be about 200 households (this is different from the number of low-income households and there is no set size or boundary for a neighborhood).

- It is a model of shared responsibility by non-profit and service organizations, community members (including neighboring communities), local businesses, and local government.
- Collaborations would include community members serving in a long-term support capacity, committing at least two years of family support. The business community would be engaged in workforce-readiness and job training. The non-profit sector will provide or support wrap-around services. All members of the collaboration will look at how to reduce barriers to things like transportation and child care.
- It would provide support to high school students at risk of dropping out to prevent entrenched poverty.
- It focuses on outcomes. A Wider Circle's goal is to have 100% of adults employed within a year of completing job skills training.

The proposal is focused on Montgomery County although it takes into consideration successes that have occurred in other jurisdictions that established programs that bring personal attention and support group structures to addressing poverty.

Planning First (Discussions since March and planning proposal © 10-15)

As follow-up to the March request, Council staff shared with Dr. Bergel and Councilmember Berliner that there should be a planning period prior to the approval of funding for implementation. As follow-up, Dr. Bergel has provided a planning proposal that seeks \$32,680. A Wider Circles expects this to be a nine month process with the first four months reviewing potential neighborhoods, with the expectation that five to seven neighborhoods would then be selected for more in-depth review. The next five months there would be interviews and small group sessions to identify the current activities to address poverty in the neighborhoods, an evaluation of A Wider Circle's capacity to address underlying causes, clear definition of community, and identification of opportunities for "bridging social capital." The final report would include an implementation plan and budget.

Council Staff Comments

Council staff is very interested in this proposal to address poverty as it focuses specifically on economic self-sufficiency which could then impact the multi-generational cycle of poverty. While the County invests significantly in anti-poverty efforts and effort to support households that need assistance with stable housing, food, medical care, and other basic needs, the proposal is also different from many of the important efforts that are already in place.

- It would focus on a specific, and relatively small geographic areas and would not just serve certain households in a community but work to draw all members of that community to support their neighbors to become more economically self-sufficient.
- It would work with all low-income families, not just those with children. This would be different from programs like the Kennedy Cluster or Linkages to Learning where families are eligible through their children.
- It would have at least one defined outcome from the start (employment within one year of completing jobs skills training.)

Options for Moving Forward

Council staff believes there should be two distinct phases to the proposal: (1) planning followed a review and decision by the County about whether to fund implementation, and (assuming support) (2) implementation in one or more neighborhoods.

While A Wider Circle has brought this proposal to the table, having A Wider Circle lead the planning process that results in a scope and proposed budget could complicate A Wider Circle's ability to compete for implementation funds, if a competitive solicitation process is used. One alternative to avoid such a complicating factor would be to provide the planning funds to a neutral entity (in terms of being a direct service provider) such as the Community Foundation to lead the planning effort. Conversely, the HHS Committee could recommend that A Wider Circle undertake the planning knowing that a decision will have to be made at a later time regarding whether implementation is a competitive or non-competitive process.

Council staff recommends approval of \$32,000 for planning because of the potential for this effort to combat poverty in a new way. Council staff prefers to use a solicitation process when possible, but recognizes that the County often non-competitively partners with non-profit agencies both for time efficiency and when they have particular expertise.

Comments Specific to the Planning Proposal

Council staff suggests that if planning is funded, the Committee indicate that the following should be a part of the process and final report:

- Specific outcomes about increased household income and financial resources. The proposal discusses being employed within a certain period of time. Council staff and Dr. Bergel have discussed some specific income points, such as 200% of Federal Poverty Level that might be appropriate for an effort like this. Outcomes should include either gains to household income, achievement of a certain income, or achievement of other resources (such as child care subsidies) that improve overall financial resources to the household.

- Agreement about a timeframe for evaluation. While appropriations are annual, if there is agreement that a program like this must be in place for two years or three years before effectiveness can be evaluated, this must be clearly understood by all parties.
- How an independent evaluator can be a part of this effort from the beginning. One of the key components of “pay for success models” is that there is agreement to outcomes and there is a neutral evaluator that is agreed to and engaged from the beginning. All parties agree to abide by the evaluation results (since this is how investors get “paid for success”). While this program does not have to be financed through a “pay for success” model, Council staff thinks that this evaluation component is critical – particularly if there is an expectation that the program could be expanded to multiple neighborhoods.
- There should be information on how key components will be coordinated with other County efforts. For example, A Wider Circle discusses providing education and professional development programming. There are significant efforts underway to change and enhance workforce development and career pathways in the County and there could be great synergies with this effort. For example, in the RX for Employability partnership with CVS, non-profit partners were asked to identify potential job candidates. The non-profits worked with their clients on the soft skills for applications and interview. Council staff believes there will be more of these opportunities and they should be part of this collaboration.



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

ROGER BERLINER
COUNCILMEMBER
DISTRICT 1

CHAIRMAN
TRANSPORTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE
ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

March 26, 2015

MEMORANDUM

To: Chairman George Leventhal
Councilmember Craig Rice

From: Councilmember Roger Berliner

Re: A Pilot Program to End Poverty

Our Committee, and our Council, is always in the unenviable position of trying to address too many societal needs with too few resources. But an issue that I know both of you feel as strongly about as I do is the issue of poverty in our County.

The rise of poverty and its lasting consequences is at the root of so many of the social, educational, and economic issues we confront as a community. That is just one of the reasons why the three of us will be among those participating in A Wider Circle's "National Conference to End Poverty" on Saturday.

For a number of months, I have been in conversation with Mark Bergel regarding his thoughts on how we could constructively advance this important agenda. I have attached the proposal he shared with me last week. I think it is a very compelling proposal, and at a price that I believe we can and must afford.

In essence, the proposal seeks to address poverty neighborhood by neighborhood, led by community members in those neighborhoods who understand that success is inextricably linked to a sense of "shared responsibility." That responsibility is shared by community members, local business owners, non-profits and service organizations.

What does ending poverty look like in the model being proposed? Independence – "gained mostly through employment." While our county appears poised to ramp up our work force development efforts, for many, achieving independence may not be about job skills per se; it is about acquiring *soft skills* (resume writing skills, job interviews skills, and conflict management) as well as technical skills. While jobs are the "central focus," the proposal highlights the importance of the basics as well – housing with dignity and food security. I have attached the details of Wider Circle's "Comprehensive Neighborhood Support Program" and proposed budget for your review and consideration.

When our Committee takes up the HHS budget, it is my intention to move that we put \$296,000 on the reconciliation list, enough funding to launch this program in two of our highest-poverty neighborhoods. The bottom line for me is that we have one of our finest non-profits prepared to pilot a proposal of the highest priority, and that we collectively find a path forward in which we can support this important work.

I look forward to working with you on what I know is a shared priority.

###

A WIDER CIRCLE

A unique, holistic approach to ending poverty

Program Focus

The key to helping County residents rise out of poverty is comprehensive support programming delivered in the neighborhoods in which they live.

A Wider Circle's Comprehensive Neighborhood Support (CNS) Program is, from the start and at its heart, characterized by shared responsibility. Responsibility is shared first, by community members who live in close proximity to those in poverty and who possess many skills that would help their neighbors rise out of poverty. Responsibility is shared also by local businesses, a responsibility that carries with it many benefits as we focus much of our programming on job preparedness. Numerous and myriad businesses in our County have positions they need to fill with determined, qualified, and hard-working individuals. These are traits that will be the hallmark of our job preparedness program.

Responsibility is also shared by the nonprofit and service organizations that will be driven by outcomes more so than by services. Finally, this responsibility is shared by local government, which will continue to do its part to represent those most in need.

The focus of programming is on the neighborhoods with the highest concentrations of poverty. As we demonstrate success, our work in these neighborhoods will be a replicable model for subsequent County and regional efforts, as well as national work.

We define "ending poverty" as gaining independence, and independence is gained most through employment. While job creation is often the focus of economic discussions, in this program, there is more focus on "worker creation." In other words, we will help individuals gain all of the soft skills they need (e.g., resume writing skills, job interview skills, conflict management, etc.) and we will also ensure that they receive adequate technical skills training for the many careers that make up the professional mosaic. With the latter, widespread collaboration will be the pathway to success.

The CNS program also reaches into high schools with intensive support to those most vulnerable to dropping out. We must focus on preventing drop-outs if we are to prevent having an entrenched poverty created in the County. At present, we are at significant risk for this.

With jobs as a central focus, we will look at two other essential components of poverty eradication, and address them just as comprehensively as we address job preparedness. For example, all service providers that address safety net or basic needs will ensure that CNS neighborhoods have the support they need. Every home will have beds and dressers, tables and chairs, and other items that allow the young and the old of the household to have stability and dignity – to feel like they have a home and all that comes with it.

We will ensure that food scarcity is not an issue for anyone in these neighborhoods. The amount of food in this County and this region makes this simply a matter of organization and priority, and with this targeted lens on high-poverty neighborhoods, there will be no food scarcity. Similarly, there will be no scarcity of anything that middle- and upper-income youth and families take for

granted. There is enough stuff, enough food, enough school supplies for each family in Montgomery County to have all that they need. This part of the program is simple, and the entire community will share in making sure we address it.

The other side of holistic support is the wrap-around. This will be where the entire community, including those living in poverty, must make a concerted effort to connect with one another. Job coaches will provide long-term support in many ways, but this more concentrated support element will require a true demonstration of community.

Collaborations across sectors will define this programming, to include:

1. Community members serving in a long-term support capacity, committing to at least two years of providing the equivalent of familial support. Because we would engage community members in four-to-one ratios, the intensity and the pressure that may typically be associated with this type of support is mitigated, and the partnership of the four supporting parties creates a powerful synergy for the individual or family receiving the support.

2. The business community is specifically engaged in the workforce-readiness and job training components. Some of this already occurs in Montgomery County, with businesses being connected to various job training programs. That would be expanded upon for all businesses that have positions for which we can train those currently not working and mired in poverty. In fact, in each and every one of these neighborhoods where there are high concentrations of poverty, we will set up a job training program.

Setting up the program in the neighborhoods - using or creating facilities located therein - removes obstacles of transportation and travel and reinforces our commitment to the people there. Along with that, free babysitting is also provided to remove that oft-cited obstacle to attending workforce training.

3. The nonprofit sector will be engaged in providing or supporting wrap-around services, but the focus will be expanded to ensure that families served see clearly the path to independence and have the support to get there in as quick a fashion as possible.

This comprehensive program is not meant to be a ten-year program in these neighborhoods. There will be long-term support built in, but within two years, we expect that families be fully immersed in their rise out of poverty. Of course, there will be many in our community who will always be in need of support services, such as those with mental or physical health issues. Similarly, elderly individuals who cannot enter the workforce and find themselves in poverty will, in addition to the assistance they need, receive quality-of-life programming.

Exiting poverty and gaining independence - those interconnected outcomes are the only outcomes acceptable for the people we will be serving through this program. For the adults living in poverty

in our county, getting a job is essential, and the key to getting a job is having other county residents serving as job coaches and supporters. That is why an important element of the program is **maximizing the human connection in our County**. The success of this program is not the responsibility of the government, the people receiving the services, the nonprofit agencies helping to lead the effort, or businesses. It is all of our shared responsibilities, and the rise out of poverty of each person currently mired in it is our dogged end.

Why A Wider Circle?

"I am so grateful to A Wider Circle for helping me realize that I still have a lot to offer, for helping me regain my confidence, update my skills, and to know that we all need a 'helping hand' sometimes. Now, I am ready for whatever new ventures are to come – and for me, that means giving back, because I have been given so much."

– Patricia, served by A Wider Circle in 2015

Throughout A Wider Circle's thirteen years of service, we have seen how often those we serve are trapped in unsafe, neglected neighborhoods where they have little opportunity to succeed and little exposure to the skills needed to obtain employment and succeed in the workplace. At the same time, we have seen families and individuals rise out of poverty, and we know what is possible when people receive truly comprehensive support.

The mission of A Wider Circle is to **end poverty** by building community and creating connections. We work in partnership with those we serve and with those seeking to help in order to ensure that every child and adult has the chance to succeed and the opportunity to live well. A Wider Circle's services focus on the following three areas: 1.) The provision of basic need items; 2.) Comprehensive education and job preparedness support; and 3.) Creating connections for long-term support. These three components work in concert to create lasting change in the lives of those we serve.

It all began in 2001. Dr. Mark Bergel, then a professor at American University, volunteered with his students to deliver emergency food supplies to local families. He saw that people not only had no food, they had no beds, dressers, or other basic need items that so many of us take for granted. He also saw that people had little access to the information and resources so readily available to others in the community. With no seed money but a strong conviction that we could do better for those living in poverty, he converted his living room into a non-profit office and founded A Wider Circle.

Today, A Wider Circle has served more than 150,000 children and adults across the greater Washington, DC region. We have twice been named "one of the best" nonprofit organizations in the region by the Catalogue for Philanthropy, and while many other individual and organizational accolades have come to A Wider Circle, most recently, Dr. Bergel was named a 2014 CNN Hero and a 2014 Washingtonian of the Year.

In the past year, we have sought to bring our services more directly into the neighborhoods where the need is greatest, developing mobile programs for many of our services. It is as part of this commitment that we submit this proposal to provide comprehensive back-to-work support to Montgomery County's most impoverished communities.

A Neighborhood-Based Approach

A Wider Circle seeks to go where the needs are greatest and do what is most needed. With this program, we will target our services to neighborhoods with high levels of poverty. Targeted neighborhoods will be clearly defined communities, such as apartment buildings or clustered neighborhood blocks. Key indicators used to identify these communities will include poverty and employment rates at the Census tract level, student achievement and percentage of students receiving Free And Reduced Meals (FARMS) at zoned schools, neighborhood crime statistics, and quality of existing housing, among other characteristics.

By delivering these services directly in high-poverty communities, we have the opportunity to create dramatic change in the quality of life there. Locating job skills training within these neighborhoods will enhance program effectiveness by removing barriers to participation and creating stronger bonds among participants and fellow community members. Doing so also creates an opportunity to engage local employers. In short, this model allows us to utilize existing community strengths and resources in order to respond to community needs.

We will bring this comprehensive support to low-income Montgomery County neighborhoods in a sequential manner – moving as swiftly as resources allow. Success would certainly lead to attention and inspire greater action on behalf of our residents.

Education and Professional Development Programming: A Wider Circle will offer specialized job skills training each month to the CNS neighborhoods, hosting classes in locations that are highly accessible to these communities. In addition to formal classes, supplemental workshops will be offered, focusing on topics such as introductions to commonly-used software, interpersonal skills, wellness, and financial literacy. We will also bring our “mobile Professional Development Center” directly to the community four times throughout the year, removing any barrier to accessing this resource.

Provision of Basic Need Items: A Wider Circle is the only organization providing furniture and home goods – free of charge – throughout the entire capital region. Residents in CNS neighborhoods will have expedited access to our showroom of furniture and home goods – typically having their homes furnished within 60 days of when we first become aware of the need. They will also receive transportation support for selecting and bringing home these items. As with other program components, we will remove all barriers for these participants as they seek to provide stable homes for themselves and their families.

Long-term Support: A significant focus of the program will include creating connections for long-term support. The reason that many in our County have never experienced poverty is the guidance that they have received every step of the way, from birth through college and beyond. It is critical to the program’s success and to our overall sense of community in Montgomery County that this same type of support is provided to those in poverty.

We will utilize volunteers who are willing to engage with an individual or family at a level where they are willing to say, “I have room in my life for one more family member.” These volunteers will

not provide direct financial support to the families with whom they are matched, but instead help with planning, problem-solving, and navigating the resources that are available to them. While job coaches have a significant role to play in the provision of long-term support, they are not expected to be the sole source of support for participants. Each CNS participant will be matched with up to four volunteers, working together to help residents reach their goals. A Wider Circle will provide coordination and support to these long-term relationships.

Community Building: A Wider Circle will work in partnership with local businesses as potential employers of residents of the neighborhood, to include tailoring job skills training to meet local employment needs. The relationships that will form through this will also allow employers to recognize the capabilities of neighborhood residents.

Project Budget

Please see attached spreadsheet.

Budget Narrative

The attached budget demonstrates the cost of establishing the program in a single community. If A Wider Circle were to implement CNS programming in multiple locations – either through this proposal or a proposal previously submitted through Councilmember Rice’s office – we would certainly identify economies of scale.

Personnel needs will be the most significant cost to undertaking this program. The Project Manager (PM) will become an integral part of the community and will build relationships with all participating residents. Along with the Project Coordinator (PC), the PM will meet with residents to understand their needs and preferences, and to then work with the residents to develop the plan for all services. Additional responsibilities of the PM will be to collaborate with other nonprofit partners and perform outreach to local businesses and institutions regarding employment, in-kind donations, volunteer support, and other assistance.

The PC will oversee the educational and job skills training, work directly with job coaches, coordinate complementary educational workshops, and provide additional support to participating residents. The PM and PC will be dedicated 100% to the project.

Other members of the professional team at A Wider Circle will dedicate a percentage of their effort to this project. These individuals will include the Client Services Director, Education Director, Outreach Manager, and Executive Director.

As noted in the budget spreadsheet, expenses will also include transportation assistance, curriculum development, technology, evaluation, and stipends for additional assistance for all program participants.

Projected Outcomes

People no longer in poverty – that is the outcome, the sole outcome this program seeks. We will closely work with CNS residents to identify starting point, progress, and how they are moving toward this end. Our goal with all adults is 100% employment within a year of completing job skills training. To

further quantify our results, we will gather data on income levels, job attainment, employment retention, and other key metrics. We will track participants at six-, twelve-, and eighteen-month intervals after intervention. Ultimately, we seek to demonstrate not only participants' ability to obtain employment, but to remain – and advance – in the workplace.

A Wider Circle

Comprehensive Neighborhood Support Program

Categories	Details	Projected
Salaries		\$99,500
Project Manager		\$42,000
Project Coordinator		\$38,000
Client Services Director	15% of effort; performs priority scheduling and works with community partners	\$7,500
Education Director	10% of effort; assists with educational offerings	\$3,000
Outreach Manager	10% of effort; coordinates distribution of professional clothing and accessories	\$4,200
Executive Director	10% of effort; provides oversight of entire project	\$4,800
Payroll Taxes		\$7,562
Fringe Benefits		\$5,003
Outreach - Printing and Postage	Mailings to be conducted monthly to CNS households, quarterly to engaged citizens, and monthly to the households providing wrap-around support	\$3,800
Curricula and Class Materials		\$5,000
Technology	Includes technology for staff use and provision of computers for use in the homes of participants	\$8,700
Evaluation		\$5,700
Transportation Assistance for Basic Need Items		\$7,500
Individual Stipends for Associated Expenses		\$5,000
Total Budget		\$147,765

A WIDER CIRCLE

A unique, holistic approach to ending poverty

Summary

With this proposal, A Wider Circle is requesting a grant in the amount of \$32,680 to undertake an in-depth planning process for the implementation of its Comprehensive Neighborhood Support (CNS) Program. The proposal below includes a brief description of the proposed program (page 2) in order to provide context; however, the planning process itself (beginning on page 3) is at the core of this request.

Through the CNS Program, A Wider Circle will seek to provide intensive support to one of Montgomery County's most impoverished neighborhoods. The focus of services will be squarely on helping participants to rise out of poverty – which we define as being able to live independently. We know that this independence must be gained through employment, which is why preparing participants to enter or re-enter the workforce will be the ultimate goal of this work.

Professional development programming will be supported by efforts to ensure that participants' basic needs are met, providing them with the stability needed to make the journey out of poverty.

The CNS Program will be characterized by shared responsibility across the six community sectors: government, business, education, human services, civic and faith, and philanthropy. Utilizing each of these sectors, we will connect neighborhood residents in need of assistance with others in the community who have the capacity to provide individualized support, access to their own social networks, and assistance in accessing available resources.

Organizational Overview

The mission of A Wider Circle is to end poverty by building community and creating connections. We work in partnership with those we serve and with those seeking to help in order to ensure that every child and adult has the chance to succeed and the opportunity to live well. A Wider Circle's services focus on the following three areas: 1.) The provision of basic need items; 2.) Comprehensive education and job preparedness support; and 3.) Creating connections for long-term support. These three components work in concert to create lasting change in the lives of those we serve.

It all began in 2001. Dr. Mark Bergel, then a professor at American University, volunteered with his students to deliver emergency food supplies to local families. He saw that people not only had no food, they had no beds, dressers, or other basic need items that so many of us take for granted. He also saw that people had little access to the information and resources so readily available to others in the community. With no seed money but a strong conviction that we could do better for those living in poverty, he converted his living room into a non-profit office and founded A Wider Circle.

Today, A Wider Circle has served more than 150,000 children and adults across the greater Washington, DC region. We have twice been named "one of the best" nonprofit organizations in the region by the Catalogue for Philanthropy, and while many other individual and organizational

accolades have come to A Wider Circle, most recently, Dr. Bergel was named a 2014 CNN Hero and a 2014 Washingtonian of the Year.

In the past year, we have sought to bring our services more directly into the neighborhoods where the need is greatest, developing mobile programs for many of our services. It is as part of this commitment that we submit this proposal to provide comprehensive support to Montgomery County's most impoverished communities.

Proposed Program

A Wider Circle seeks to go where the needs are greatest and do what is most needed, and with the CNS Program, A Wider Circle seeks to bring its full complement of services directly to our County's most vulnerable neighborhoods.

The focus on high-poverty neighborhoods is key to this effort. We know that the effects of living in concentrated poverty are significant, including increased likeliness to experience food hardship, to have difficulty with housing costs, and to lack health insurance. For children in these neighborhoods, the increased risk of harmful levels of stress and severe behavioral and emotional problems can affect their ability to succeed in school and undermine their chances of adult economic success. These effects are seen in neighborhoods with poverty rates of 20% or more (Annie E. Casey Foundation, "Data Snapshot on High-Poverty Communities," 2012).

By delivering services directly in a high-poverty community, we have the opportunity to create dramatic change in the quality of life there. Locating job skills training within the neighborhood will enhance program effectiveness by removing barriers to participation and creating stronger bonds among participants and fellow community members. Doing so also creates an opportunity to engage local employers. In short, this model allows us to utilize existing community strengths and resources in order to respond to community needs.

Services will be provided with the following areas of focus:

Education and Professional Development Programming: A Wider Circle will offer specialized job skills training each month to the pilot CNS neighborhood, hosting classes in locations that are highly accessible to these communities. In addition to formal classes, supplemental workshops will be offered, focusing on topics such as introductions to commonly-used software, interpersonal skills, wellness, and financial literacy. We will also bring our "mobile Professional Development Center" directly to the community four times throughout the year, removing any barrier to accessing this resource.

Provision of Basic Need Items: A Wider Circle is the only organization providing furniture and home goods – free of charge – throughout the entire capital region. Residents of the CNS pilot neighborhood will have expedited access to our showroom of furniture and home goods – typically having their homes furnished within 60 days of when we first become aware of the need. They will also receive transportation support for selecting and bringing home these items. As with other program components, we will remove all barriers for these participants as they seek to provide stable homes for themselves and their families.



Long-term Support: A significant focus of the program will include creating connections for long-term support. The reason that many in our County have never experienced poverty is the guidance that they have received every step of the way, from birth through college and beyond. It is critical to the program's success and to our overall sense of community in Montgomery County that this same type of support is provided to those in poverty. Each CNS participant will be matched with up to four volunteers, working together to help residents reach their goals. A Wider Circle will provide coordination and support to these long-term relationships.

Community Building: A Wider Circle will work in partnership with local businesses as potential employers of residents of the pilot neighborhood, to include tailoring job skills training to meet local employment needs. The relationships that will form through this will also allow employers to recognize the capabilities of neighborhood residents.

Planning Process Overview

A key part of the planning process will be selecting the pilot neighborhood. In the process of selecting this neighborhood, we also expect to gather information on neighborhood needs that will help us to tailor the services provided through the CNS Program to the selected neighborhood and to high-needs sections of the population within that neighborhood, such as disconnected youth, ex-offenders, immigrants, and other groups. Throughout the planning process – in addition to the statistical reviews and interviews described below – a review of current literature and best practices will be undertaken to further inform the final program design.

A review of 2013 Census data shows that there are 18 Census Block Groups in Montgomery County that have a poverty rate of 25% or more. These Block Groups will form the core of our initial pool of potential neighborhoods. While the Block Groups are the smallest level at which reliable poverty information is available, CNS Program services will be focused on an area smaller than most Block Groups. We expect the program to serve a community of approximately 200 households, while the core Block Groups range in size from 300 households to 1,300 households. To identify smaller areas of concentrated poverty that may not be revealed at the Block Group level, we will review our own client records for geographical patterns and conduct interviews with nonprofit partners and County officials. Upon the inclusion of additional neighborhoods, we expect our initial pool to be comprised of approximately 25 neighborhoods.

Each potential neighborhood will be assessed on a number of complementary indicators, to include:

- *Income*
Measurement: FARMS participation data at zoned schools (MCPSS website), median income data (American Community Survey), TANF participation rate (MD Department of Human Resources)
- *Children prepared to succeed*
Measurement: Proficiency rates for 3rd grade, high school completion rate, percentage of students with chronic absences (all from MCPSS website)

- *Neighborhood support*
Measurement: Food access information (USDA), business density (Census), bank density (FDIC)
- *Workforce opportunity*
Measurement: Level of educational attainment (Census), jobs within a 45-minute transit ride (EPA Smart Location Database), percentage of households with no vehicles available (American Community Survey)
- *Housing*
Affordability Index – Mortgage and Rent (American Community Survey), number of vacant units (Department of Housing and Community Affairs), number of code violations (Department of Housing and Community Affairs)

While this is not an exhaustive list of the indicators that will be used to assess potential neighborhoods, it does provide an overview of the main categories of interest. For neighborhoods that are likely candidates for selection, in-person observations and information gathered from stakeholder interviews will supplement our evaluation.

We expect to conduct all initial identification interviews and review of the above indicators within **four months** of the start of the grant. The result of this review will be a list of approximately five to seven neighborhoods with characteristics warranting more in-depth review.

Over the course of the following **five months**, we will conduct interviews and small-group meetings with representatives of County and State agencies, nonprofit organizations, and other key groups that are active in these neighborhoods. Individual conversations will also be held at this point with residents who have been identified as community leaders. However, in order to avoid creating expectations that cannot be immediately met, these conversations will be limited in scope until we have a level of certainty that we will be providing services in a given neighborhood. The goals of these discussions will be to:

- Identify current activities being undertaken to address poverty in the neighborhoods, to be assessed for potential partnerships and for overlap of services.
- Evaluate contributing factors to poverty in the neighborhood and A Wider Circle's capacity to address underlying causes.
- Clearly define a community within the larger neighborhood that is best suited for this intervention, relative to both cohesiveness and size.
- Identify opportunities to create "bridging social capital" – that is, nearby organizations, businesses, and individuals with the capacity and potential to connect neighborhood residents with resources such as jobs, training, and community services.

From these discussions, A Wider Circle will select one neighborhood as the pilot neighborhood for the CNS Program.

Planning Budget

As shown in the attached budget, the majority of planning work will be done by the Executive Director and Associate Director. Additional support will be provided by the Deputy Director, who will help to identify existing relationships in neighborhoods being studied and to coordinate communications with stakeholders, and by the Programming and Evaluation Coordinator, who will provide research support and connect this project with evaluation work being done by the organization as a whole.

Additional expenses will include travel and supplies for stakeholder meetings, materials and postage for outreach efforts, and consultation in developing metrics and evaluation practices at the community level.

Final Report

Within **twelve months** of the beginning of the grant period, A Wider Circle will produce a final report. The main components of this report will be:

- *Overview of the selected neighborhood.* This overview will include geographical description, demographics, active organizations, causes and contributing factors to the concentration of poverty, and key factors influencing the selection of this neighborhood.
- *Detailed program description.* In addition to the current overview of services we expect to provide through the CNS Program, the detailed description will also include specific services directly tailored to the needs of the pilot neighborhood, including services targeted toward specific sections of the population; relevant best practices from existing literature; an estimated timeline for implementing different phases of programming; and potential community partners, their roles, and any available statements of commitment.
- *Proposed outcomes.* Core outcomes will focus on employment attainment, retention, and advancement. Our goal with all adult participants is 100% employment within a year of completing job skills training. Additional outcomes and metrics will be developed to address needs identified during the selection process and to measure change at the community level.
- *Revised budget.* Based on the detailed program description developed throughout the course of the planning process, a revised budget for the program will also be developed. This budget will reflect all adjustments to programming, as well as any proposed subcontracts with external partners. Finally, the budget narrative will include potential sources of funding for future and expanded programming.

Conclusion

Montgomery County can be a model for what is possible in our nation – a County where we decide to no longer simply manage poverty and its effects, but to seek poverty's complete elimination. At the same time, we face the real risk of seeing entrenched, generational poverty increase in our County. If we are to truly address this risk, we must bring our full commitment to these areas of concentrated need. Through the CNS Program, A Wider Circle seeks to do just that, creating greater connections among those in need and those who can help, and ensuring that all County residents can see a path to independence for themselves and their families.

A Wider Circle

Planning for Comprehensive Neighborhood Support Program

Categories	Details	Projected
Salaries		\$26,300
Executive Director	20% of effort	\$9,600
Deputy Director	10% of effort	\$5,000
Associate Director	15% of effort	\$7,500
Programming and Evaluation Coordinator	10% of effort	\$4,200
Payroll Taxes		\$2,000
Fringe Benefits		\$1,600
Travel		\$100
Supplies	Includes food and other supplies for community meetings	\$500
Printing and Copying		\$250
Postage and Delivery		\$1,000
Evaluation	Majority included in staff time	\$950
Total Budget		\$32,700