

Solicitation for Interest Application



Organization Name: Metanoia Community Development Corporation
Organization Location: 2005 Reynolds Avenue, North Charleston, SC 29405
Contact Name: Bill Stanfield
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OBJECTIVE

Metanoia Community Development Corporation has been working for the past three years to pioneer what will be the region's only A Rated and NAEYC Accredited early childhood development center (ECDC) serving a majority of low-income students. These students will be destined to attend one of the 9 schools that are listed in the Charleston County School District's (CCSD) Solicitation of Interest document. In conversation with district staff, we have prepared this proposal to begin a conversation that we hope may result in CCSD partnering with Metanoia to cover the cost of 3 and 4 year-old students within this facility, which will serve just under 100 students from six weeks through 4 years of age. The ECDC will be located within the renovated former Chicora Elementary School. The ECDC wing of this facility has been completely redesigned to meet all the highest standards for early childhood development. Metanoia has completed the design work of the ECDC and anticipates starting construction in January of 2020 and will be ready to open for students in January of 2021.

By investing in the operation of this ECDC, CCSD will be assisting in the building of a model for early childhood education that will yield critical outcomes and evidence of what early intervention can mean to the life of low-income students. Vanderbilt University researchers studied cohorts of low-income students who received high quality early childhood education and those who did not over several decades and found that for every dollar spent on early childhood education there was \$7 in public expenditure for students who did not receive this valuable service. In addition, the Abecedarian Study by UNC's Frank Porter Graham Institute showed that quality early care and education led to children scoring higher on achievement tests in math and reading, lower levels of grade retention and fewer placements in special education classes. We believe that by providing this investment in an early childhood development center that will be the first of its kind in our region, CCSD can learn valuable lessons that can set policy and also can save on future expenditures for students who receive this care now, thus making them ready for kindergarten. For Metanoia this facility will serve as a compliment to our existing programming which now achieves strong outcomes for students from first grade through high school graduation. Once this ECDC is operational, Metanoia will have a continuous pipeline for student development from cradle to career.

Section 1: Metanoia & Our Philosophy

Organizational Background

Metanoia believes that children are the greatest asset in our community. All children are capable of learning and becoming successful adults. Students do not achieve this goal when they do not have adequate opportunities to grow their own gifts, skills and abilities. When children receive appropriate opportunities, they are capable of learning and of reaching positive outcomes and they and their families can transform neighborhoods in the process. Our mission is to provide the highest quality learning experiences for preschoolers in order for them to be successful lifelong learners. Our approach to achieving this goal will be to focus on early learning experiences which fall into the six domains of child development outlined in this proposal. Our goal is to create a learning environment that encourages collaboration between children, parents, teachers and the community. Our vision, mission and key values are detailed below.

Vision Statement: Metanoia envisions a diverse community of people that are inspired and empowered to make the community better for generations to come. Where quality housing and livable wage jobs are accessible to all. **Where there are academically achieving schools** and businesses and faith communities benefit the community; where the quality of life includes green space and recreational opportunities and where Reynolds Avenue is a hub

of economic, social and family activities. We recognize that the people of our community are essential to the accomplishment of this vision.

Mission Statement: Metanoia Community Development Corporation is a movement of people rooted in faith. We invest in neighborhood assets to build leaders, establish quality housing and generate economic development.

Core Values: Metanoia has two key approaches that flow through our work. We are:

Community-Driven: Metanoia delivers youth programming in a community-based learning environment that highlights interdependence between children, parents, teachers and community. We facilitate community-wide collaboration and innovation throughout each of our program areas, which creates a sense of buy-in with participants.

Asset-Based: We invest in our community's assets and we believe our children are our greatest asset. Metanoia believes that our community and its families are the most critical 'assets' for community transformation from the inside-out. Metanoia's asset building culture is deep seated in our broad-based community development goals. We see this opportunity to affect long-term outcomes through early childhood development as one of the most promising ventures on which we can embark to create positive, healthy neighborhood transformation.

Leadership Team Bios

Bill Stanfield, Chief Executive Officer

Rev. Stanfield is responsible for providing organization wide direction to an effort of outcomes-based continuous improvement and community organizing. He is co-founder of Metanoia and has taken the organization from a small start up to an award winning, multi-faceted community development organization with a unique and wholistic approach to community renewal with fairness and equity. He has 18 years of grassroots community development experience in areas of education, affordable housing, and economic development. Rev. Stanfield received his M.Div. from the Princeton Theological Seminary and his B.A. in History from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is a 2011 graduate of the Liberty Fellowship Program and was named in 2012 the "North Charleston Citizen of the Year" by the City of North Charleston citizens advisory council.

Jamilla Harper, Chief Operating Officer

Ms. Harper is a member of the National Accreditation for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and is leading the effort to develop our research-based, outcomes-driven early childhood development program. She has travelled throughout the nation to visit early childhood development centers and to learn from experts to create an innovative program for young children. Ms. Harper first worked for Metanoia as a Servant Leader Intern during our summer literacy immersion program, Freedom School. She then became one of Metanoia's first AmeriCorps VISTA staff members before moving to Nairobi, Kenya for eight years, where she worked for a Non-Government Organization. In July of 2018, she returned to her hometown of Charleston to take on Metanoia's newly created COO role. Ms. Harper received her M.A. in Development Studies from the University of Nairobi and her B.A. both in Corporate Communication and Spanish from the College of Charleston.

Linda Mills, Child Care Consultant

Ms. Mills has worked in the early childhood field for over thirty years and is nationally recognized as a leader in the early care and education consulting and research arena. She provides consultation services to non-profit community-based programs, private employers, early childhood organizations, institutions of higher learning and state governments. Her expertise lies in a range of areas, such as: childcare center start-up, expansion and renovation planning, childcare service delivery assessment, childcare feasibility studies, childcare market rate analysis, workforce studies, strategic planning, budget analysis, organizational structure review and the facilitation of childcare collaboratives. Ms. Mills has advised policymakers on childcare issues and consulted to local and state governments. She received her M.S. in Leadership in Early Childhood Education from Wheelock College and her B.S. in Child Development from the University of Rhode Island.

Mary Hodgson, Organizational Resiliency Specialist

Mrs. Hodgson is tasked with building the organizational resilience necessary for the next phase of Metanoia's growth and community development efforts. As a leader of Metanoia's present capacity building assessment and efforts, Mrs. Hodgson is a skilled performance coach and is certified in the Baldrige analysis and PROSCI process. She is a Certified Public Accountant and received her B.A. in Accounting from Providence College.

Summary of Philosophy

Metanoia begins by listening to neighborhood residents to identify community problems. We then look at those issues to locate how we can invest in neighborhood assets to affect sustainable transformation – looking to research-based, data-driven models to execute programming. In fact, this is how we arrived at the need for quality early childhood education in our community. Eight of the nine lowest performing schools in South Carolina are located within the area we serve. One of the contributing factors to this dire statistic is that our children are entering schools unprepared for Kindergarten, which puts them on a direct path to falling short of achieving third grade reading levels.

Metanoia believes that investment in early childhood development will be catalytic for renewing our community in a manner that is healthy for everyone. Our approach to early childhood education is built on a foundation that:

- Accentuates interdependence between children, parents, teachers and community in a way which realizes the potential for children and teachers to learn together and the rights of parents to participate.
- Focuses on Kindergarten preparedness for children through curriculum delivery in each of the six early learning domains.
- Focuses on Kindergarten preparedness for parents through our interpretation of parents as partners in the educational process.
- Creates a learning environment that is developmentally appropriate, and which sets the stage to meet developmental milestones.
- Offers a research-based, data-driven early educational model that can serve as an evidence-based prototype.

Section 2: Relevant Experience

Our Model

The overall goal of Metanoia's Early Childhood Development Center (ECDC) will be to provide experiences for children from birth through 4 years-old that are based on South Carolina Early Learning Standards. Care will address all the six domains of child development (Approaches to Play and Learning, Emotional and Social Development, Health and Physical Development, Language Development and Communication, Mathematical Thinking and Expression, and Cognitive Development), ensuring the children who attend Metanoia's program thrive and are prepared for school. Developmentally appropriate curriculum which allows for learning opportunities that will stimulate curiosity, are language rich and foster conceptual understanding will be implemented. Our model provides for small adult-to-child ratios which offer hands-on learning opportunities through activities which encourage children to meet key milestones.

Metanoia is creating an early learning prototype that can be replicated by CCSD. Our model is inspired by high-quality, evidence-based educational approaches such as Emergent Curriculum, Reggio Emilia, Montessori. We are designing both space and curriculum to comply with Early Head Start and Head Start Standards. At present, there are no A-rated early childhood centers serving a majority of low-income children in the Lowcountry. Ours will be the only A-rated ECDC in the Lowcountry serving a majority of these students.

Proven Experience

While we acknowledge that early childhood development is a new initiative for Metanoia, we already have an excellent track record of success with 16 years of award-winning programming for students from grades 1-12. We have extensive project management experience and have birthed major initiatives in youth development, housing development and economic development within the communities we serve. While all of these experiences have provided us with valuable knowledge of what it takes to bring a project to successful fruition, we focus on our education experience below as most relevant to this proposal.

Metanoia Youth Leadership Academy (MYLA) is our year-round youth leadership program for first through 12th grade students. We deliver a curriculum that was developed in tandem with College of Charleston which lays out a series of Integrated Leadership Standards. These standards identify specific and measurable milestones for students in our afterschool program. They are translated into a curriculum that is developmentally appropriate and used to track progress in specific aspects of student performance. In the summer Metanoia operates a Children's Defense Fund Freedom school that teaches literacy and citizenship skills over a full school day of scheduling.

These key priorities are integrated into all MYLA programming and are integrated into our ECDC model:

- **Sequential:** Our unique approach teaches 21st century leadership skills to students and reinforces the growth of these skills by integrating developmentally appropriate and contextualized instruction for students that builds on itself each year. As students grow older, they can put lessons learned into practice as interns working with our younger students.
- **Longitudinal:** Our program is the only one of its kind in the region that offers a pipeline for student development from first grade to graduation (soon to be six-weeks to graduation). In our experience, this longitudinal approach is essential to the success of students from our disinvested neighborhoods
- **STEAM Focused:** Metanoia makes a concerted effort to integrate Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics to help move students forward as 21st century leaders and expose them to the possibilities of focus on the sciences as viable career choices.
- **Literacy Engagement:** Metanoia's curriculum places strong emphasis on both the mechanics of and love for reading. Our summer Freedom School, just completed its 15th year, is an intensive six-week "literary immersion" program where more than 100 first through eighth grade students spend eight hours each day exploring the world of books and developing a love of reading.
- **Rigorous Measures:** Clear and objective measures are documented for internal mission faithfulness and external reporting. Our program relies on key tracking systems that provide staff nearly real time data to make continuous improvements and track individual student's progress. We firmly believe that we get what we measure and so we constantly check our own progress to define and tweak, as needed, even clearer measurement goals.

For example, our literacy immersion summer Children's Defense Fund Freedom School achieves strong reading outcomes through targeted curriculum delivery. The goal of our six-week, full-day summer program is to develop reading strategies as well as a love for reading. The graphic to the right illustrates gains made during our 2019 session. Of those students who began the 2019 session reading below grade level, the graphic indicates the percentage who increased one *or more* reading levels. We are able to report that per third-party testing completed using the Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment, **98% of Freedom School students either gained or maintained reading levels (50% gain, 48% maintain) over the course of our 2019 session.**



In addition, parent involvement is a critical component of our youth programming model. Research shows that families who are not involved intimately in their students' growth may become a barrier to progress once the student begins to advance beyond family norms. For children to participate in MYLA, Metanoia requires parent participation. Parents 'pay' for programming through involvement and personal growth, not by being charged monetarily. Our parents consistently exceed the required number of hours. We are the only program in the region to require this level of parental involvement.

Initial Groundwork

To begin this ECDC endeavor, we worked with the Institute for Child Success to create a sustainable business plan, which called for a feasibility study of an early childcare program and facility. We enlisted local early childcare experts Cathy Marino and Jane Ferrell as advisory board members. Ms. Marino and Ms. Ferrell were strategic volunteers who provided mentorship and assisted our project team in reviewing curriculum, interviewing consultants and designing

the space. Ms. Marino is a noted childcare specialist and author. She was the founder of the first childcare program for infants and toddlers serving low-income children in New Jersey. Ms. Ferrell has taught early childhood development at the collegiate level and has experience directing the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation Project in our region for Trident United Way.

Metanoia's CEO, Bill Stanfield, has spoken with various players in the health arena, potential funders, and the Zucker Center for Early Childhood Education at the University of Florida. Each of these are helping us think about our approach. Rev. Stanfield has over 18 years of track-record and positive community development experience. He maintains strong relationships with neighborhood, municipal and school district leadership to assure that stakeholders stay well informed and provide value where possible. Rev. Stanfield has worked to raise over \$8 million for this facility in philanthropic and tax credit commitments. Many of the relationships that are discussed in this proposal have been forged based on Rev. Stanfield's personal relationships and he is willing to leverage those relationships to the benefit of this facility.

Metanoia's COO, Jamilla Harper represents Metanoia and the Charleston Leadership Cohort as a member of the three-year national Strive Together Leadership Program. In this collaboration with TriCounty Cradle to Career, Father to Father and Trident United Way, the team is exploring the landscape of equity, early care and early learning with parents, schools, and wraparound service providers in the Chicora-Cherokee and Acabee neighborhoods of North Charleston. With the support of Strive Together, Jamilla and the partnership will pilot critical interventions for successful, community-oriented early learning in our neighborhoods. Learnings from Leadership Program and this pilot have already been integrated in the philosophy and the planning and design of our early childhood development space.

In addition, we have retained the services of Mills Consulting Group (MCG). MCG has worked with clients such as Johns Hopkins University, Boston University, the Jewish Community Centers of Greater Boston and Vanderbilt University to develop sustainable early learning programs. We are working with Linda Mills to develop an implementation plan which includes the following:

- Space design review
- Overall timeline of start-up
- Licensing regulations and ABC Quality (requirements to achieve A+ rating)
- Budgets
- Voucher and Head Start consideration
- Curriculum
- Collaborative partnerships
- Director recruitment

To further expand upon the space design, Metanoia's architect at McMillan, Pazdan and Smith Architecture has extensive knowledge in designing childcare facilities.

Resource Development

Metanoia has secured a \$700,000 federal Community Economic Development Grant for the operational and equipment costs associated with the start-up of the ECDC. In addition, Metanoia partnered with the Institute for Child Success to develop a sustainability plan for the Center. This business model hosts a combination of 25% private-pay and 75% federal, state and/or locally-funded children.

Our ECDC will be located within the former Chicora Elementary School, a building Metanoia will revitalize for this purpose among others. Toward this effort, we have raised \$4.3 million in philanthropic funds. In addition, we have been approved to utilize New Market and Historic Tax Credits for the project. As a result of this, the Center will not pay rent which speaks to the sustainability of our ECDC model.

Metanoia is sustained by a portfolio of funders, including federal, county and city dollars, corporate grants, foundation grants and private philanthropic funds. In fact, no one funding source makes up more than 15% of our total revenue. This diverse funding pool is evidence of Metanoia's ability to leverage the impact of both public and private funding to improve programming and secure additional sources of revenue. We maintain a robust agency-wide development plan to support the overall fiscal health of the agency and ensure program sustainability. We view this diversity as a significant strength in our capability to accomplish our mission in a sustainable manner. Metanoia is ranked as a best

“Four Star Charity” by Charity Navigator and we have never achieved less than a best case “unqualified audit” on our annual audited financial statements.

OUR APPROACH

Metanoia engages in a continual process of listening and building relationships in the communities we serve. Many of our staff and board live in these communities themselves. We have gained trust by seeking to understand the issues of families and youth in the low- to moderate-income areas we serve. In fact, their voices are the foundation of our mission.

Just as we have listened to our neighbors and friends, we have also listened to CCSD. We feel confident that together, we can partner to create significant, long-term outcomes in the set of schools identified by the state as the lowest performing. We see this not as a deficit, but rather an opportunity to invest in the capacity and connections of committed partners to fuel new possibilities.

We propose that CCSD invest in the three- and four-year-old slots in Metanoia’s ECDC which will open in January 2021. We further propose that CCSD will not require Metanoia ECDC students who have attended the Center since the age of six weeks old to test below average to receive this investment. By joining us to expand our intervention to include early childhood development, you will build a 17-year cradle to career investment of direct engagement to affect outcomes. What is possible as a result of this is that we are walking beside families every step of the way, providing a continuity of care that builds confidence both in the student and in those providing care. This will build trust through a network of support that is consistently providing unmatched direct engagement. We believe that it takes a village to raise a child and our view of the village is expansive. Our view includes parents and teachers, but it also includes the collaborative support of many service agencies and local employers working together to achieve outcomes that truly matter.

Wholistic, Integrated, Asset-Based Approach

Our approach to achieving Metanoia’s early childhood development goal of Kindergarten readiness and meeting third grade reading requirements will be on learning experiences in various areas which fall within the six domains of early childhood development. This wholistic, integrated approach will be a prototype for our organization and for CCSD. Longitudinal research borrowed from Reggio Emilia has shown a high success rate that highlights “previously unimagined and rarely realized potentials of children and teachers to learn together, the rights of families to participate and the responsibilities of communities to support such collaborative engagement.”¹ In addition, brain development research has confirmed that high-quality early childhood education programs provide long lasting benefits for young children, and other research has shown young children who are at-risk are even more affected by the quality of their early childhood experiences.

NAEYC claims that children make the greatest gains in learning between the ages of two and five. We are building upon our 16 years of asset-based community development with an asset-based educational development model. Children who have attended our ECDC program will be attending eight of the nine lowest performing schools in the state. Our solution is long-term and rooted in our core value of being asset-based as we invest in early childhood development to prepare tomorrow’s students to enter Kindergarten on a trajectory which leads to success. Programming will begin in January 2021 and will be a year-round, full-day (anticipated 6am – 6pm) program.

Support Kindergarten Readiness and Third-Grade Reading Levels

Building on our wholistic, asset-based approach, research has shown there is a ‘zone of proximal development’ where children “grow into the intellectual life of those around them and develop the culturally organized psychological functions of importance to their socio-cultural context.”¹ Our program will support Kindergarten readiness through a targeted research-based curriculum inspired by methodologies of Emergent Curriculum, Reggio Emilia, and Montessori. When students are prepared for Kindergarten and with continued investment in their education over time, they will be on target to reach at or above third grade reading levels. We have experience in producing outcomes to support this claim through our existing year-round youth programming model. When we meet students at every stage of their academic career, we circumvent the pitfalls often associated with youth living in low-income environments. Something

unique about our model is that we are creating advantages for children at the intersection of our curriculum and their zone of proximal development. This creates a sense of optimism, pride and support that fosters collaboration.

Parent Engagement

We will work with families in our ECDC to recognize how to guide their child(ren)'s learning and adaptation to the world around them in a healthy manner. Our priority is to emphasize relations among adults as well as children in our programming. Teachers will recognize and respect a parent's role in their child(ren)'s learning. By establishing this trust early on, both parent and child will enter elementary school with the necessary knowledge to form collaborative partnerships with teachers and administrators as well.

When parents feel like nobody is listening, it is difficult to ask for them to be advocates for their child(ren). Research has shown what a high impact the level of investment we propose can have on early learners, parents and teachers. To assure strong outcomes for parents, we will have a full-time staff member serve as a Parent Liaison Coordinator for families to interface with our ECDC. Through the schools and systems of relation, the needs and interests of children and families are linked as integral to the needs and interests of teachers, administrators and community members. As we prepare early learners to enter school, we also engage families in a way that equips them to become participants in their child(ren)'s learning and actively involved in their child(ren)'s learning environment.

Teacher Investment

We will also invest in teachers as we see this new approach to early childhood development being centered around child, parent and teacher collaboration. Metanoia places a high priority on high-quality, professional development, which will remain a focus as we operate our ECDC. In addition to our continued commitment to building teacher competencies, each full-time staff member will attend cultural competency training through the Racial Equity Institute. Metanoia has engaged in extensive conversations with College of Charleston and Trident Technical College (both of whom have early childhood development programs) about partnerships that will create opportunities for teachers' educational and professional development.

Space

We view the early childhood development classroom as a critical component of the learning environment, so much so that we think this physical space the "third teacher." Our goal is to create a space that is designed to suite a child's developmental stages and is culturally representative of community. This will be a space where children can prepare to participate fully in their cultural community and beyond with ease. Our goal will be for children to move throughout the classroom with a progressively building sense of curiosity. The agile classroom will respond to the steadily evolving interests and developmental stages of the child. We have been inspired by the Nature Explore Outdoor Classroom at Cummins Child Development Center in Indiana and are partnered with Cummins to develop the outdoor space at our Center – expanding our capacity to deliver innovative curriculum within the six learning domains. Metanoia will invest in both professional development for teachers, as well as the indoor and outdoor learning environment to ensure high-quality educational outcomes that prepare children to enter school equipped with not only the foundation to achieve well, but to do so with eagerness and trust. The floorplan is located on page eight.

Partnership with CCSD

Metanoia is grateful for the opportunity to submit this proposal and we welcome a continuing conversation about how to partner with CCSD to create an innovative and transformational early childhood development center that will serve children and families who most need quality early childhood education to achieve their full potential. We believe that lessons learned in this center will be critical to the understanding of how to educate students in the future. Although the doors of this facility have yet to open, we are working very hard each day to ensure that this center delivers high quality care to students from six weeks to 4 years old. Although we are not asking CCSD to fund the 0-2 year old children, we do believe that our efforts with that age group will yield valuable learnings that can help CCSD policy makers to understand the power of early interventions in a child's life.

We are melding a variety of funding sources together to make this project a success and we believe that CCSD can both be a tremendous benefit to this project and also that the project can benefit CCSD as an early childhood development lab where the best practices or early childhood development are applied with rigor and clear outcomes measurement. We look forward to opening this facility in partnership with CCSD and celebrating together as we change the trajectory of students in our community that are now arriving at kindergarten far behind where they need to be to graduate on time and move into being successful adults that can transform their own communities.

Citation:

¹"Reggio Emilia as cultural activity theory in practice," by R. S. New, *Theory into Practice*, 46(1), p. 5-13.

Metanoia Early Childhood Development Center Floor Layout

