



February 28, 2014

City of Columbia
Purchasing Division
Avril L. McQuilla, Senior Buyer
Attn: RFI No. 0001-13-14 City of Columbia Homeless Services
1136 Washington Street, 4th Floor
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Ms. McQuilla:

The Step Up Corporation (Step Up) would like to be considered by the City of Columbia as a major resource and source for helping to solve the homeless and poverty problems that plague so many individuals and families here in Columbia and in this state. Just in Richland School District One, there were 1,093 homeless students attending their schools in 2010, and over 10,820 homeless students in schools across the state. Guess what, if that's not address now, they will potentially grow up and add to the current homeless population as well.

The proposed programs viewable in the attached flyers and power points are designed to work with youth and individuals wholistically. We are partnering and have partnered various groups to provide community building programs that are designed to improve both family and community. In addition to the Food banks, we will partner with restaurants and grocery stores to feed the families and the homeless. We will secure vans for transportation, as well as partnering with existing transportation providers.

Step Up starts with an initial assessment to evaluate where the individual is emotionally, spiritually, physically and mentally. The results of that assessment will determine if a counseling program is necessary to be provided with or before any occupation and educational skills training programs are started. The overall goal is for the counseling and occupational skill programs to run concurrently. An overall general assessment will be conducted as well to access the educational levels, skills level, income level, employment background, so on and so forth.

Step Up is partnering with TD Bank and other financial institutions as well as private CPAs to provide and coordinate Financial Literacy programs for the community. We have also partnered with Southeast Consulting and other psychological/psychiatric clinical providers for the psychological assessments for entry into the program, as well as the general assessment that will determine the individual's current level of education, skills and desires.

Step Up belief is that you cannot just give an individual a skill without having addressed and ratified any underlying root issues or circumstances that have caused the individual to not be a productive citizen. Step Up further believes that God gives all individuals innate dreams, gifts and talents but if not connected with the resources those things will never come to fruition. Our goal is to connect these individuals and youth with the resources and mentors they need to grow.

Step Up have and will continue to make the connections, partnerships and collaborations (bringing together the village) that will centrally and systemically grow this underserved and disadvantaged population. There are just too many resources available for this many people to continue to perish at our expense. We will be the hub.

Step Up will address numerous community, family and business development issues. Families are lacking the internal structure and skills for self-sustainment needed to survive. They are falling behind in education, information and direction. We are stepping up, so can you! We will work to strengthen communities from the inside out.

MORE

The focus is on internal empowerment, strengthening with education. Teachers and instructors from different trades will share in a classroom setting with grades and scores to show progress of students and the program. Instructors from the air conditioning industry, plumbing, electrical, carpentry, construction and others will come in to provide occupational skills development hands-on training labs. We will provide instruction for computer technology, website development, networking, maintenance and repair. We will teach computer literacy. Most training will be conducting through hands-on training labs. We will match our developed apprentices and protégés with businesses in the community who have signed up as mentors.

We have over 60 volunteers and business owners who has committed to provide weekly training for the occupational skills classes. Mentoring programs for our youth to teach them to always aspire to do more and never let anyone or anything hold them back. We are recruiting police officers, pastors and the like to volunteer their time to help in our efforts to strengthen our youth and help parents in giving them guidance.

We will also have family counseling to help in the internal structuring phase of our programs. We want to train the mind to think in positive, concisely and decisively. Step Up will offer through partnerships with local business develop resources offering courses for the entrepreneur minded. The business training center will provide one-on-one and group seminars to develop business plans, counseling, and address other issues small businesses face. Many small businesses are not successful because they lack proper planning, training, information and guidance. Step Up will bridge the gap between successful and unsuccessful. We will empower!

Step Up will work with SC Works for offer employers labor at a 75% discount initially through its program. Step Up will work with other WIA program to help these individuals become employed after they are employable.

Step Up is literally taking a stand. It's your time to make a difference, be a catalyst for positive change in the community, letting everyone know there still are people willing to help. Step Up has local as well as national endorsements.

We have an ongoing recruitment for volunteers and other qualified staff with extensive experience in their respective fields to help in our efforts to strengthen our communities. Unfortunately we can not do it alone so we are asking for help from the City of Columbia, hopefully via the in any way you can. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

The Vision, Missions and Goals of Step Up does mirror the Goals and Objectives of the City of Columbia to combat and reduce the homelessness and poverty levels in the City of Columbia:

1. Sustainability: Sustainability is born through job skills training and education. Teach them how to fish for themselves.
2. There has to be a leader, a hub and one stop shop connecting all of the community resources. Step Up is a compiling and will complete a central resource database. Step will form a collaboration of those resources and a referral network for the recipients.
3. The plan for future allocations is to have a program that is funded with not just government funding, but private industry as well. As a 501C3 entity, one who is making a difference in the lives of the Citizens of SC, funding by banks, major employers and other private industry will be well supported.
5. Short and Long-Term Housing: Step Up will partner with the Housing Authority, local hotels and motels as well as real estate secured, donated and leased property in and out of the city limits to provide housing. There is so much vacant property in this area. It is a matter of structuring the program and funding. Several private residential homes property will be leased and transportation will be provided. Dorm type facilities will be more suitable in some cases depending on the individual needs. For instance, as in individuals excel in the program, residential housing and room will transition them into more independent and self-sustaining environments.
6. Individuals with mental health challenges: Working closely with the mental health facilities to see how these individuals can become productive citizens and laborers according to their mental health levels. If the individuals cannot learn the minimum skills to carry out minimal tasks, then Adult day cares services will be provided via Step Up's Adult Day care. SC Works will help pay for the wages (up to 75%) and some employers (committed to this program) may be willing to allow training in certain positions for these individuals as well.
7. Veterans: Same as above.
8. Transportation: I think that the City will or can be instrumental and help the entity administering this program to develop the overall transportation program from our public transportation system, the private transportation providers as well as the donation and leasing of transportation (vans). This also creates jobs for drivers.

9. Cost: This program should bring in significant revenue through private donations, private and public funding. Job creation and job retention should also be measurable, which contributes back to the City's tax base.
10. Logistics: Addressed in #6.
11. Sex offenders: Coordinate with Law Enforcement. Make ongoing clinical counseling and assessment mandatory for all identified sex offenders in our program.
12. N/A – Do not understand the question.
13. Any individual identify as homeless will have to come through this program.
14. The assessment will determine currently levels of needs.
15. Same as #14. The whole goal of the program is to place the individual in employment, further education or business. Timelines will have to be established for all of the programs offered. Some individual may not be able to go to school or hold a job, etc. because of mental issues, etc. Those individuals are the only ones who may continue with the baseline programs and housing. However, they will be identified by a clinical diagnosis and assessment.
16. City Sanctioned: This is a City of Columbia's "Communities Embrace" program. According to the Major..." We are a city of creativity, a city of excitement and a city of promise. I firmly believe we have the potential to become the most talented, educated and entrepreneurial city in America because, more than anything else, Columbia has heart."
What does the City have a heart for if not it's people?

Sincerely,

Cheryl Salley, President

csalley@stepup-us.org
803-476-2165
www.stepup-us.org



See attachments: Flyer, Engagement Workshops, General Presentation