



Request for Proposals: Phase 2, Critical Exploration of Amherst H. Wilder Foundation History

Purpose

Amherst H. Wilder Foundation is seeking a partner to guide and collaborate the second phase of its work to explore and address the organization's history. The second phase of this "critical history" project is focused on Wilder's connection to community and actions during the 20th and early 21st century. The project is part of a foundation-wide effort to deepen its connection to community and build sustainable pathways to partnership. We want to explore how our actions shaped who we are today and what we do moving forward.

Background

Wilder has been dedicated to improving people's lives and well-being for over a century. Over time, we've evolved and enhanced our services to meet the changing needs of our community. However, our unwavering commitment to creating positive outcomes for children, families, and communities remains the same.

Mission

Wilder is a collective force for social good that works to see all people thrive. We champion stability and wellness through direct services, advocacy, and research.

Vision

People that thrive in their fullness.
Good that lasts for generations.

Values

- We center equity to promote access and opportunity to thrive.
- We listen with intent to the people most affected so we can be part of the solution.
- We build trusting relationships knowing each person and community has their own answers.
- We act with kindness toward families, communities, and each other.
- We take action with others to challenge systems so all people and communities can reach their goals.



As we continue to grow, Wilder is committed to ensuring that our work has lasting impact. We plan to be here for good, with good that lasts for generations, by adopting a whole-family approach and ensuring that our staff are equipped with the intercultural skills necessary to meet the diverse needs of our clients, participants, partners, and community. Through this approach, we are fostering an environment where every individual can thrive, and where our work will continue to support families and communities for years to come.

To continue to lean into our growth model we have been doing a look back through the Critical History Report Project on how we have done our work and how we have shown up in community as an anchor community non-profit.

To get this work started, Wilder's (former) Racial Equity Workgroup initiated the plan to conduct a critical history review of Wilder's inception and work to date, the plan included a study of how Amherst H. Wilder accumulated his wealth, and at whose expense; and a study of the foundation's work and interaction with communities since its founding.

The resulting report from the first phase of the project, [*Toward a Critical History*](#), was complete in January 2020. The research focused on Wilder's business interests and impact on Indigenous people and, to a lesser extent, people who were immigrants or enslaved. The report is "critical" by design. It used a racial equity lens, specifically diving into Amherst Wilder's actions, with a focus on his interaction with and impact on Indigenous people – and how he benefitted from this. The report describes: colonialism, 1800s history of region/nation, early MN statehood; Wilder's government ties & benefits to his contracting business; Wilder's work in land speculation, timber, railroad and 'deals' made with Indigenous groups; and that Wilder was not found guilty of crimes in a settler colonial-designed justice system.

Wilder delayed the release of the report after the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and the uprising following the murder of George Floyd, in order to prioritize emerging staff and community needs. In August 2022, the full report was shared with staff and published on wilder.org. Seven listening and feedback sessions were offered for staff and Wilder's Board of Directors. As a result of the first phase of this project, Wilder committed to making a plan to complete phase 2 and to work to make Wilder more welcoming to all. We also updated the history information on our webpage, made investments in our DEI infrastructure, and revised our mission, vision and values. In fall 2023, discussions about Phase 2 of the project began in earnest, and in fall 2024, a cross-organizational group developed a scope and sequence for the second phase, including the development of this RFP.



Project Goals

The goals of this project are to:

1. Learn more about the development, programming, and external partnership of Wilder during key social and political moments during the 20th and 21st centuries.
2. Engage local communities and community members in the exploration of Wilder's history, including learning from community about the role and/or impact of Wilder during key moments in history
3. Explore implications of Wilder's action/inaction over time, with particular attention to immigration, civil rights, mental health, housing, and poverty
4. Contribute to the field by documenting and disseminating a review of and reflections on this overall project

The research conducted will focus on key time periods and events related to peoples and issues aligned with Wilder's mission and scope of work. With a final historical scope to be determined by the consultant in coordination with community, a Wilder planning group has identified a number of time periods for consideration:

- Wilder's support of specific immigrant groups newly settled in Minnesota in the 20th century and how this work aligned to a broader history of immigration in the United States. Key periods include the 1910-20s (primarily Southern and Eastern Europeans) prior to the immigration quota act of 1924 and the 1980-90s (primarily Southeast Asians, with a strong focus on Hmong refugees) after the implementation of the Federal Refugee Resettlement Program in 1980. Other considerations include whether some immigrant groups did not receive Wilder support, and why.
- Wilder's support and interaction with the African-American community in Minnesota (as people resettled in Minnesota as part of the Great Migration from southern states) and in relation to local and national Civil Rights events during the 1950s-70s. Aspects may include Wilder programs and support for individuals but also a broader look at how – and if – Wilder took a stance on key issues impacting the African American community in Saint Paul – for example, the decision to build Highway 94 through the Rondo neighborhood.
- Examples where Wilder programming and decisions reflect a response to key issues at the time, which might include
 - the creation of a preschool and school for children with disabilities in 1956, nearly two decades before it was required by law
 - Wilder's strong focus on low-income and supportive housing in the 1980s, after the elimination of federal support and services for people experiencing mental health issues



- An increased focus on developing programs for youth of color beginning in the 1990s, reflecting demographic changes in Minnesota (6% people of color in 1990; 19% in 2014).

The planning committee will provide partnership and oversight to consultants for the duration of the project. The committee offers the following considerations for consultants who respond to this RFP:

- Decisions and actions/non-actions should be contextualized per the time period in history, to make clear the implications of those actions and decisions at the time they occurred.
- This phase of the project should maintain a through-line to Wilder's current work and future vision, for example: our Whole Family framework; our DEI Strategy Framework that integrates Whole Family, 3R strategies, and IDI/IDC along with One Wilder; and our history with the African American community and the Hmong community.
- This phase of the project should include insight to into Wilder leaders (executive staff and board) and how their leadership influenced what Wilder did or didn't do as an organization

Planning Committee

Angela Clair, Early Childhood Development Services Director

Amanda Eggers, Research Librarian

Nona Ferguson, Vice President for Economic Stability and Aging Services

Briellen Griffin, Community Engagement and Partnership Manager for Wilder Research

Jeff King, Wilder Research Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager

Nicole MartinRogers, Consulting Research Scientist

Michelle Morehouse, Vice President of Advancement

Shanea Turner-Smith, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager

Mai Choo Yang, Lead Case Manager for Community Mental Health and Wellness

Xia Xiong, Compliance and Human Resources Generalist

John Zimmerman, Event Manager

Project Deliverables

We encourage the consultant to bring a creative and innovative approach to the project deliverables, with an openness to exploring non-traditional formats. We envision the possibilities of incorporating a digital media campaign, compelling graphics, posters for staff to display, or even engaging video content to enhance the initiative's messaging. Additionally, we are open to the use of graphic recording or other visual tools to effectively capture key insights and present them in a dynamic, accessible manner. The goal is to create impactful materials that resonate with our staff, community, and key partners, fostering engagement and strengthening the overall success of the project.



We will look for the consultant to outline the strategy and approach for different aspects of the project (e.g. community awareness-building and engagement) and the rationale for using selected strategies/approaches.

The consultant will be responsible for the following key deliverables:

- **A Summative Report:** This comprehensive report should include insights and feedback gathered from all project activities, including historical documents, community engagement sessions, and other relevant sources. Final report should also capture the journey of the project – what worked, what didn't, where pivots were needed, where risk management was necessary, and the overall process.
- **Wilder-Branded Slide Presentation (and delivery to Wilder staff):** A polished, Wilder-branded presentation that can be used for educational purposes and training across various audiences (Wilder will provide the template). Also, delivery of this presentation, to include Q&A and discussion, for Wilder staff.
- **Strategic Recommendations:**
 - (1) How Wilder can leverage the full range of deliverables (from both phase 1 & 2) to inform our future work, including key partnerships, language choices, and overarching strategies.
 - (2) Approaches for building on the momentum of this project as we continue to make history in real time, with actionable suggestions for policy or practice changes, as well as recommendations for community engagement priorities moving forward.

In addition to these primary deliverables, we are also seeking process-focused contributions, including recommendations for how project learnings can inform Wilder's organization-wide and team-specific:

- Project management frameworks
- Risk management strategies
- Change management approaches
- Creative methodologies for outreach and engagement

With the recent enhancements to our website, there is an opportunity to integrate these deliverables into a broader digital strategy. As an example, we encourage drawing inspiration from the Brown University report, particularly its use of a timeline, process, and findings to structure the deliverables.



The consultant will need to collaborate with several key internal departments, including Compliance, Communications, Human Resources, and others, to ensure seamless integration of the deliverables and process-focused contributions to ensure alignment with Wilder's mission and strategic efforts.

Project Timeline

The project timeline is September 2025 to December 2026. The proposed segmentation of time is as follows:

- September – December 2025: Planning
 - September: Community advisory messaging and RFP release, targeted outreach for consultant recruitment
 - October: Close RFP, review applicants, host first round interviews and second round job talks
 - November: Finalize consultant selection and update community on decision
 - December: Host kick-off meeting and draft workplan with consultant
- January – September 2026: Research & Community Engagement
 - January – February: Continued planning for process and community engagement
 - March – August: Community engagement and feedback loops
 - September: Meaning-making of initial feedback with staff and community
- October 2026 – December 2026: Reporting & Sharing
 - October: Finalize deliverables based on engagement and feedback
 - November – December: Finalize process document and each consultant deliverable, present findings and recommendations to staff, and (share out with community

Proposal Requirements

We welcome creative and exploratory proposals with diverse approaches to engagement. At minimum, we request that proposals include:

1. **Project overview:** Explain the approach to the project, including philosophy/approach/framework for community engagement. Community engagement is a requirement. ***Proposals that do not include community engagement will not be advanced.***
2. **Experience and qualifications:** Provide a description of the consultant team's experience exploring historical process, documents, and relationships; engaging community members in conversations about social and/or political issues, including experience engaging Black/African-American, Asian American (including Hmong), Indigenous, and immigrant communities in Minnesota; and producing relevant and usable deliverables that help facilitate organizational change.



3. **Consultant profile:** Provide a description of the mission/vision/values of the consultant(s), key projects or partnerships that drive their work
4. **Project timeline and plan:** A detailed project schedule and project plan that will be used to meet the project goals and submit the final deliverables, including **community engagement/listening sessions** and any subcontractors to conduct parts of the work. Community engagement is a requirement. **Proposals that do not include community engagement will not be advanced.** Include a plan for **collaboration with the steering committee and the Executive Team** at both prescribed intervals and spontaneous necessary instances
5. **Wilder organizational information:** A list of the organizational information that will be needed for the consultant team to effectively do their work. *We understand that this may change after the planning stage begins; we encourage proposals to include baseline information.*
6. **Wilder staff engagement:** Provide an estimate of the amount of time needed weekly for the planning committee members', Executive Team's, and other staff participation (e.g. planning meetings, engagement sessions, correspondence). Include **facilitated development of scope and plan** in partnership with the planning committee and/or Executive Team, including but not limited to: necessary board engagement around the types and degrees of action the foundation will/will not consider (e.g. changing bylaws, operating models, reparation, etc)
7. **Work sample:** Provide a relevant sample of the work completed by the consultant team that will be assigned to this project.
8. **Client references:** Provide three references (name, email address, and telephone number) who were clients of the consulting firm. *Consultants will be notified before references are contacted.*
9. **Cost estimate:** Submit a detailed cost estimate of all project costs, including time and resources.

Key Considerations for Proposals

The planning committee provides a few additional considerations for proposals:

Engagement with History Center

The Minnesota History Center was a partner in Phase 1 of Wilder's critical history work. The planning committee welcomes the opportunity for funding support, access to materials and other resources, consultation and insight from the History Center. We expect consultants to utilize the History Center as a partner and/or resource, but we do not expect the History Center to be a subcontractor for this project.



Engagement with Wilder Research

Wilder resources, including the Wilder Research division, can be leveraged as valuable internal assets to support research, evaluation, and community engagement throughout the project. Wilder Research brings a wealth of expertise, access to critical data, and invaluable insights that will significantly enhance the project's outcomes. We encourage consultants to collaborate with these internal resources for consultation and strategic guidance. However, it is important to note that we do not expect Wilder's internal teams, such as Wilder Research, to act as subcontractors for this project. Rather, they will serve as integral partners, providing essential knowledge and resources to ensure the project's success.

Community Engagement

The planning committee is prioritizing community knowledge and voice in this phase of the project. In general, the planning group recommends that community (including staff) be engaged in as many aspects of this work as possible. The group recommends this is finalized with the selected consultant, but suggests:

- As previously noted, coordinate this work with other aligned organizational strategies, and, engage community to advise on final aspects of history for review
- Explicit clarity is offered about the purpose/goals of each aspect of community engagement.
- Use of Wilder's internal WIDE group and other ERGs for staff involvement
- Inclusion of public officials; other foundations/organizations who have completed similar research on their own history
- Seek input from community regarding individuals for interviews (e.g. community elders) and groups for focus groups during research

Selection Criteria

The selection committee is tasked with evaluating proposals based on a set of criteria designed to ensure the successful selection of a consultant who aligns with the project's goals and objectives. In order to proceed with the proposed timeline, the committee requires a minimum of three qualified proposals. Should the submitted proposals fall below the required rating threshold, the project timeline may be paused or adjusted, and the work could be delayed or halted while a new search for qualified consultants is conducted. The committee maintains flexibility to amend the timeline as needed to ensure the project proceeds with the right expertise and alignment with the Wilder's goals. Below is the selection criteria rubric that will guide the evaluation process.



Selection Criteria Rubric for RFP Evaluation

Criteria	Description	Points	Rating Scale
Experience & Expertise: DEI	The consultant's relevant experience, qualifications, and demonstrated success in similar projects with an emphasis on diversity, equity and inclusion.	10	1-5 (1 = little experience, 5 = abundant experience)
Experience & Expertise: Community Engagement	The consultant's relevant experience, qualifications, and demonstrated success in similar projects with an emphasis on community engagement.	10	1-5 (1 = little experience, 5 = abundant experience)
Experience & Expertise: Historical Research	The consultant's relevant experience, qualifications, and demonstrated success in similar projects with an emphasis on historical research.	10	1-5 (1 = little experience, 5 = abundant experience)
Understanding of Scope	Clarity of the consultant's understanding of the project's objectives and scope of work.	10	1-5 (1 = unclear, 5 = thorough understanding)
Methodology & Approach	The proposed approach to achieving the project's goals, including creativity, innovation, and feasibility.	20	1-5 (1 = inadequate, 5 = highly creative and effective)
Quality of Deliverables	The clarity, quality, and comprehensiveness of the proposed deliverables, including reports, presentations, and other materials.	20	1-5 (1 = low quality, 5 = high quality)
Budget & Cost-Effectiveness	The reasonableness of the proposed budget in relation to the scope and quality of work, including any value-added services.	10	1-5 (1 = overpriced, 5 = cost-effective)
Timeline & Project Management	Realistic and achievable project timeline, and demonstrated project management skills.	10	1-5 (1 = unrealistic, 5 = well-planned)
Community Engagement & Collaboration	The consultant's approach to working with key stakeholders and engaging the community.	20	1-5 (1 = limited engagement, 5 = highly collaborative)
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion	The consultant's commitment to incorporating diversity, equity, and	10	1-5 (1 = not addressed, 5 =



Criteria	Description	Points	Rating Scale
	inclusion principles into their approach and deliverables.		strongly emphasized)
References & Past Performance	Quality and relevance of references and examples from previous work.	10	1-5 (1 = weak references, 5 = strong references)

Total Possible Points: 140

Evaluation Scale:

- 121-140 points: Excellent
- 101-120 points: Good
- 81-100 points: Satisfactory
- 61-80 points: Needs Improvement
- 60 or below: Does not meet criteria

Proposal & Selection Timeline

- September 8: RFP release
- September 22: Questions due to michelle.morehouse@wilder.org
- September 27: Question responses released
- October 8: Proposals due
- October 17-24: First Round Interviews
- October 3-7: Second Round Presentations
- November 15: Finalist notified

Questions

Wilder will accept questions from applicants on a rolling basis until September 22, 2025. All questions and answers will be condensed and shared with applicants by September 27, 2025.

Contact Information

If you have any questions about this RFP, please contact Michelle Morehouse at michelle.morehouse@wilder.org or 651-280-2447.