



## Strategic Planning RFP for LearningWorks | July 2019

LearningWorks is seeking an experienced strategic planning consultant to design and facilitate a participatory planning process that will create a new three-year strategic plan for the organization.

### *About LearningWorks*

LearningWorks supports 3,000 students in Southern Maine by **bolstering** elementary students' academic and social-emotional wellbeing; **transforming** the lives of teens and young adults; and **building** the capacity of New Mainers. We are a 52 year old nonprofit with a staff of 90 and offices in Portland, Biddeford, and Sanford. Our mission is to **reimagine learning** through innovative programs that help children, families, and adults realize their potential and build a thriving community. We offer five free programs – to learn more about the details of each one, you can **read about our services at [learningworks.me](http://learningworks.me)**. The common thread through all we do is a desire to bring equity and access to people's education journeys. Most of our students are not well served by the traditional education system and do not have the resources required to move to a different school, hire a tutor, pay for the enrichment camps or language lessons they need to succeed. We strive to be an accessible resource and alternative, as well as to fill in gaps in the traditional education system. Our local school districts are key, valued partners in this work.

### *Planning Needs*

After undergoing a major leadership transition in 2015 and 2016, we have recently come to the end of a two year strategic plan meant to bring LearningWorks' programs and operations "back to basics." Our last strategic plan aimed to stabilize our organization financially, ensure we had the right team in place, increase employee engagement and satisfaction, and implement the best practices of a thriving nonprofit organization. We have made great strides in all of these areas. Now, we are excited to look to the future and create a more visionary strategic plan. We have four primary goals for our next plan.

(1) We'd like to settle some "**big**" **questions** we've grappled with over the past three years related to our finances, programs, physical space, and more. (2) We hope to **create a vision** for sharing our expertise in alternative education, positive youth development, and restorative justice more broadly. (3) We want to ensure we have the right mix of programs to fulfill our mission and **meet the community's needs**. (4) Finally, we are increasingly aware of how issues related to racial, class, and gender inequality intersect with our work as educators, and we seek to improve our internal knowledge, goals and practices related to these inequalities in and outside of the classroom.



We are eager to develop a strategic plan that will guide our operations for the next three years with all of the above in mind.

We want a process that will include the organization's staff, board, and key stakeholders and create a map for the next stage of our organization's journey. We feel it's critical that the plan include measurable goals, a clear timeline, a process for accountability, and an integrated development and fundraising plan.

Our initial internal strategic work has uncovered the following questions that give a sense of what we're interested in discovering and doing during this strategic planning process. The questions we'd like to explore include, but are not limited to, the following:

- What is the right business model to ensure our long-term **sustainability**?
- How can we help **reduce or eliminate systemic inequities** that harm the education system?
- Are we doing everything we can to ensure our own programs are **inclusive for teachers, staff, and students of all backgrounds**?
- How can we increase our **administrative capacity** to allow program staff time to focus more completely on their students?
- Do we need to **expand, remove, or change any of our programs** to fulfill our mission and meet our community's needs?
- How might we incorporate **earned revenue** into our business model?
- Is there a new service we can offer to our **New Mainer students**?
- How do we **balance** offering programs that supplement the public schools' services with programs that provide complete alternatives to the traditional education system?

#### *Budget and Timeline*

Our total budget for this project, including consultant fees and meeting materials and supplies, is \$7,500. We will consider all proposals within that range. We would like to begin initial work on this project in the fall of 2019 and conclude the planning process no later than the spring of 2020. We are open to ideas about how to structure the work. We will convene a board and staff committee to work with the selected consultant on this project and would like to include at least one working retreat in the process, as well as meaningful and thorough engagement with our stakeholders.



*Proposal Requirements*

If you are interested in working with us on this project, please submit a brief proposal (1-3 pages) to our executive director that includes information about your relevant professional experience, your approach to strategic planning, the rate for your services, and any other information you'd like to include by August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019. We will schedule interviews for September 2019. If you have any questions, feel free to call or email Heather Davis, executive director, at 207.517.3121 or [hdavis@learningworks.me](mailto:hdavis@learningworks.me).