

CITY OF BURLINGTON
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT - 2020 APPLICATION

*Application must be no more than 9 total pages (including cover page) with 12 point font.
Refer to NOFA for required information for each question.*

Project Name: Women's Small Business Program Greater Impact Project

Project Location / Address: 255 South Champlain Street Suite 8, Burlington VT 05401

Applicant Organization / Agency: Mercy Connections, Inc.

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EIN #: 03-0369962 DUNS #: 11125557

CDBG Funding Request: <u>\$38,000</u>
Total Estimated Program/Project Cost: <u>\$243,320</u>
Grant Duration: mark one <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 Year <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Year <i>(Only Public Service programs with a focus on Housing and Homelessness are eligible for 2 year grant this year)</i>
Development: mark one <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic Development <input type="checkbox"/> Construction
Public Service: <input type="checkbox"/> Housing <input type="checkbox"/> Homelessness <input type="checkbox"/> Health <input type="checkbox"/> Econ Opportunity <i>Mark one</i>

1. **Type of Organization**
- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local Government | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-Profit Organization (please provide copy of your <u>IRS 501(c)(3) tax exemption letter</u>) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> For-Profit Organization | <input type="checkbox"/> Institution of Higher Education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Faith-Based Organization | |

Certification
To the best of my knowledge and belief, data in this proposal are true and correct.
I have been duly authorized to apply for this funding on behalf of this agency.
I understand that this grant funding is conditioned upon compliance with federal CDBG regulations.
I further certify that no contracts have been awarded, funds committed or construction begun on the proposed program, and that none will be prior to issuance of a Release of Funds by the Program Administrator. In addition, this project is ready to proceed as of July 1, 2020.

Lisa J. Falcone
Signature of Authorized Official
Executive Director
Title

Lisa J. Falcone
Name of Authorized Official
1-15-20
Date

I. Demonstrated Need

1. What is the need/opportunity being addressed by this program/project and how does that contribute to CDBG's national objectives? *

The Women's Small Business Program (WSBP) addresses "Economic Development," a CDBG national objective that supports the creation of small businesses and microenterprises. Small business development is a proven strategy to move people out of poverty; however Vermont's new business startup rate falls below the national average, according to the U.S. Census Statistics of U.S. Businesses; and only 48% of Vermont's business startups stay open five years or more, according to the Business Dynamic Series U.S. Census. WSBP expands economic opportunities in Burlington and reduces economic barriers by providing programs that benefit primarily low- to moderate-income female entrepreneurs. Change the Story found, in Vermont, only 32% of businesses are owned by women, generating only 9% of gross revenues. Mercy Connections' expansion of WSBP's portfolio will ensure a local continuum of entrepreneurial supports to address these findings. WSBP's Greater Impact Project is bolstered by research findings that underscore the importance of supporting women during the critical launch period and as they grow their ventures. When low-income women gain access to supportive, entrepreneur education opportunities, the gender gap in self-employment narrows, women move toward greater success, and the entire community benefits.

II. Program/Project Design

1. Give us a short summary (2 sentences) that describe the program/project.

The WSBP Greater Impact Project will deliver semester-long business planning programs as well as an ongoing, expanded calendar of entrepreneur education, skill building, and support opportunities for aspiring and existing entrepreneurs and makers. This project will drive economic opportunities and financial security for entrepreneurial women (and some men) in Burlington as an accessible, one-stop resource of programs (Mercy Marketplace; Idea to Action; Start Up; Co-working/Coaching; Women Entrepreneur Mentoring; Specialized Business Workshops for Busy Entrepreneurs) that support the early, most vulnerable years of business start-up and development.

2. Explain why the program activities are the right strategies to use to achieve the intended outcomes. Why is the program designed the way it is? (cite evidence, best practices, or community input)*

Mercy Connections has a proven track record of providing adult learning opportunities that spark high levels of engagement with individualized support and networking opportunities embedded at all levels. The organization is solidly grounded in principles of adult learning and has expertise in utilizing gender-sensitive education practices to create an immersive, self-directed learning environment. In WSBP's non-competitive classrooms, aspiring entrepreneurs build community quickly and deeply, gaining the personal confidence and small business skills necessary to take successful action steps. The WSBP Greater Impact Project is designed to help low-income students overcome barriers to success by ensuring ease-of-access. This includes: technology and computer trainings available on site; programs delivered at various times to try to accommodate working individuals; participation in the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC) Advancement Grant program, availability of direct scholarships and payment plan options through Mercy Connections for those who qualify, and self-efficacy of program participants reinforced by programs designed to support a continuum of entrepreneur readiness.

3. How will this program/project contribute to the City's anti-poverty strategy?

According to CEDO's Consolidated Plan, "As the state's largest city, Burlington must continue to be an economic engine...to support low-income residents in business ownership through entrepreneurial training" (CP, Executive Summary, 4). The WSBP Greater Impact Project will contribute to the city's anti-poverty strategy by training and empowering entrepreneurial women from extremely low to moderate income means to establish, grow, and expand small businesses. WSBP is a local "entrepreneurial anchor"

and “critical pathway out of poverty.” A CDBG investment will support CEDO in achieving the 2018-2022 Consolidated Plan to “address community development needs in the area of... establishment, stabilization and expansion of small businesses”. It addresses Goal #8, supporting microenterprises “with a focus on special populations of women...” and “increase[es] employment/ economic opportunities” (SP 116) through supporting micro-enterprises (EO 1.1). The project helps people retain and create jobs (EO 1.2) and contributes to “Reducing Barriers to Economic Opportunities” (CP Priority Need 8).

4. How do you use community and/or participant input in planning the program design and activities?*

WSBP actively assesses program relevance and quality as well as student outcomes by soliciting feedback from program participants, instructors, volunteers and alumni. Constituents engage in written evaluations, interviews and conversations, focus groups, and surveys. The WSBP Director, Executive Director, and WSBP Teacher Team review WSBP data to ensure the program is utilizing best practices and remaining effective. The WSBP Director maintains close contact with program alumni, whose needs and requests have helped inform the development of the expanded suite of offerings through the Greater Impact Project.

III. Proposed Outcomes

1. What are the intended outcomes for this project/program? How are people meant to be better off as a result of participating?

WSBP’s primary outcome is that participants gain the knowledge, skills, competence, and insights they need to make informed decisions about launching, owning, and/or expanding a business. Outcomes also include personalized successes based on each student’s business ideas and program participation. People are better off with increased confidence and effectiveness in business, decreased sense of isolation in entrepreneurial pursuits, increased professional networks, educational progress, and improved financial stability. WSBP adheres to evidence-based strategies to help people toward greater self-sufficiency.

2. List your goals/objectives, activities to implement and expected outcomes (# of units, # of individuals, etc.)

Goal/ Objectives	Activities Funded	Expected Outcomes
1. People move toward improved economic self-sufficiency	WSBP Greater Impact Project	delivery of a suite of programs (listed in the activities below) that support the early, most vulnerable years of business start-up and development.
2. Women plan, start and sustain microenterprises	➤	53 Burlington participants attend WSBP microenterprise training and support programming; 90% gain increased knowledge of self-employment/entrepreneurship; 85% take concrete steps toward greater self-sufficiency; 75% increase business networks and collegial support of their entrepreneurial ventures
3. Small business owners create economic opportunities	➤	One 10-week cycle of Mercy Marketplace (5 Classes, 5 blocks of coaching, 1 event), intensive support, business workshops, and skill building to craft & art vendors-in-training.
4. Entrepreneurs gain confidence and skills for a stronger workforce	➤	100% of participants earn income selling handcrafts and artwork at the Mercy Marketplace event; 36% plan to participate in in other craft fairs
	➤	Two 3-day cycles of Idea to Action , an introduction to business for aspiring entrepreneurs to consider the realities of self-employment then create a clear vision and action plan.
	➤	100% of participants decide if self-employment is the right choice for them; 40% select a business idea to pursue further.
	➤	Two semester-long cycles of Start Up , a rigorous business planning course
	➤	Of all graduates, 90% complete business plans; 11% decide not to pursue a business based on research but apply new insights into their current position/life strategy. 33% of participants start a business within one year, 56% start businesses within 2-5 years.
	➤	Two days/month of Guided Co-working over 44 weeks with entrepreneurial coaching
	➤	100% of entrepreneur participants make individualized gains in their business

	development within the first year of business
➤	24 two-hour Specialized Business Workshops for Busy Entrepreneurs
	90% of participants gain new knowledge/insights to improve their business practices
➤	Deliver an ongoing Women’s Entrepreneur Mentoring service for Start Up graduates to match with seasoned business owners for practical business mentoring
	100% Start Up graduates who participate cite a decreased sense of entrepreneurship isolation; 100% of entrepreneurs make sustainable gains in their business development within their first five years in business

IV. Impact / Evaluation

1. How do you assess whether/how program participants are better off? Describe how you assess project/program outcomes; your description should include: what type of data, the method/tool for collecting the data, from whom you collect data, and when it is collected. *

Mercy Connections evaluates program efficacy in a results-based accountability (RBA) framework to analyze quantifiable and qualitative data on program delivery and impact, participant satisfaction and expected outcomes/better-off measures. Tools include program applications, instructor records on student progress, surveys, student interviews, attendance records, and business plan assessments. Participants of this project will complete pre- and post-class surveys in each program cycle, and in entrepreneurship mentoring. WSBP will administer an additional mid-way assessment in Start Up, Co-working and Mentoring. Specialized workshop attendees will complete post-class surveys on their workshop. Quarterly, staff will analyze collected data to determine participant outcomes in business ownership & capitalization; income, career, financial mobility/stability; and program satisfaction. WSBP documents student changes in knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, circumstances, and sense of hope.

2. How successful has the project/program been during the most recent reporting year for your CDBG project? Report the number of beneficiaries you intended to serve with which activities (as noted in your last Attachment A) and your final outcomes (as noted on your Attachment C) from June 2019 (or June 2018). For non-CDBG participants – report on your achievements from the previous year.

Cumulative Fiscal Year 2018	Total # Owners / Persons Assisted	Result of Assistance: # of New Businesses	Result of Assistance: # of Businesses Expanded	#Owners/ Persons at or < 30% AMI	# Owners /Persons between 30% and 50% AMI	#Owners/ Persons between 50% and 80% AMI	#Owners/ Persons above 80% AMI
	29	19	9	10	8	8	3
Goal, Scope of Services				Outcome			
65% of Start Up graduates will complete a complete business plan.				100% of students in Start Up handed in final work, over 50% of the students submitted completed business plans, and eight graduates are now operating their businesses as of June 2019.			
35% of Start Up graduates use new knowledge and skills to make an informed decision to modify or put aside their business idea in order to earn income through other avenues.				Two students realized their current business ideas were not feasible due to overhead and operating costs; they decided to defer their plans for now and revisit them at a later date			
100% of Start Up graduates will gain a better understanding of business literacy, management skills and awareness of the realities of owning a business.				Post-program surveys indicated that 100% of Start Up graduates improved their business and financial literacy, gained business management skills, and increased knowledge of the requirements and outputs needed to start and run a business.			
100% of Mercy Marketplace makers will earn income				100% of Mercy Marketplace makers earned income.			

V. Experience / Organizational Capacity

1. What is your agency’s mission, and how do the proposed activities fit with your mission?

WSBP is a program of Mercy Connections with a mission to deliver education, mentoring, entrepreneurship, and community opportunities to people in life transition. The organization nurtures self-sufficiency by empowering these individuals to develop new insights, education, community/networks, and life plans. It is a mission of social justice and equality. Here, an individual can find support in each phase of their life journey as they navigate opportunities and barriers. The WSBP Greater Impact Project’s courses, strategies, intended participants, and outcomes are fully in line with these efforts.

2. Explain how your agency has the capacity to carry out the proposed activity (i.e. staff qualifications, years of experience related to this type of activity, etc.)*

WSBP has been moving people out of poverty in Burlington through self-employment since 1989 and is an entrepreneurial anchor in this area. Program alumnae are significant contributors to the local business landscape and the Burlington’s economy. WSBP Director Lisa Wood started Sprout New Media in 2008, is a certified business coach, and first came to the WSBP as a guest speaker in 2013. WSBP instructors all own their own businesses and have long experience teaching in their areas of expertise. The Mercy Marketplace Coordinator is also an Education & Transition Programs Coordinator at Mercy Connections. She has worked here for 11 years, helped launch Mercy Marketplace, is a graduate of WSBP and runs her own niche business. There is unsurpassed value inherent in the diversity of ages, stages and experiences of leader of this program; each is a role model of how to successfully navigate life and family circumstances, overcome barriers and not give up while learning how to embrace leadership and business owner.

3. What steps has your organization/board taken in the past year to become more culturally competent internally?

Cultural competency is embedded in all aspects of Mercy Connections. We include cultural competency training in board, volunteer, and staff orientations. This past year, staff participated in the following professional development opportunities: UVM’s Diversity Conference, Greater Burlington Multicultural Resource Center Conference, VT Victims Assistance Academy, and An Inside Look at Mass Incarceration by a Black Vermonter. Additionally, staff regularly attends meetings of the Refugee and Immigrants Providers Support Network (RISPNET), the VT Human Trafficking Task Force and The Vermont Women’s Commission to name a few. We also hosted a session facilitated by the Peace and Justice Center called the Equal Justice Initiative for staff, mentors and other volunteers.

4. Have you received Federal or State grant funds in the past three years? Yes No

Mercy Connections receives partial funding from the Vermont Department of Corrections for our Vermont Women’s Mentoring Program.

5. Were the activities funded by these sources successfully completed? Yes No N/A

VI. Proposed Low & Moderate Income Beneficiaries / Commitment to Diversity

1. Will the program solely serve a specific group of people?

NO

2. a. For your proposed project, please estimate how the Burlington residents will break out into the following income categories during the total grant period.

2020 Service / Activity	Unduplicated Total # of Burlington HH / Persons to be Served	# Extremely Low-Income (30% median)	# Very Low-Income (50% median)	# Low-Income (80% median)	# Above Income Limits (above 80% median)
Idea to action	15	5	5	3	2
Start Up	8	1	2	4	1

Women's Entrepreneur Mentoring	4	0	0	1	3
Guided Co-working	5	0	1	2	2
Mercy Marketplace	11	9	2	0	0
Specialized business Workshops	10	2	3	3	2
Total	53	16	13	14	9

b. All CDBG grantees serving limited clientele will be required to use CEDO's CDBG Beneficiary Self-Certification form to collect beneficiary data including race, ethnicity, annual income, and family size. Is your organization willing and prepared to add this documentation to the intake process for your CDBG funded program by July 1, 2020?

Yes NO Not Serving Limited Clientele

3. Who is the project/program designed to benefit? Describe the project/program's target population, citing (if relevant) specific age, gender, income, community/location or other characteristic of the people this program is intended to serve. How do you select and reach your target population?

The primary beneficiaries of the WSBP Greater Impact Project are entrepreneurial, extremely low-to-moderate income women. All have come to a crossroads in their lives or in the startup phase of their business and see entrepreneurship as a strategy to achieve a more stable life. Participants are highly diverse in terms of education, income, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and life experiences. Most are unemployed, under-employed, or unhappy in their current employment. Many rely on economic benefits though the State of Vermont or, if they do not qualify for public assistance, struggle to make ends meet while living on the "benefits cliff". In addition to referrals from alumni and advertising, we reach our target population through an extensive referral network including the City of Burlington; Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CEDO); the VT Chapter of Center for Women & Enterprise (CWE); US Small Business Administration (SBA); Small Business Development Center (SBDC); Vermont Works for Women; Women Business Owners Network (WBON); Community Capital of VT; Burlington Housing Authority's Family Self-Sufficiency Program; ReSource's Apprenticeship Programs; Reach Up (the VT Department of Children and Families); VSAC; and Howard Center.

4. Describe the steps you take to make the project/program accessible, inclusive and culturally appropriate for the target population. *

Mercy Connections' training facilities are handicapped accessible and our hiring policies are non-discriminatory. WSBP supports new students accepted into the Start Up program by assessing the computer literacy of participants then providing pre-program support, when necessary, to ensure readiness while respecting for diverse learning styles and abilities. The design of the program ensures those at all levels of financial circumstance or entrepreneurial readiness can access WSBP.

VII. Budget / Financial Feasibility

- Budget Narrative: Provide a clear description of what you will do with CDBG's investment in the project/program. How will you spend the money?** CDBG's WSBP investment will contribute \$38,000 to the salaries of the full-time Program Director and the Mercy Marketplace Coordinator/ Instructor. CDBG funds will support time for program planning/curriculum development, program recruitment and enrollment, instructor and volunteer supervision, teaching and student support, and program evaluation.

2. If you plan to pay for staff with CDBG funding, describe what they do in relation to the specific service(s) / activity(ies) in your Project/Program Design.

Specific Service / Activity	Position/ Title	Work Related to CDBG-Funded Activity	# of Hours per Week spent on this Specific Service / Activity	% of Hours per Week spent on this Specific Service / Activity to be paid with CDBG
Start Up	WSBP Program Director	Teacher supervision	5	5.00%
		Program Delivery	4	4.00%
		Student support	6	5.28%
		Recruitment, enrollment & alumni relations	6	5.00%
		Evaluation & Program planning	6	6.00%
Idea to Action		Student Support	0.5	1.00%
		Program Delivery	1	2.00%
		Recruitment & enrollment	1	2.00%
		Evaluation & Program planning	0.5	1.00%
Specialized Business Workshops		Program Delivery	2.5	3.00%
		Evaluation & Program planning	2	1.50%
Guided co-working		Program Delivery	2	1.50%
		Student support	2	0.55%
		Evaluation & Program planning	0.5	0.55%
Women's entrepreneur Mentoring		Recruitment & Enrollment	0.5	0.55%
	Program Planning/ Delivery	0.5	0.55%	
Mercy Marketplace	Mercy Marketplace Coordinator	Program Delivery	1	40.00%
		Evaluation & Program planning	1.8	20.00%
		Recruitment & Enrollment	1.6	6.00%
		Student support	0.5	32.00%

b. All CDBG grantees that use CDBG funds for salaries must submit timesheets that capture total time and effort of staff members funded with CDBG. These timesheets must record CDBG hours worked, other hours worked, all funding sources, and a narrative for all CDBG and non-CDBG funded activities, and they must be signed by the employee and supervisor. Does your organization have the ability to implement a timekeeping system for CDBG funded staff that meets these requirements by July 1, 2020? Yes No Not funding salaries

3. Program/Project Budget

Line Item	CDBG Funds	Other	Total
Director of WSBP	30,000	45,971	75,971
WSBP Program Associate		34,341	34,341
WSBP Instructors		22,473	22,473
Marketplace Coordinator	8,000	3,935	11,935
Supporting Staff (Evaluation, Exec. Dir, Marketing & Finance)		45,105	45,105
Scholarship		8,000	8,000
Marketing/Printing/Postage		15,500	15,500
Other Program Expenses: Supplies, Subscriptions		16,150	16,150
Admin/Overhead		13,845	13,845
Total Project expense	38,000	205,320	243,320

4. Funding Sources

	Project		Agency	
	Current	Projected	Current	Projected
CDBG	-	38,000	-	38,000
State : N/A				

Federal: N/A				
United Way: N/A				
Private (specify)				
Peoples United	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
TD Charitable Foundation	10,000	15,000	10,000	15,000
Mascoma Bank	5,000	15,000	5,000	15,000
Onda Foundation	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
BTV Ignite	20,000	-	20,000	-
Kauffman Foundation	15,000	-	15,000	-
Hearst Foundation	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
Mercy Connections Annual Fund	92,508	89,320	469,000	415,000
In-kind	2,800	2,800	12,000	12,000
Program Income	66,450	66,200	71,300	68,950
Other (<u>specify</u>)				
Grants- other			135,500	130,500
Investments			173,012	171,719
Total	228,758	243,320	1,053,812	1,009,169

5. Of the total project cost, what percentage will be financed with CDBG?

$$\frac{\$ \underline{38,000}}{\text{CDBG Funding}} \div \frac{\$ \underline{243,320}}{\text{Total Program/Project Costs}} = \frac{\underline{6.4}}{\text{Percentage}} \%$$

6. Of the total project cost, what would be the total cost per person?

$$\frac{\$ \underline{243,320}}{\text{Total Program/Project Cost}} \div \frac{\underline{80}}{\# \text{ Total Proposed Beneficiaries}} = \frac{\$ \underline{3042}}{\text{Cost Per Person}}$$

$$\frac{\$ \underline{38,000}}{\text{Total Amount of CDBG Funding}} \div \frac{\underline{53}}{\# \text{ Total Proposed CDBG Beneficiaries}} = \frac{\$ \underline{716}}{\text{Cost Per Person CDBG Investment}}$$

7. Why should CDBG resources, as opposed to other sources of funding, be used for this project?

Trinity College and Burlington’s Community & Economic Development Office initiated WSBP 30 years ago. The business programs in this Greater Impact Project preserve CEDO’s legacy of collaborating with and investing in locally-grown, successful entrepreneurship programs to empower Burlington women toward greater success. WSBP is directly in line with CDBG goals for economic development thereby making CDBG a natural fit. Mercy Connections is also committed to continuing to explore additional funding investments.

8. Describe your use of community resources, including volunteers. Include any resources not listed in your budget. Will CDBG be used to leverage other resources?*

Mercy Connections engages over 240 volunteers in all levels of the organization. WSBP organizes 50 expert volunteers who review business plans and serve as guest speakers. Twice a year, business support specialists from organizations such as CEDO, SBA, SBDC, CVOEO, Consumer Assistance Program, Opportunities Credit Union, local attorneys, WBON, CWE, Community Capital of Vermont, SCORE, and the State of Vermont AG Office and Department of Taxes volunteer their time to share their expertise to support WSBP’s new cohorts of entrepreneurs. The Center for Women in Enterprise conducts registration and provides space to deliver some of WSBP’s Specialized Business Workshops. The University of Vermont provides access to its research computer software. Mercy Connections continues to be mindful of the entrepreneurial landscape, consulting with relevant stakeholders. CEDO’s endorsement through CDBG funding of WSBP strengthens our leverage politically and financially to attract new funding sources.

VIII. Collaboration/Efficiency

1. Give 1 or 2 examples of key successful collaboration(s) between your program/project and another agency/program/group to address the needs of the people you serve.

The WSBP Director co-presents a monthly “Business Plan Basics” class, among other occasional business workshops alongside Center for Women and Enterprise staff, providing multi-layered services to potential business owners. WSBP also has an arrangement with At the Root on Pine Street to present facilitated peer-to-peer discussions on topics such as Funding Opportunities for Small Businesses; Time Management & Balance for Entrepreneurs; Social Responsibility in Business; and Planning for Year-End Tax Prep.

2. Do identical or similar community programs exist? How does this program complement or collaborate rather than duplicate services? What makes this program unique?

WSBP’s full, multilayered, home base of entrepreneurship training and supports are well-known to complement the work of SBDC, CVOEO, Generator, and CWE, who also offer entrepreneurship assistance. WSBP meets regularly with and occasionally offers workshops collaboratively with these organizations to avoid service duplication. WSBP’s uniquely comprehensive suite of programs supports entrepreneurs from the idea-phase through the first five years of business; from taking first steps to embrace one’s entrepreneurial potential, to constructing comprehensive business plans, then receiving mentoring, co-working support, and trainings once a business is running. A special benefit of WSBP is that students can receive support from a network of successful business owner alumnae ready to champion new graduates. By spending time in WSBP offerings, students create personal and professional networks that continue to support them throughout their small business journey. WSBP’s Start Up course is a one-of-a-kind opportunity that includes comprehensive business training, business plan development and plan reviews from business and financial experts who provide important insights, confidence and assurance to students.

3. Provide 1 example of how your agency has become more efficient in achieving your outcomes or managing your project/program.

Over the past year, the WSBP Director has worked to streamline and improve the application process, introduce online platforms to support student learning, create systems to organize alumni and participant data, and initiate collaborations with organizations such as CWE to deliver business workshops.

IX. Sustainability

1. How will this project have a long-term benefit to the City of Burlington? If this program/project ends, how will that benefit continue?

WSBP contributes to the City’s revitalization goals through alumnae who reside and operate businesses in designated neighborhood revitalization areas. There are at least three WSBP alumnae-owned businesses located on or within a block of Church Street, three on Pine Street, and three on North Avenue. Benefits continue far beyond program completion - employers benefit as the City retains program graduates who are skilled workers, and individuals benefit as there are new job opportunities close to where they live.

2. CDBG funding is intended for new or expanded services. If CDBG funding ends, will the project be able to continue?

CDBG funds are used for direct program expenses. If funding ended, participant fees may need to increase, but the project will continue, relying more heavily on marketing to higher income students and utilizing VSAC assistance. That said, Mercy Connections has consistently depended on diverse funding sources to sustain our efforts and we continue to aggressively search for additional funding. The City’s investment acts as endorsement and as leverage for engaging other funding sources.

3. How will you prioritize the proposed project activities if you do not receive the full amount requested?

WSBP has a legacy worth preserving and prioritizing. We value our partnership with the City and will do our best to avoid scaling down and limiting access to our programming and will seek alternate funding, if necessary.