

**CITY OF BURLINGTON**  
**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT - 2024 APPLICATION**

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

Project Name: Small Business Equity Project

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

Applicant Organization / Agency: Mercy Connections, Inc.

Mailing Address: 255 South Champlain Street, Suite 8, Burlington VT 05401

Physical Address: 255 South Champlain Street, Suite 8, Burlington VT 05401

Contact: Lisa Falcone Title: Executive Director Phone #: [REDACTED]

Web Address: www.mercyconnections.org E-mail: [REDACTED]

EIN #: [REDACTED] DUNS #: [REDACTED]

**CDBG Funding Request: \$75,000**

**Total Estimated Program/Project Cost: \$ 339,267**

*Choose one category from Development OR one category from Public Service:*

**Development:**  *Economic Development*     *Affordable Housing*     *Public Facilities/Improvements*

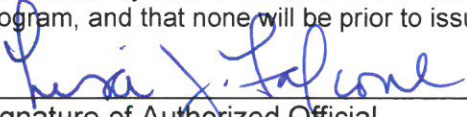
**OR**

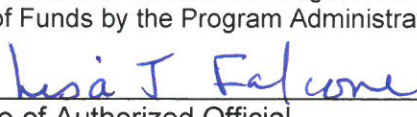
**Public Service:** (choose one)     *Early Childhood Ed/Childcare*     *Youth Services*     *Health*  
 *Economic Opportunity*     *Housing and Homelessness*

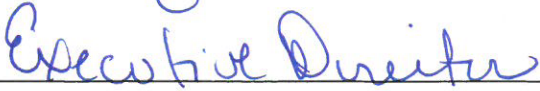
- 1. Type of Organization**
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local Government         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-Profit Organization (please provide copy of your |
| <input type="checkbox"/> For-Profit Organization  | IRS 501(c)(3) tax exemption letter)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>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

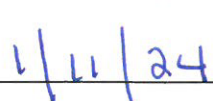
**Certification**  
To the best of my knowledge and belief, data in this proposal are true and correct.  
I have been duly authorized to apply for this funding on behalf of this agency.  
I understand that this grant funding is conditioned upon compliance with federal CDBG regulations.

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.

  
Signature of Authorized Official

  
Name of Authorized Official

  
Title

  
Date

## ***I. Demonstrated Need***

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

The **Small Business Equity Project** addresses the CDBG national objective of “facilitating economic development through the establishment, stabilization, and expansion of microenterprises.” Small business development is a proven strategy to move people out of poverty; however, Vermonter entrepreneurs need support to be successful. Data from the 2021 Census shows that while Vermont’s start up rate is the lowest in the country at 6%, businesses that do launch in Vermont are more likely to succeed than in any other state but one, with a 74% 5-year business survival rate. By advancing inclusive entrepreneurship, we are uniquely positioned to support underserved entrepreneurs as they start or expand successful businesses that increase business owner net worth while also making positive contributions to Vermont’s economy.

## ***II. Program/Project Design***

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

The **Small Business Equity Project** delivers high-quality entrepreneurial and English Language Learning (ELL) education to support the launch or strengthening of small businesses in Vermont, with special focus on needs of underserved populations including people with marginalized gender identities, adults with different abilities, immigrants, migrants, and refugees, and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). It provides business and professional development support and training in ways that meet participants’ unique needs and remove barriers to their success.

### **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 long and proven track record of creating access for marginalized populations in adult learning and entrepreneurial training. For the last 20+ years, Mercy Connections has been advancing the self-empowerment and self-sufficiency of women+ entrepreneurs, women coming out of incarceration, and people from all walks of life seeking to improve their lives. The **Small Business Equity Project** is part of the Inclusive Entrepreneurship Program (formerly known as the Women’s Small Business Program) focused on expanding entrepreneurial education and skill-building to groups traditionally excluded from the business world. Mercy Connections is already a go-to resource for the Project’s target audiences for basic education, literacy, ELL, and U.S. Citizenship preparation services. Students have told us that they want to expand their learning with business development education and skill building.

Inclusive Entrepreneurship, the idea of supporting entrepreneurs from all backgrounds by creating a genuinely level playing field, is just beginning to take hold nationally. The Kauffman Foundation’s *America’s New Business Plan* lays out what is needed to accomplish the vision: access to opportunity, access to funding, access to knowledge, and access to support. The **Small Business Equity Project** at Mercy Connections is designed to increase access by: elevating the case for inclusive entrepreneurship, teaching practical classes about business ownership, connecting small business owners to funding mechanisms, and helping students build the social and business networks to be successful. Best practices and feedback from our students indicate that language access, varied content delivery, individualized support, and on-demand learning are ways to improve our programming and broaden access.

Burlington's efforts to support racial equity, inclusion and belonging, along with the input of our participants, inspired the design of the Project to meet a burgeoning equity gap for business development and ownership. Establishing the Inclusive Entrepreneurship program has allowed us to build new offerings and partnerships to serve even more Burlington residents. Notably, we have seen an influx of participants looking for ELL, many of whom are also interested in exploring entrepreneurship. After consulting with partner organizations, we realized that we are uniquely positioned to combine ELL instruction and small business curriculum to support entrepreneurial immigrants and refugees. The curriculum incorporates ELL best practices and is co-taught by an ELL instructor and a small business instructor, with special attention to teaching vocabulary and concepts specific to entrepreneurship. This design creates new access not only for those learning English, but also for people who grew up speaking English and lacked access to or success in traditional educational settings. When we make a class accessible for language learners, we make it more accessible for all learners.

We employ strategies to achieve language accessibility, support foreign-born students to navigate American systems, and innovate current course designs for a variety of learning styles and mediums. Our classes meet people where they are and combine skill- and knowledge-building with personal development in a supportive environment. All but one class offered through the project are free of charge, and for that one class scholarships and payment plans are made available through our own secured funding and through our partnership with the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC). We are committed to ensuring that classes remain financially accessible; securing grants and other support such as these from VSAC and CDBG helps us meet this goal for our students.

**3. How will this program/project contribute to the City's anti-poverty strategy? If this activity is to respond to COVID-19, please also describe how this activity prepares or responds to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

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 (p. NA4)." The **Small Business Equity Project** will contribute to the City's anti-poverty strategy to address the roots and consequences of poverty by training and empowering residents, regardless of income, to establish, grow, and expand small businesses. This investment will support the CDBG purpose of "Expanded Economic Opportunity," including to "address community development needs... [for] establishment, stabilization and expansion of small businesses (including micro-business) (NA3)." It addresses Goal 8, Support Microenterprises, with a focus on "women, refugees and businesses... (AP157)" and to "increase employment/economic opportunities (SP117)" through supporting micro-enterprises (EO 1.1). The **Small Business Equity Project** helps retain and create jobs (EO 1.2) and contributes to Priority Need 8, "Reducing Barriers to Economic Opportunities." Our community programming, such as community lunch and the winter coat drive, complement our educational work to help the City's most vulnerable residents meet basic needs and increase social capital, contributing directly to two additional key components of the City's anti-poverty strategy. To respond to the pandemic, classes and workshops have been moved to a virtual space as much as is practicable, and we offer pandemic-related workshops and resources to program participants. We continually update our educational curriculum to better plan for and mitigate the impacts of COVID-19.

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

Mercy Connections actively assesses relevance and quality in all programming. We regularly monitor statewide economic data to understand the gaps in business ownership as well as the needs of our target audiences. We solicit continuous feedback from program participants, instructors, community partners, volunteers, and alumni through formal surveys as well as informally through individual interactions and group dialogue. Our strategic planning for the **Small Business Equity Project**, including an analysis of existing services and interviews with program participants, identified gaps in current community offerings; we fill

these gaps by designing unique classes and supportive environments. We participate in networking events like the Micro Business Alliance facilitated by Will Clavelle and UVM's Entrepreneurial Forum to stay apprised of complementary efforts and to gain valuable feedback about how to innovate our offerings. Similarly, we develop new ELL offerings based on community partner and participant feedback.

### **III. Proposed Outcomes**

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

The **Small Business Equity Project's** primary outcome is that participants gain the knowledge, skills, competence, and insight to make informed decisions about launching, owning, and/or expanding a business, and that they are supported to meet their business goals. A secondary outcome is development of the skills needed to successfully participate in entrepreneurial education thereby improving financial stability and ultimately achieving economic self-sufficiency. New businesses owned by people traditionally excluded from business ownership will not only improve the quality of life for the business owner, but will also improve Vermont's business startup rate, grow the local economy, and increase equity within our community. Given the continued growth of this project, we anticipate increasing the number of Burlington beneficiaries to 100 Burlington through this CDBG funded program.

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

##### **Goal #1: Increase access to business and economic opportunity for underserved Burlington residents.**

###### Activities

1. Offer comprehensive, accessible educational programs to address barriers to participation in the local economy.
2. Become subject matter experts on supporting residents receiving public assistance who have or want to start a small business to create supplemental income or to transition off of public assistance without jeopardizing their financial stability. This knowledge could be used to design resources or curriculum for this specific audience.
3. Leverage existing partnerships for continuous program improvements and outreach and to advance the collective effort to serve the target audiences.
4. Facilitate connections to resources and professional networks for project participants.
5. Advance the need for, and idea of, inclusive entrepreneurship in community outreach efforts, conversations with partners and through presentations to interested parties.

###### Expected Outcomes

- 100 Burlington participants are served by programs.
- 85% of participants take concrete steps toward greater self-sufficiency.
- At least 90% of participants gain confidence and build supportive relationships to support increased self-sufficiency.

##### **Goal #2: Participants make informed decisions to start or grow a business through planning, coaching and self-reflection.**

###### Activities:

1. Deliver 4 cycles of **Idea to Action**, a 3-part introductory business workshop for aspiring entrepreneurs to create a clear vision and action plan. *Two of the cycles will be co-taught for the first time with an ELL instructor and customized for ELL students.*

2. Deliver 2 cycles of **Start Up**, an intensive, 16-week business planning course resulting in a formal business plan for women and people with marginalized gender identities.
3. Provide short-term **one-on-one technical assistance coaching** to entrepreneurs.
4. Provide pathways to self-employment for people with significant life challenges via 1 cycle of **Mercy Marketplace**, a 12-week program to develop arts and crafts vendors-in-training culminating in a holiday market hosted by Mercy Connections.
5. Deliver 1-2 cycles of **Mercy Makerspace**, a supported weekly co-working environment to develop and create products to sell at craft and art fairs.

Expected Outcomes

- 95% of Idea to Action participants decide if self-employment or business ownership is the right choice for them; 40% select a business idea to pursue.
- 90% of Start Up participants complete business plans; 10% decide not to pursue a business but apply new insights to their current position/life strategy; 20% of participants start a business within one year, 50% start businesses within 2-5 years.
- 90% of Mercy Marketplace participants earn income selling handcrafts and artwork at the Mercy Marketplace event(s); 40% plan to participate in additional craft fairs.

**Goal #3: Participants develop technical skills and knowledge to navigate business ownership in VT.**

Activities

1. Provide 3 cycles of **English Language Learning (ELL)** for non-native speakers to improve their access to professional and business development. Each cycle includes:
  - **4 group ELL classes** (meeting 1-2x weekly) for beginner or intermediate level students.
  - **1:1 ELL Tutoring** for all levels of ELL students in which volunteer tutors are trained to work one-on-one weekly with participants to develop their language skills, including tutoring for special purposes related to specific employment or higher education goals.
2. Create and pilot a new **English Pronunciation Class** to advance skills of all levels of ELL students.
3. Develop an **Orientation to Small Business in the US** workshop specifically for immigrant students. This will be co-taught with an ELL instructor, with a goal of increasing awareness of the culture and logistics of business ownership in this country.
4. Deliver 2 cycles of **Launch Pad**, a supported biweekly drop-in co-working space for folks actively working to start a new business.
5. Deliver 3 cycles of **Introduction to Small Business Series**, a 5-part introductory series that covers business basics including finance, marketing, and getting set up, offered both online and in person.
6. Deliver 10 additional **Small Business Trainings** or events to meet needs of the target audiences, including language.

Expected Outcomes

- 90% of participants gain increased knowledge of self-employment.
- 85% of ELL students increase language skills.

**IV. Impact / Evaluation**

1. **How do you assess whether/how program participants are better off? Describe how you assess project/program outcomes; 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 using a Results-Based Accountability (RBA) framework to analyze quantifiable and qualitative data on program delivery and impact, participant satisfaction, and expected outcomes. We are successful when participants complete deliverables such as business plans,

gain new business and personal management skills, access new resources, develop meaningful and supportive relationships, and feel more economically self-sufficient and financially empowered. We are also currently enhancing our internal systems for engaging students in assessing and understanding their own goals and progress achieved.

- Type of Data: Participant outcomes (business ownership; income, career, financial mobility/stability; program satisfaction, increased language skills); changes in knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, circumstances, and sense of belonging.
- Method/Tools: Program applications, student progress records & conferences, surveys, interviews, attendance records, and business plan assessments.
- From Whom: Program participants, instructors, volunteers, alumni.
- When: Pre- and post-activity surveys, mid-way assessments, quarterly outcome reports.

**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 and your final outcomes from June 2023 (or June 2022). For non-CDBG participants – report on your achievements from the previous year.**

**Attachment A, 2022 Application**

Total #	# low/mod owners
73	66

In the 2022-2023 grant year, our goal was to serve 73 Burlington residents. We were pleased to serve 115 Burlington residents that year, 86 of whom were low to moderate income residents. The increase can be attributed to the growth in demand for small business and ELL education in Burlington, and a strategic increase in internal capacity to meet that need. The addition of an ELL Instructor and new group ELL classes enabled us to reach more people, and we are taking a leadership role in convening ELL service providers in Chittenden County, helping to elevate our role in the ecosystem. The Director of Inclusive Entrepreneurship continues to expand our relationships within the small business support community in Vermont, in addition to developing new offerings that attract new audiences. All of this has increased our visibility and reputation as a “go-to” place for both English Language Learners and aspiring entrepreneurs.

**CDBG 2022 Program Year Results**

	Total # of Owners / Persons Assisted	Result of Assistance: # of New Businesses	Result of Assistance: # of Businesses Expanded	# Owners / Persons at or under 30% AMI	# Owners / Persons between 30% and 50% AMI	# Owners / Persons between 50% and 80% AMI	# Owners / Persons above 80% AMI
Cumulative	115	10	42	55	19	12	29

**V. Experience / Organizational Capacity**

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

Mercy Connections empowers people to make significant life changes through education, mentoring, entrepreneurship, and community. At its heart, ours is a mission of social justice and equity. At Mercy Connections, an individual can find support in each phase of their life journey as they navigate barriers and find opportunities. The **Small Business Equity Project** is designed to provide access to economic

opportunity and personal empowerment for groups of people who are traditionally locked out of entrepreneurship. Through small business courses and community building, this project generates self-sufficiency, empowerment, and a sense of belonging.

**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.)**

The Inclusive Entrepreneurship program is preceded by the Women’s Small Business Program, a trailblazer in women’s entrepreneurship that has moved Burlington residents out of poverty through self-employment since 1989. In 2001, Mercy Connections took over the program from Trinity College. We recently made the decision to change the name of the program to acknowledge that while business education specifically for women remains critically important, defining any offering for a single gender excludes transgender, gender non-confirming and gender nonbinary individuals. Our intensive business planning class continues to serve all marginalized genders. The new program name also speaks to our desire to reach more marginalized identities with our business classes, including BIPOC, New American, and the formerly incarcerated.

The Project Director holds an MBA and is trained in RBA, racial justice, and restorative justice. She owned a consulting practice for 7 years and taught in the Start Up course for 5 years prior to joining Mercy Connections fulltime as Program Director in January 2022. We are also thrilled to have added capacity in November 2023 by hiring an Inclusive Entrepreneurship Program Coordinator who is a small business owner and has a background in mental health practice and social work. Start Up instructors are small business owners and experienced teachers. In 2014, Mercy Marketplace was developed as an outgrowth of Start Up to support people with significant life challenges to create a market for their handmade creations. The Marketplace Coordinator is a Start Up graduate who has operated her own business and is a master facilitator for our personal growth and development programs, making her deeply familiar with what it takes to work with people who have experienced poverty, mental health challenges and/or trauma. She just earned a Master’s from UVM’s Education Leadership and Policy Studies with a focus on resilience-based practices. We have delivered ELL programs for 11 years and headed into 2024 will have a larger team of 2.5 FTE dedicated to supporting our ELL learners. All have advanced degrees and ELL-specific qualifications, as well as decades of cross-cultural teaching experience. Together they now form a powerhouse team that is rapidly expanding the depth and kind of program options available to ELL students in our community. Billing time to this grant will be our newest English Language Instructor and ELL Tutoring Coordinator, who holds an MA in Education and is ELL Certified as well as having 30 years of experience in language teaching in the U.S. and abroad.

**3. What steps has your organization/board taken in the past year to address racial equity, inclusion, and belonging internally? What new commitments have been made to address racial equity, inclusion, and belonging internally in the year ahead?**

Racial and social justice is core to our mission. Board members and staff are continuously improving our approach, policies, and strategies to achieve this mission. The reframing of our business program from the Women’s Small Business Program to Inclusive Entrepreneurship illustrates our commitment to actualize racial equity, inclusion, and belonging for people with marginalized identities. All our classes include guidelines and expectations about respect for differences and cross-cultural understanding. We are intentional about equitable representation of different identities and learning styles in our communications, curriculum, and modes of teaching. Last year we served individuals from 35 countries, speaking 23 first languages. By integrating our classes in small business and English, we continue to break down barriers so that all participants can succeed.

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

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

**VI. Proposed Low & Moderate Income Beneficiaries**

1. Will the program solely serve a specific group of people? If so, check **ONE** below:

- Abused Children                       Elderly (62 years +)                       People with AIDS  
 Battered Spouses                       Homeless Persons                       Illiterate Adults  
 People with Severe Disabilities

If this activity/project is designed to serve the population experiencing homelessness through housing or supportive services, is your organization or entity partnered with the Chittenden County Continuum of Care and participating in the Coordinated Entry system for the project:

- Yes       No       Not applicable to activity/project

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. Use the Income Table at

<https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/CEDO/2023-HUD-Income-Limits>

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)
English Language Learning	25	15	5	5	0
Trainings & Events	25	8	8	5	4
Small Business Classes	20	5	5	5	5
1:1 Coaching	15	1	5	5	4
Mercy Marketplace/Makerspace	15	8	5	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>14</b>

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, 2024?  Yes  No  Not Serving Limited Clientele

**VII. Commitment to Equity, Inclusion and Belonging**

1. Who is the project/program designed to benefit? Describe the project/program’s target population, citing (if relevant) specific age, gender, income, community/location, race or ethnicity, 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 **Small Business Equity Project** are entrepreneurial, extremely low-to-moderate income people. Historically our students have come to a crossroads in their lives and see entrepreneurial education as a strategy to achieve a more stable life. Most are unemployed, under-employed, or seeking advancement in employment. Many rely on economic benefits through the State of Vermont or, if they do not qualify for public assistance, struggle to make ends meet while living on the “benefits cliff.” We intend to serve diverse participants, including people who have marginalized gender identities, BIPOC, low-



income, newly immigrated, LGBTQIA2S+ or those who face significant life or learning challenges. In addition to referrals from past participants and strategic marketing, we reach our target population through an extensive referral network including nonprofit service providers and municipal and state economic development and benefit service departments.

**2. Describe the steps you take to ensure the project/program is accessible, inclusive, addressing racial equity, and culturally appropriate for the target population.**

We are launching newly created curriculum and a co-teaching model with both a business and an ELL instructor so that ELL students and native English speakers can learn together in the same space. This approach allows us to scaffold both the subject content and English language vocabulary in from the beginning of a program. We know making a class more accessible for ELL students makes it more accessible to *all* learners. Some of the steps we take to ensure accessible programming include: creating regular and ongoing feedback loops with participants to ensure programs meet their needs; highly individualized learning plans for ELL students (developed *with* them to address immediate needs); training for tutors and instructors regarding awareness and sensitivity to cultural differences; access to individual coaching with a small business instructor; diversification of teaching methodologies to meet different learning styles; and adapting complex content into simpler formats at an appropriate level for students. All our classes except for Start Up are offered free of charge at varying times of the day to help match the schedules of our students.

**VIII. Budget / Financial Feasibility**

**1. 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? Give specific details.**

CDBG’s investment will support the salaries of the Project Director, and partial time for the Mercy Marketplace Coordinator and the ELL Instructor and Tutoring Coordinator. Funds will be spent for instruction, program planning, equity and inclusion systems, curriculum development, recruitment, enrollment, instructor and volunteer supervision, teaching, student support, and program evaluation. Ongoing support allows us to keep the program cost-accessible for participants.

**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.**

a.

Specific Service /Activity	Position/Title	Work Related to CDBG-Funded Activity	# Hrs/ Week	% Hrs/ Week
English Language Learning	ELL Instructor & Tutoring Coordinator	Instruction, student and tutor support, planning & evaluation, recruitment & enrollment	30	49.8%
Trainings & Events	Project Director	Outreach, presenter support, collaboration, planning, evaluation	4.5	5.22%
Small Business Classes	Project Director	Recruitment & enrollment, instruction, admin, instructor supervision and student support, planning & evaluation	25	29%
1:1 Coaching	Project Director	Program delivery, student support, evaluation & program planning	4.5	5.22%
Mercy Marketplace/ Makerspace	Program Coordinator	Recruitment/enrollment, program delivery, evaluation & planning, student support, admin & operations management	4.5 avg	8.39%

b. All CDBG grantees using CDBG funds for salaries must submit timesheets capturing total time and effort of staff members funded with CDBG. Timesheets must record hours worked on CDBG-funded programs, hours worked on non-CDBG funded programs and the corresponding program name/funding source(s). Timecards must include a narrative for all CDBG and non-CDBG funded activities and must be signed by employee and supervisor. Is your organization able to implement a timekeeping system for CDBG funded staff that meets these requirements by July 1, 2024?  Yes  No  Not funding salaries

**3. Program/Project Budget**

Line Item	CDBG Funds	Other	Total
Direct Personnel	\$75,000	\$167,386	\$242,386
Marketing	\$-	\$15,000	\$15,000
Resource Materials & Supplies	\$-	\$9,000	\$9,000
Scholarships	\$-	\$15,000	\$15,000
Technology	\$-	\$7,000	\$7,000
Admin/Overhead	\$-	\$50,881	\$50,881
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$75,000</b>	<b>\$264,267</b>	<b>\$339,267</b>

**4. Funding Sources**

	Program/Project		Agency	
	Current	Projected	Current	Projected
CDBG	\$65,000	\$75,000	\$65,000	\$75,000
State - Department of Corrections			\$132,300	\$132,300
Federal - N/A				
United Way - N/A				
Private (specify)				
Hearst Foundation	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
KeyBank Foundation	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Mercy Ministry Fund	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$40,000
Northfield Savings Bank	\$30,000	\$-0-	\$50,000	\$-0-
TD Charitable Foundation	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
Mercy Connections Annual Fund	\$40,500	\$62,267	\$475,000	\$525,000
Program Income - Tuition	\$65,000	\$70,000	\$65,000	\$70,000
Other (specify)				
Grants – other			\$110,000	\$125,000
Investment Income	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$150,000	\$150,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 332,500</b>	<b>\$339,267</b>	<b>\$1,129,300</b>	<b>\$1,159,300</b>

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

$$\frac{\$ \underline{\$75,000}}{\text{CDBG Funding}} \div \frac{\$ \underline{\$339,267}}{\text{Total Program/Project Costs}} = \underline{22.1} \% \text{ Percentage}$$

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

$$\frac{\$ \underline{\$339,267}}{\text{Total Program/Project Cost}} \div \frac{\underline{100}}{\text{\# Total Proposed Beneficiaries}} = \underline{\$ 3,393} \text{ Cost Per Person}$$

$$\frac{\$ \underline{75,000}}{\text{Total Amount of CDBG Funding}} \div \frac{\underline{100}}{\text{\# Total Proposed Beneficiaries}} = \underline{\$ 750} \text{ Cost Per Person CDBG}$$

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

Trinity College and Burlington's CEDO began the Women's Small Business Program (WSBP) 35 years ago; it has evolved continuously and was renamed the Inclusive Entrepreneurship Program two years ago. The **Small Business Equity Project** preserves CEDO's legacy of collaborating with and investing in locally-grown, successful entrepreneurship programs to empower Burlington residents toward greater success. More capable and diverse business owners make a stronger Burlington and a thriving future for the city, especially as we continue to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. The **Small Business Equity Project** aligns with both the CDBG goals for economic development and the mission of Burlington's Racial Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Department: "promoting racial equity and inclusion throughout the City of Burlington both internally and externally through engagement, facilitation, and education." We know it takes a village, an investment in our interdependence, to support individuals to thrive. For these reasons, a CDBG investment is a natural fit.

**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 engaged 179 volunteers last year. Start Up organizes 25 expert volunteers who review business plans, serve as guest speakers, and exist on a short-list of vetted professional resources for new business owners. Business support organizations such as the SBA and SBDC, state agencies, and local lending institutions volunteer their time to share their expertise to support entrepreneurs. Trained volunteers play an integral role in our ELL Tutoring programs, with 35-45 serving at a time. UVM provides access to its research library for our Start Up students. CEDO's endorsement of our work through CDBG funding strengthens our leverage politically and financially to attract new funding sources.

***IX. 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.**

We are proud to be an Outreach Partner in the Small Business Technical Assistance Exchange grant program, helping business owners access funds for key projects. The program specifically seeks to support business owners who were not prioritized in previous COVID-era assistance programs, including women, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, mature Vermonters, young Vermonters, people with disabilities, veterans, justice-involved individuals, new Americans and people in rural places. As an Outreach Partner, our role is to create easy access to the program as well as additional support for applicants as they grow their businesses. In mid-December, we partnered with CVOEO's Financial Futures program, the Center for Women & Enterprise, and Vermont Works for Women to host an in-person networking event for women+ entrepreneurs. Focused around developing a simple elevator pitch, the event drew attendees from a variety of backgrounds, including several New Americans, who offered praise for the opportunity to gather and practice in a low-stakes and high-support environment. We have also taken a leadership role in convening and facilitating the ELL Providers group, which includes language partners from Vermont Adult Learning, USCRI Vermont, the J.S. Munt Family Room, CCV, multiple public libraries and schools, to coordinate non-duplicative opportunities and identify gaps for people who are learning English.

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

Mercy Connections is unique in the combination and integration of program areas we offer and the prioritization of community building. People from diverse backgrounds learn together, no matter their goals.

Through networking meetings and collaboration with partner organizations, we ensure that our programs complement partners' work with the goal of increased access for all. The **Small Business Equity Project** provides a growing suite of programs to support entrepreneurs from the skill-building and idea-phase through the first years of business ownership. Newer offerings such as coaching, co-working support, and training provide an ongoing network of support to lessen the isolation of business ownership.

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

In the past year, we have endeavored to integrate work across program areas. This allows us to combine expertise from different content areas (for example, ELL and small business) to create unique program offerings that meet known needs in the community. At the same time, we have increased capacity and greatly increased our numbers through the addition of group classes that did not exist 2 years ago. We are working to standardize the curriculum frameworks and measurement tools for classes across content areas so that we can better support students who take a variety of classes with us.

## **X. Sustainability**

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**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?**

Mercy Connections' programs contribute to the City's revitalization goals through participants who reside and operate businesses in designated neighborhood revitalization areas. Benefits continue far beyond program completion – as the City gains more successful and diverse businesses, those businesses grow to create more jobs within the City and grow the local economy. Beyond economics, there is the profound impact of belonging that participants feel as they join the business community in Burlington. As we support individual business owners, we constantly weave networks of professional supports, mentors, and people operating in similar industries so that participants can expand these support networks as they grow their businesses. The Small Business Equity Project provides access and opportunity for people who are left behind in our current economic model, instead giving them place and dignity in our community.

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

CDBG funds support direct program expenses. If funding ends, participant fees for Start Up may need to increase, but the project will continue, relying more heavily on marketing to higher income students and utilizing VSAC assistance in the form of advancement grants to students who qualify. Mercy Connections has consistently depended on diverse funding sources to sustain our efforts and we continue to aggressively search for additional funding, especially to ensure continued accessibility for all who may want to take classes. 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?**

Mercy Connections' programs have 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 as we seek alternate funding.