



Request for Proposals (RFP) to develop a 2026-2030 Strategic Plan and Theory of Change for Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT)

RFP SUMMARY: CNT is issuing this Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit responses from an individual, organization, or team to develop a Theory of Change, Strategic Plan, and Impact Statement.

We anticipate that the selected consultant will complete, at minimum, the following activities to support the co-creation of both documents with CNT and our Board of Directors:

- Facilitate meetings and workshops to gather staff and Board input and incorporate their perspectives in the Theory of Change and Strategic Plan.
- Plan and deliver an in-person workshop at CNT’s staff retreat.
- Convene and engage an advisory group throughout the process.

RFP ISSUE DATE	December 3, 2024
PROPOSAL DUE DATE	January 21, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. CDT
DEADLINE FOR QUESTIONS	The deadline for questions is January 3, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. CDT. Please submit your questions in writing to Miriam Savad, msavad@cnt.org . Responses to all questions will be posted to the RFP Website and emailed back to all consultants who emailed questions by January 10, 2025.
PROPOSAL SUBMISSION PROCESS	Please email your proposal in a PDF or Word document to Miriam Savad at msavad@cnt.org with “CNT Strategic Planning Services RFP” in the subject line. Budgets may also be attached separately in Excel. Proposals will be reviewed on a rolling basis.
RFP WEBSITE	cnt.org/careers-and-opportunities#strategic-plan
OFFICIAL CONTACT	Miriam Savad, Chief Strategy and Program Officer, msavad@cnt.org

ABOUT CNT

Center for Neighborhood Technology’s (CNT) mission is to deliver innovative analysis and solutions that support community-based organizations and local governments to create neighborhoods that are equitable, sustainable, and resilient.

We work directly with neighborhoods and communities to enhance transit access, improve air quality, expand economic opportunities, and empower residents with the tools needed to build resilience. As a “think and do tank” we bring analysis, engagement, innovation, and collaboration together under one roof.

Founded in Chicago in 1978 to organize Black and brown residents and challenge harmful environmental practices with a socio-economic lens, the core vision that still animates our work is a belief in tackling issues directly within communities to increase resources and economic opportunities, in partnership with the people who live there.

Today, CNT’s core programming spans more than two dozen projects in the focus areas of sustainable community development and transportation, urban resilience, and urban analytics. Our core capabilities include interdisciplinary analysis, engagement and empowerment of local partners and government leaders, innovation in data-informed policy, financial, and technological solutions, and community collaboration to recognize gaps in service and devise strategies to address challenges.

BACKGROUND

As we approach our 50th anniversary, CNT recognizes the significance of re-evaluating our purpose, direction, and strategy and to embark on the next era of implementing our mission, vision, and values.

Over the past year we’ve committed significant resources to initiatives that will actively shape CNT’s future. We completed a comprehensive values assessment and are currently achieving consensus on our core values. Alongside this work we are conducting an evaluation of our history of advocacy, projects, and programs to draw insights from them that will inform our strategic direction. We also hired a strategic consultant to engage staff, our Board, partners, clients, and community-based organizations to develop a 360-degree view of the organization. The outputs of this collective body of work include CNT’s new value statements, a workbook of findings from staff, board, and external organization interviews conducted during the latter half of 2024, and will soon include additional reporting on CNT’s existing conditions. We intend to share these work products with the consultant or team brought on to implement this scope.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

CNT seeks a consultant or team to develop a Theory of Change, Impact Statement, and Strategic Plan. CNT’s work began nearly 50 years ago, organizing residents to challenge harmful environmental practices with a socio-economic lens. Since then, we have expanded our work to include equitable transportation systems, inclusive housing strategies, and data-informed decision making.

A Theory of Change and Strategic Plan will guide CNT staff to reconcile our rich history to chart a path forward that allows CNT to maximize our impact for the communities we

partner with in line with our vision, mission, and values. An Impact Statement will help CNT establish mechanisms to continuously evaluate our impact toward our goals in line with our mission, vision, and values, ensuring accountability to our community partners and ourselves.

To that end, CNT has the following goals for this work:

- Engage all CNT staff and the Board of Directors in the Strategic Planning process to share feedback and shape the deliverables.
- Give staff and Board an opportunity to listen to and learn others' perspectives and synthesize those perspectives to inform a collective pathway forward that establishes consensus across diverse stakeholders.
- Develop a cross-organizational advisory group, diverse in experience, identity, and tenure, to shape the Strategic Plan and Theory of Change. The selected consultant should advise on the composition and overall function of the group.
- Refine a shared understanding of who CNT is, where we sit in relation to the communities we partner with, and develop a shared language to describe how CNT achieves our mission and why do what we do.
- Deepen understanding of CNT's current impact and where we would like to see that impact evolve from 2026 to 2030.
- Evaluate and refine CNT's programs, growth opportunities, and financial sustainability to operationalize our values and deepen our impact.
- Understand and establish systems for how CNT operates, the frameworks or guiding principles for our work, and overall structure and organization of CNT to support the strategic priorities that emerge during the Strategic Planning process.
- Facilitate a productive and inclusive in-person Strategic Planning session at an all-staff retreat that fosters common ground and collective agreement on CNT's future strategic initiatives.
- Establish performance indicators, metrics, and anticipated outcomes that reinforce CNT's accountability to itself, the communities we are partnered with, and our funding partners.

TIMELINE

The primary output of this work will be a Theory of Change, Impact Statement, and Strategic Plan for 2026-2030. We anticipate initiating the contract in March 2025. The project should be completed by the end of 2025, with an initial draft of the Theory of Change, Impact Statement, and Strategic Plan delivered before October 2025.

We anticipate that our staff retreat will happen in the fall of 2025. The selected consultant should plan to attend the retreat in-person, facilitate full day Strategic Planning session, and participate in retreat planning.

The contract is anticipated to conclude in December 2025.

CONTRACT TYPE

CNT prefers a milestone-based contract billed at milestone dates identified by the consultant during the RFP process, but we are also open to a time-and-materials contract billed monthly. Should a consultant want to recommend another contract format, they should include a rationale with their RFP submission.

BUDGET

CNT expects a not-to-exceed budget of \$50,000 for this work, including all time and expenses associated with completing the scope of work; however, CNT reserves the right to revise our budget assumptions at any time.

We ask consultants to propose as competitive a budget for the project as they can, while being realistic about the scope that they can complete within that budget. If a consultant proposes a budget that will exceed \$50,000, we ask that consultants provide a rationale for why it is necessary. In addition, we ask consultants that propose to exceed the threshold to provide alternative budget scenarios where they could stay within the budget by making certain trade-offs, such as dropping tasks or reducing complexity in places.

SCOPE OF WORK

CNT seeks an individual, organization or team to complete the following scope of work. Please feel free to include any additions to the scope you see appropriate and include a rationale for doing so in your response.

1. Facilitate small and large group meetings across CNT staff, leadership, and Board throughout the duration of the project. Ensure all parties are involved in creating, refining, and planning to implement the Theory of Change, Impact Statement, and Strategic Plan. CNT has a hybrid staff and thus the consultant should be comfortable with hybrid facilitation; however, in-person sessions in Chicago are preferred.
2. Convene an advisory group that represents CNT's diversity by tenure, lived, learned, and embodied experience, and position. Work closely with the advisory group during the scope of work.
3. Create opportunities for Board and staff members to share perspectives, listen to one another, and come to consensus on CNT's future.
4. Develop a Theory of Change that aligns with our mission, vision, and values. Support socialization of the Theory of Change with all CNTers and help develop a shared language using the Theory of Change.
5. Develop a five-year Strategic Plan which identifies strategic priorities along with recommendations about resources and capacity needs.
6. Develop an Impact Statement that CNT can use as a launch point to determine goals, metrics, and key performance indicators.
7. Plan and facilitate a half-to-full-day in-person workshop regarding the 2026-2030 Theory of Change and Strategic Plan at CNT's all-staff retreat.
8. Manage the project in an organized and transparent way. Plan for weekly email updates to Miriam Savad, Chief Strategy and Program Officer, biweekly meetings

with Miriam and CEO Nina Idemudia, and updates to all staff and the Board via email, video calls, and in-person meetings as needed.

9. Develop formal recommendations on Strategic Plan implementation, including how to prioritize efforts over the five-year period, including an implementation roadmap.
10. Create a slide deck for executive level presentation to funders on CNT's Theory of Change, Strategic Plan, and Impact Reporting plan.
11. Develop communications language around CNT's Strategic Planning process and outcomes that can be included in public facing documents.

NOTE: There is potential for subsequent engagements on implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and further adaptation depending on CNT's needs following the completion of 2026-2030 Strategic Planning Process.

DELIVERABLES

1. An updated workplan, including timeline and expected staff commitment, within two weeks of project kickoff.
2. Theory of Change.
3. Impact Statement or other framework for monitoring ongoing progress toward mission with established performance indicators, metrics, and anticipated outcomes.
4. 2026-2030 Strategic Plan.
5. Slides, handouts, and notes for all workshops during the contract.
6. Weekly written email updates.
7. Facilitated meeting and related materials for all-staff retreat workshop.

THE IDEAL CONSULTANT

Having spent nearly fifty years doing work to give communities the tools, resources, and support to advocate for and create the future they envision for themselves, CNT has strong mission alignment across staff and a lot of passion about the best way to get there. Agreeing on scale, approach, and how to think more globally about our values and their relationship to strategy will require a patient and thoughtful individual or organization who builds a foundation of trust and sees CNT staff as whole people whose personal values deeply influence their work.

CNT is also looking to work with an individual or firm who:

- Understands the policy, housing, urban planning, transportation, and environmental justice landscape of the Chicagoland area, Illinois, or the Midwest more broadly.
- Uses the [Jemez Principles of Democratic Organizing](#), the [Principles of Environmental Justice](#), and the [Just Transition](#) framework to guide their work, or supports clients or partners who do.
- Has professional commitments to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ), and incorporates these values in their work.

- Is experienced at facilitating in-person Strategic Planning workshops that are inclusive, use multiple tools or modalities to engage participants, and creating brave spaces for staff to share their feedback.
- Has an understanding of nonprofit strategy and the nonprofit-industrial complex and works to ensure it avoids perpetuating harmful approaches with the strategies they recommend.
- Thinks about strategies to ensure a small organization remains impactful and community-driven during conversations about growth, scale, and impact.
- Understands the business model of procuring and maintaining philanthropic funding well enough to support conversations around developing new nonprofit business models.
- Poses critical and challenging questions to improve overall organizational efficiency and effectiveness.
- Has strategies to develop long-, mid-, and short-term goals and benchmarks for an organization or project that are achievable, measurable, and mission-aligned.
- Has the capacity to manage disagreements, facilitate difficult conversations, and navigate diverse perspective to connect disparate dots and find common ground.
- Can build consensus across staff and Board through facilitated listening sessions on strategic direction for the organization.

Proposal Content

Please answer the following questions in your proposal. The proposal should not exceed twelve pages (excluding resumes and work sample):

1. Tell us a little bit about who you are as an individual or organization, including what drives you to do this work. If you're an organization, tell us about your team members and what role each person will play on this project. What makes you a good fit to support CNT's strategic evolution?
2. How will you approach project management and ongoing communications with CNT?
3. What is your theoretical and practical approach to developing a Strategic Plan, Theory of Change, and Impact Statement? What resources would you draw on to help educate staff? What steps would you take to develop the deliverables?
4. Summarize your experience with Strategic Planning and Theory of Change, including the types of organizations you've worked with and their industries.
5. What is your approach to facilitating large and small group meetings and workshops, both in-person and virtually? How do you ensure all voices are heard?
6. How do you address disparate perspectives in the feedback you receive? How do you work with feedback from staff and/or the Board that ultimately isn't included in the final deliverable? What is your strategy for aligning those staff who may feel the priorities they had are not represented by the deliverables?
7. How will you navigate the different perspectives of CNT staff and Board, including creating space for both groups to share their perspectives and be heard while also finding common ground?
8. CNT knows it wants to develop an advisory group for this process, but what that will look like is ultimately up to the consultant who conducts this scope of work. What is

your experience with advisory groups in the past, and how would you approach developing one for CNT’s context?

9. Project Plan: How will you approach the scope of work? Include additional details you would add to or change about the provided scope, a sample timeline including major task milestones and estimated number of hours per task, and the staff lead assigned to the task if you are submitting as an organization.
10. Deliverables: What will you produce throughout the scope of work? Please include the formats you anticipate for the completed Strategic Plan, Impact Statement, and Theory of Change.
11. Please attach a sample of your work to your application. While CNT would prefer a sample Strategic Plan and/or Theory of Change, any piece of work you believe shows your skillset for this project will be considered. CNT also understands that some details of Strategic Plans and/or theories of change are intentionally kept private. A framework for either would be acceptable.
12. Please include resumes for all staff who will be assigned to this project.
13. Please include at least two references who can speak to your ability to complete the scope of work.
14. Budget Proposal: Please describe the underlying budget assumptions and any drivers of cost that can be modified without compromising the project’s goals. Please see the [budget section](#) for more details.

Please use the following template for your budget proposal:

Milestone	Description	Anticipated Completion Date	Estimated Number of Hours	Staff Lead	Amount

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Please package all elements of the submission as a single document, labeled with the consultant’s name and “CNT Strategic Planning Services RFP.” Email to Miriam Savad, Chief Strategy and Program Officer, msavad@cnt.org.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Bids will be evaluated using the following criteria:

1. Depth of understanding of the local context in which CNT operates and the foundations on which we are built.

2. Equitable and actionable approach to Strategic Planning and Theory of Change development detailed in project plan.
3. Distinct ability to successfully complete the work, including clear project management approach, a reasonable project timeline, and appropriate staffing for the depth and level of effort required.
4. Clearly describes project deliverables, including formatting expectations, approach to completion, and strategies for collecting and incorporating feedback.
5. Demonstrates success with Strategic Planning and Theory of Change development for similarly sized or missioned organizations.
6. Describes a pathway to engage all staff and develop an advisory group that is inclusive and considerate of the diversity of perspectives and experiences at CNT.
7. Clear approach to facilitation with strategies to ensure all voices are heard, as well as a clear approach to closing the feedback loop when perspectives do not end up directly in a final deliverable.
8. Demonstrates mission, vision, and values alignment with CNT.
9. Reasonableness of budget based on expected tasks and deliverables and within CNT's context.

CNT also reserves the right to contact references provided by any potential consultant and include their feedback in the overall evaluation.

SELECTION PROCESS, AWARD, AND PROTEST PROCEDURES

All proposals will be reviewed by CNT leadership. CNT may send follow-up questions to any consultant during review. CNT may also choose to interview consultants during the selection process. All communications will happen via email between Miriam Savad and the consultants using the email address with which the RFP was submitted.

Selection Schedule

Schedule	
Event	Date(s)
RFP issue date	December 3, 2024
Deadline for questions	January 3, 2024
Proposals due	January 21, 2024
Interviews if needed	Week of March 3, 2025
Anticipated contract award date	Week of March 17, 2025
Anticipated contract execution date	Week of March 24, 2025
Anticipated contract completion date	End of 2025

Debrief Conversation

Any unsuccessful consultant may request a debrief conversation with CNT within **one week** of receiving a notice of nonacceptance. Please send your requests to Miriam Savad, Chief Strategy and Program Officer, msavad@cnt.org with “Request for Debrief” in the Subject Line.