



Saint Paul City Council Audit Committee

Technical Proposal

Wilder Research

OCTOBER 2023

451 Lexington Parkway North | Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104
651-280-2700 | www.wilderresearch.org

**Wilder
Research**
Information. Insight. Impact.

Tab 1: Firm Information

Name of firm: Wilder Research

Complete address: 451 Lexington Parkway North, Saint Paul, MN 55104

Contact person: Heather Britt

Telephone number: 612.850.9179

Fax number: 651-280-3700

Website: wilderresearch.org

Email Address: heather.britt@wilder.org

Tab 2: Philosophy & Approach

Wilder Research, an independent research unit of the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, is a nationally respected nonprofit research and evaluation group located in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Our mission is to improve the lives of individuals, families, and communities through objective, collaborative, community-engaged, and culturally responsive research and evaluation. For more than 100 years, we have worked with nonprofits, community leaders, government agencies, foundations, and policymakers throughout Minnesota and the country to gather and interpret facts and trends, help uncover and understand issues and how best to address them, and make data-informed decisions. Wilder Research is uniquely qualified to partner with the City of Saint Paul because of our longstanding presence and commitment in Saint Paul and the East Metro.

Our primary services include process and outcome evaluations, population-based research, cost-benefit analysis, training, consultation and technical assistance, data management, and communications of research findings. Our work helps organizations assess the impact and economic value of their programs, improve their operations and outcomes, plan for the future, allocate funds, and inform policies.

Wilder Research projects and expertise span a breadth of topics and sectors, including arts and culture; community safety and criminal justice; early childhood and children; education and youth development; housing and homelessness; mental health and well-being; older adults and aging; public health and health care; and substance use.

Researchers and evaluators are trained in a variety of disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, public health, economics, library science, and public policy. Wilder Research staff, including the staff on this study, are highly experienced in working with representatives of culturally diverse communities to conduct successful research studies. Most of our studies are with economically, racially and ethnically diverse communities and the public and private organizations that serve them. This work requires an understanding of the views, needs, and traditions of these communities. We strive to integrate cultural considerations in all aspects of our work, including research

design, data collection, data analysis, and reporting and interpretation of results. Additionally, many of our staff live in and are active in communities within the city of Saint Paul.

Our capacity to conduct cross-cultural research is enhanced by a diverse staff. Wilder Research staff are recruited from the diverse communities of Saint Paul, Minneapolis, and the surrounding areas. We actively recruit survey interviewers fluent in languages other than English. Typically these interviewers use the non-English language as their first (and often primary) language, and they are familiar with and/or come from the communities being surveyed. We have substantial experience conducting interviews and focus groups in multiple languages, including Hmong, Somali, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Spanish, Karen, and Russian. Our multicultural research capacity is further enhanced by the efforts we have made to capture practice knowledge, and continually refine and improve our approaches to the implementation of research in multi-cultural contexts. We make active efforts to learn from our previous experiences and to apply this knowledge to the next set of projects we undertake.

Tab 3: Outline of Project

Statement of Understanding

Wilder research understands the Saint Paul City Council Audit Committee (Audit Committee) is seeking a contractor to conduct program and financial evaluations designed to improve the timing of delivery and quality of Saint Paul City services with the goal to build greater public trust and satisfaction with city services.

To this end, Wilder understands the Audit Committee is seeking a vendor who will conduct two specified evaluations of City programs, each to be completed within a three month period, using appropriate program and financial evaluation methods. In partnership with the Audit Committee, these methods may include:

- Developing research questions;
- Designing data collection methods including surveys, focus groups, key informant interviews, quantitative data analyses, qualitative data thematic analyses, and document review; and
- Providing written reports with recommendations for improvements as well as presentations to the City Council Audit Committee and, if requested, to City staff and leaders.

Wilder Research has a mission of turning information into insight and impact. We are pleased to submit this proposal for program and financial evaluation services. The key

staff identified in this proposal have years of experience advancing the Wilder Research mission through projects related to improving service outcomes and financial accountability. Our proposal outlines our approach, timeline, costs, qualifications, work examples, and references. We understand our proposed approach will be refined and finalized depending on the projects selected and each project's budget implications.

Proposed Approach

Activity 1: Finalize project scope and conduct ongoing project management (Month 1)

To ensure that each project runs smoothly and effectively achieves its objectives, Wilder will facilitate key planning, communication, and project management activities.

Task 1a: Hold a preliminary meeting to discuss the scope of services.

Wilder will begin by meeting with the Audit Committee to understand the full scope of each project, identify project stakeholders and answer any remaining questions about our approach and the project proposal. The activities and tasks outlined in this proposal are subject to change, depending on new or updated information or timelines, as shared by the Audit Committee.

Task 1b: Hold check-in meetings with the Audit Committee (ongoing).

Wilder will host check-in meetings with the Audit Committee (and other stakeholders as appropriate) to continually review the work plan, plan key tasks, discuss updates on work progress, and problem solve challenges. These meetings will be 30 minutes to one hour in length and take place via an online platform (e.g., WebEx, Zoom, or Teams). Meetings may be more frequent at the start of the project (weekly).

Task 1c: Hold internal Wilder meetings (ongoing).

Wilder will also have weekly meetings among the internal project team to ensure smooth coordination and project management.

Task 1d: Provide project management and communication (ongoing).

Wilder will facilitate ongoing communication and project management through project meetings described above, by updating the project work plan, and other project management documents.

Task 1e: Finalize list of stakeholders for data collection.

Wilder will work closely with the Audit Committee to build a list of stakeholders that is concise enough to meet timeline and budget constraints, but robust enough to garner detailed information and perspectives on the structure and finances for each project. Wilder will work with Audit Committee in the early planning phase to identify a list of key stakeholders who can speak knowledgeably about the existing structure and financing of projects. Stakeholders could include (but are not limited to) community groups, city staff, city partners, and individuals with expertise in an area related to the project.

Deliverables (Month 1)

- Project work plan with expected processes and timelines for each task
- Finalized list of stakeholders developed in collaboration with the Audit Committee

Activity 2: Conduct primary data collection (Months 1 and 2)

Task 2a1: Document review.

In cooperation with the Audit Committee, Wilder will conduct a broad document review to gather needed information to gain a complete understanding for each study. Examples may include historical documents, city council resolutions, previous audit reports, legal reports, financial information. For this approach, given the short time frame, Wilder will need to establish a cut-off point for reviewing documents to meet the budget and deadline for reporting.

Task 2a2: Collect and analyze documents.

Wilder will work with the Audit Committee to gather relevant information and documents, thoroughly review available documents for analysis using a review checklist as our guiding tool. The key themes and patterns will be synthesized for inclusion in the final report.

Engaging stakeholders is a critical component of this project. Wilder will also work with the Audit Committee to develop key questions and data collection tools to use throughout each project.

Task 2b: Develop a list of common questions to ask stakeholders.

To assure a level of consistency in reporting, Wilder will develop a list of common questions that can be tailored and used across data collection activities. Questions will examine the existing structure and finances of the city service, particularly, consistent challenges and barriers to providing quality services in a timely manner.

Task 2c: Conduct 1 to 3 focus groups or listening sessions with key stakeholders, for example, city leaders, city staff, community partners, and community members.

City staff have unique knowledge about the structure and financing of city services. Wilder proposes conducting 1 to 3 focus groups or listening sessions (depending on the number of attendees) with relevant stakeholders. Focus groups/listening session may be virtual or in-person depending on the needs of focus group/listening session members and budgetary constraints. Wilder will ask the Audit Committee to help identify and select relevant, potential attendees early in the project with a goal of having 5-6 members per focus group or if more individuals are available, more than 6 and up to 15 for a listening session.

Task 2d: Conduct up to 3 key informant interviews with the leaders overseeing each service area that is the subject of a Wilder evaluation.

Wilder proposes conducting up to 3 key informant interviews with city services leaders (e.g., director/manager of the city service area) on the structure and financing of the service area. Wilder will ask the Audit Committee to help identify and engage service area leaders.

Task 2e: Conduct a survey of identified stakeholders.

Depending on the size of the service area, Wilder may conduct a survey of stakeholders, such as city staff, city partners, and relevant community groups. The survey will likely consist of closed-ended questions (rather than open-ended) to meet timeline and budgetary parameters. Wilder will need the support and assistance of the Audit Committee to finalize and fill in any gaps in this list of potential respondents, including respondent name, organization, and email address.

Task 2f: Conduct a financial evaluation of the service area if needed.

Depending on the scope of each project, other Wilder staff may be brought on the team to evaluate the financial needs of the service area. For example, when a financial evaluation is needed, Wilder will use staff with expertise in conducting a Return on Investment (ROI) analysis to evaluate the efficiency of the investment made to perform and deliver the service. Wilder will calculate the benefit (return) of the investment compared with the cost of the investment.

Deliverables: (Month 1 and 2)

- Document review checklist
- Questions/data collection tools

Activity 3: Analyze data and prepare reports (Months 2 and 3)

Wilder will analyze findings and prepare two reports for each project: a mid-term report updating the Audit Committee on progress, challenges, and potential opportunities and a final comprehensive report with findings and recommendations. Both reports will be fully accessible and in a city-approved format.

Task 3a: Analyze results and determine themes and findings.

Wilder will conduct a thematic analysis of qualitative data collected (survey, focus group, key informant interviews) and will use SPSS for quantitative analysis. The analysis will examine respondent experiences with the current service, as well as suggestions for improvements. Analysis could also include mapping current organizational and financial structures, along with potential alternative models.

Task 3b: Write a mid-term report.

Wilder will write a mid-term report during Month 2, updating the Audit Committee on the progress of the project, the challenges, and potential opportunities. The draft report will be submitted to the Audit committee for feedback incorporating their edits before submitting a final mid-term report.

Task 3c: Prepare a final report and present findings.

Wilder will prepare a draft final report in Month 3, sharing findings and recommendations with the Audit Committee for feedback. Audit Committee feedback will be incorporated into the final report. Wilder will participate in one to two presentations to share results of the work using a PPT format.

Deliverables: (Month 2 and 3)

- A mid-term report
- A final report
- One to two virtual presentations including PPT slides.

Audit Committee responsibilities

At the outset, Wilder Research will partner with the Audit Committee to solidify each of our roles and responsibilities in each study. While these responsibilities are subject to change, we propose initially that the Audit Committee responsibilities include the following:

- Engage in collaborative discussions with Wilder about refinements to data collection tools, engagement strategies, incentive options if appropriate, and general administration procedures.

- Meet with Wilder on a regular basis to discuss the progress of each project and address project challenges.
- Provide Wilder with the names and contact information for all individuals (City and community) who are potential key informants, community stakeholders, and city staff.
- Provide Wilder with project related to-be-specified administrative data, if available, as well as key project related documents and documentation for review.
- Review data collection tools drafted by Wilder.
- Provide timely feedback to Wilder regarding all project deliverables.

Methods used to maintain the schedule

For each project, Wilder will develop a detailed project timeline outlining specific deliverables with the due date for each deliverable, to be shared and approved by the Audit Committee. Each deliverable will be shared with the Audit Committee for feedback prior to finalizing. Depending on the scope of the project, each timeline will include:

- **The project work plan** with dates for preliminary meetings, developing the evaluation project plan, submitting the plan, and implementing the plan.
- **Stakeholder engagement**, for example, (i) identifying and recruiting stakeholders, (ii) developing data collection tools including survey, focus group, key informant interview and financial protocols, (iii) data analyzes, and (iv) data dissemination to the Audit Committee and to the stakeholders who took part in the study.
- **The mid-term and final report** which will detail data analysis and interpretation, strengths and opportunities, and prioritized recommendations. *Depending on the scope of each project, an implementation plan could be provided if budget and time allow.*

Other pertinent details, i.e., description of your firm's process through approval of the final design

The Wilder Foundation and Wilder Research have infrastructure to monitor regulation and contract compliance, human resources, and finance, along with feedback loops that provide oversight for each proposal prior to its submission and for each contract when a proposal is accepted.

Tab 5: Project Team

Chris Bray PhD, MA LP Wilder Research Scientist

Chris Bray is an established evaluation professional and Licensed Psychologist with a history in leadership positions in St Paul, both in county and state government positions. In these leadership positions she was responsible for overseeing the work in her divisions, for advocacy with Ramsey County Commissioners, and for advocacy with state legislators. Chris joined Wilder Research in 2020 as clinical lead on [Minnesota's System of Care grant evaluation](#) before expanding her role to conduct research and evaluation on a variety of projects within Wilder Research. Chris's research interests range from improving individual mental health to examining and improving organizational/systems functioning. Her current projects include an examination of a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic, the transition of a hospital clinic to becoming trauma-informed, examining implementation strategies for a comprehensive state Behavioral Health Safety Net, and consulting with the Aiding and Abetting Felony Murder Task Force. She will be a key researcher on the City projects by designing draft work plans with timelines, conducting literature/document reviews if needed, drafting survey/focus group tools depending on the project, analyzing data, and drafting reports. Chris has a doctorate in evaluation studies from the University of Minnesota, a master's degree in counseling psychology from St. Thomas University, and a bachelor's degree in social welfare from the University of Minnesota.

Rachel Fields, MLIS Wilder Research Librarian

Rachel is an experienced library professional, skilled at gathering information and supporting the research process. At Wilder Research, she conducts literature searches of academic and gray literature, program evaluations, and field and policy scans. She maintains internal systems and workflows related to knowledge management, organizes and catalogs internal materials, and provides copyediting support to the communications team. She will assist the project team with information searches and data retrieval, note taking and organization, and editing deliverables. Rachel has a bachelor's degree in sociology from the University of Minnesota and a master's degree in library and information science from St. Catherine University. Rachel lives in Saint Paul and has two children, one who attends Capitol Hill Magnet School and one who attends ECFE through SPPS and will start Pre-K in 2024.

Heather R. Britt, MPH, PhD
Wilder Research Executive Director

Heather Britt joined Wilder in June of 2022. As executive director of Wilder Research, Heather's role is to help ensure research and evaluation efforts yield insight and impact across Saint Paul, Ramsey County, and Minnesota. Prior to joining Wilder, Heather served in leadership positions at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, Minnesota Hospital Association, and Allina Health. Heather also spent time at the Minnesota Department of Education and the Urban Coalition. Heather's research interests range from understanding the environments where young people thrive, the most beneficial ways for systems and organizations to work together to support worker wellbeing, to the influence of systems on health equity. Her largest research study to date was focused on community health workers in late life care and ways healthcare systems can better support individuals and their families in their last few months and years of life. Heather will serve as a Project Lead on City of Saint Paul projects; coordinating partnership and communication with City and Audit Committee team members; working with the research team to implement work plans; participating in primary and secondary data collection and analyses; and partnering on report and dissemination efforts. Heather has her doctorate in epidemiology from the University of Minnesota, her master of public health from the University of North Carolina, and her bachelor of science from Cornell University. She lives in Saint Paul and has two children, both recent graduates of Central High School.



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Tab 6: Related Project Experience

Project Examples & References

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Project Example 1:

City of Saint Paul Families First Rent Supplement Evaluation

The Families First Housing Pilot provides Saint Paul families a \$300 monthly rent supplement and ongoing supportive services for three years, in partnership with Saint Paul Public Schools. Wilder Research is evaluating the impact of the pilot on family outcomes, including housing stability; child school attendance, mobility, and well-being; parental well-being; access to resources; and financial stability. Research methods include pre- and post-interviews with parents whose families receive the rental supplement; interviews with program staff; and analysis of yearly attendance and school mobility data from Saint Paul Public Schools.

Client Contact: Rachel Finazzo Doll

Email: Rachel.Finazzo.Doll@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Phone: 651.266.6627

Address: 15 Kellogg Blvd. West | Saint Paul, MN 55102

Initial Budget: \$99,200

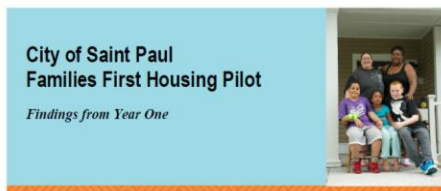
Total Project Cost: In-progress

Date of Proposal: February 27, 2020

Scheduled Completion Date: February 2025 (project extension under consideration)

Actual Completion Date: N/A

Work Sample Images: Full report available upon agreement with client contact (report is private currently).



Project Example 2:

Sprockets Evaluation and Data Management

Sprockets is an out-of-school time network (2011-present) that aims to improve access to quality learning opportunities for Saint Paul's children. It ensures coordination of out-of-school time (OST) learning opportunities in Saint Paul and offers learning and professional development opportunities to OST program staff. About 40 organizations with more than 20,000 children participate in the network. Wilder helped with designing and creating protocols for implementation of the network database that track student attendance in Saint Paul. Wilder also manages and provides training and technical assistance to OST providers. Using these data, Wilder provides reports on the participants' attendance and their characteristics. The reports also show the neighborhoods in Saint Paul where OST programs are and are not provided. In addition, through a data sharing agreement with Saint Paul Public Schools, we receive students' school data, including demographics, attendance, and achievement.

Client Contact: Erik Skold

Email: erik.skold@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Phone: 651.744.7738

Address: 209 Page Street West | Saint Paul, MN 55107

Current Annual Budget: 86K (initially around 150K). Every year, we sign an amendment to the contract to extend our work with the City. The amendment lists the primary tasks (database management and evaluation); additional specific tasks are included when there are enough funds in the budget.

Work Sample Images: <https://www.sprocketssaintpaul.org/about-sprockets/sprockets-publications>

See the acknowledgements in each of the reports. "Special thanks to our data partners Amherst H. Wilder Foundation . . ." We provided graphs and charts, summarized the findings, and reviewed the City's data reports before they are being published. Also we prepared the Journey Mapping and Ripple Effect Mapping reports to celebrate their 10 year anniversary.

Project Example 3:

Saint Paul Public Libraries Community Services Evaluation

From 2019-2022, Saint Paul Public Libraries contracted with Wilder Research to evaluate the expansion of its Community Services program. The expansion prioritizes the co-creation of culturally responsive and informed programs, resources, and services via the utilization of community specialists. The goal of the program is to bridge the gap between the library and underserved/underrepresented Saint Paul communities and to address inequities in library services. Wilder worked with the community specialists, other library staff, and patrons to develop and update a logic model to guide the evaluation. Key evaluation activities over three years included focus groups and interviews with patrons that directly engage with SPPL community specialists, focus groups with the community specialists, a survey of library staff, and facilitated data-informed decision-making sessions. The evaluation provides rich insight into the impacts of the community specialist role, patron experience with the SPPL system, and community specialist feedback to guide improvements to the innovative community services model.

Client Contact: Sarah Gerdes

Email: sarah.gerdes@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Phone: 651.266.7482

Address: 90 W 4th St | Saint Paul, MN 55102

Client Contact: Rebecca Ryan

Email: rebecca.ryan@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Phone: 651.266.7065

Address: 90 W 4th St | Saint Paul, MN 55102

Owner's Initial Budget: 2019 - \$13,917; 2020 - \$29,481; 2021 - \$27,918

Total Project Cost: 2019 - \$13,917; 2020 - \$29,481; 2021 - \$27,918

Date of Proposal: January 2019; June 2020; July 2021

Scheduled Completion Date: July 2019; September 2020; January 2022

Actual Completion Date: July 2019; March 2021; March 2022

Work Sample Images: Year 1 report (includes logic model)

https://www.wilder.org/sites/default/files/imports/SPPL_EvaluationReport_1-21.pdf

Project Example 4:

City of Minneapolis—ARPA Performance Reporting Planning Support

Wilder Research worked with the City of Minneapolis to provide support and consultation to grantees of federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars. Support included meeting with grantees, developing evaluation plans that capture required output and outcome measures, and providing technical assistance to grantees who requested additional assistance.

Client contact: Fatima Moore

Email: fatima.moore@minneapolismn.gov

Client contact: Renae Youngs

Email: renae.youngs@state.mn.us

Phone: 651.259.3811

Address: 658 Cedar Street | Saint Paul, MN 55155

Owner's initial budget: \$123,600

Total project cost: \$123,600

Date of proposal: We submitted our proposal on November 16, 2021 (the proposal was issued by the City on 10/27/21)

Scheduled completion date: August 31, 2022

Actual completion date: September 27, 2022 (with contract amendment)

Work sample images:

Wilder created many deliverables for this project, including focus group protocols, survey instruments, literature review summaries, and 15 program-specific evaluation plans literature reviews. We would need to get permission from the City of Minneapolis and the relevant individual programs to share work samples.