

**MetaMS: Mississippi's Institute for the Future**  
**A Strategy to Change Systemically the Trajectory and Vision of the State**

**Overview and Additional Reading/Viewing:** Maximizing the resourcefulness and assets of the United Way of the Capital Area (UWCA), MetaMS seeks to catalyze the short-term to long-term use of strategic foresight/futurism, innovation and equity/social. UWCA is requesting \$250,000 over an 18-month period to articulate the following outcomes and deliverables:

- a) **Planning, Discovery and Predevelopment** exploring the potential structure, operations, budget, partnerships, driver/sustainer foci listed below as a) through i) and strategic import of MetaMS;
- b) **Requests for Proposals or Big Idea Competitions** incentivizing responses from the field in the enclosed possible drivers and sustainers;
- c) **Knowledge Production** disseminating of a description of the initial process, philosophy or theory of change and theory of action and other activities through a hard cover book, virtual and digital platforms, a podcast, convenings, an app, and other activities,
- d) **Narrative Change** evangelizing Mississippi as an epicenter of innovation, equity and futurism, projecting what the state should be addressing over the next 25 years and beyond; This is including professional learning sessions for the W.K. Kellogg Mississippi and New Orleans staff, senior leadership and others as designated; This includes partners such as the emerging Center for Inclusive Competitiveness-Strategic Foresight. and
- e) **Coalescing Influence** organizing the eight spheres of influence and the Fifth Sector (social innovation sector plus virtually, unsupervised and self-directed change-makers.) Additionally, UWCA will organize United Ways of Mississippi, the United Worldwide and United Ways in Washington, DC, Atlanta, and other affiliates. This includes collaborating the W.K. Kellogg to identify state and national philanthropic organizations to support MetaMS and to inform their strategic, equitable/just and operational functions.

To address systems and narrative change around these drivers and sustainers in the state:

- a) The future of equity, exercise of power, and social justice (This may be a distinct focus; however, ALL futures should infuse equity and justice.)
- b) The future of work, learning and the talent, including strategies that address the “brain drain,” K-12 opportunity gaps and adult learning
- c) The future of generational wealth and economic inclusion,
- d) The future of emerging technologies, emerging industries, and the innovation economy,
- e) The future of the family, including the possibilities of girls and women,
- f) The future of climate change/sustainability,
- g) The future of local impact in the context of global change,
- h) The future of vision and bi-partisan leadership, and,
- i) Other futures based on the applicant’s discretion.

Borrowing from the framework, Futures Launchpad, of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation grantee- partner, the Jackson Medical Mall Foundation, let us define some foundational terms that act as a guiding star and framework of the foresight movement-building upon which MetaMS is built:

- a) **Futurism:** Long-term planning that applies foresight to articulating a preferred future and understanding and shaping the factors that define and inform the future. This includes ensuring that the key values of the future such as equity, dignity and participatory democracy are evident, building upon the Kellogg Foundation’s values emphases. Central to directing this work is the creation of a futures learning lab and a preferred scenario specific to the RFP.

- b) **Innovation:** The introduction of new and breakthrough ideas, solutions, products, processes and services or the spreading of these to new audiences; While conventional initiatives of innovation and futurism often focus on technological advances and commercialization, MetaMS defines our work as social innovation, that is, moving the individual and collective outcomes of the community, using technology and other tools.
- c) **Equity:** By equity we mean both the removal of one's socioeconomic characteristics as predictors of one's life chances and the building of those factors, systems and institutions that facilitate one's success and potential. Greater still, we see equity as core to flourishing--the comprehensive sense of fulfillment in life. While deeply rooted in social justice, MetaMS commits to deeper capacity building and an inclusive culture of equity and perpetual dignity rather than a culture of humiliation.

Minimally, the RFP should address the futures of the next 10-100 years and may address either one or a combination of the above drivers. (Feel free to limit or prioritize the drivers, which may be a series of RFPs rather than one. For example, the impact of climate change on children and families, which is rarely discussed in Mississippi may deserve its own RFP. Additionally, the RFP can also so request considerations of futures foci, which are not listed and are generated by the applicants. Actually, this work may inform the foundation's strategic and programmatic direction in which RFPs are just one mechanism.

***Additional reading and viewing materials provide a context to this brief MetaMS concept paper include:***

- a) The Future of Social Justice in the Cyber Age (30 minutes)
- b) Remember Me: How Blues, Jazz and Gospel Change Philanthropy (30 minutes),
- c) Clark-Atlanta University Futurism (60 minutes), which is the most comprehensive description of the potential integration of futurism in higher education that I have seen or read,
- d) The Future of Educational and Social Justice (15 minutes); and,
- e) Prophetic Innovation, Learning Session video, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Pioneering Ideas, (54 minutes); Pioneering Ideas, the futurism learning and grantmaking of the foundation, invited me to share my framework, and based on the director's comments, my approach is quite different from the field. (Not for public dissemination); Prophetic Innovation prospectus/concept paper, ***Prophetic Innovation: Philosophy and Practice for a New Vision of Futurism***, submitted by request to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Pioneering Ideas, the foundation's futures unit, for the comprehensive development of Prophetic Innovation across the nation. Philosophically and practically, futurism, innovation and equity are seen as resident in communities as funds of knowledge and not just in the expertise, insights and perspicacity of professional futurists.

**Potential elements of the RFP/Big Challenge:**

**Eligible Organizations:** Public and Private Institutions of Higher Education in Mississippi or Higher Education Commissions; 501c3 organizations

**Purpose/Goal:** Articulate a futurism plan that would establish a futurism institute or sustainable collaboration on Mississippi's future that addresses the above drivers

**Institute Award for Winning RFP/Big Challenge:** \$3M over 3 years or smaller grants for special projects that would lead to an institute ; **Number of RFP/Big Challenge Planning Grants:** 5-10

**RFP/Big Challenge Planning Timeline: 12 months**

**Potential RFP Guidance/Big Challenge Grant:**

- a. Addresses geographic area:
  - i. Statewide or
  - ii. Sunflower County or Jackson or East Biloxi or any combination thereof (These Kellogg Foundation cities may choose to collaborate with each other and submit a joint proposal.)
- b. Addresses the development of interdisciplinary, cross-sector and intergenerational partnerships. Non-profits and higher education institutions must identify public and private higher education institutions as partners (The applicant must identify how this effort creates new, non-traditional and innovative partnerships.)
- c. Addresses narrative change to position the state and targeted locales as hubs of futurism, change, innovation and equity
- d. Articulates the need and opportunity
- e. Articulates the underlying philosophical theory of change and theory of action for the proposed project
- f. Identifies the specific futuristic driver or combination of drivers with the preferred future and impact identified over a specific timeframe referred to as a domain, 10-100 years
- g. Addresses both concrete practicable activities as well as speculative activities
- h. Addresses the impact of the futuristic drivers on vulnerable communities
- i. Articulates an environmental scan such as a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats and Trends analysis
- j. Addresses the logistics and operations of such an institute, including:
  - i. Location
  - ii. Virtual and in-person delivery
  - iii. Budget and sustainability
  - iv. Infrastructure and technological needs
  - v. Staffing/Talent
  - vi. Data collection
  - vii. Target population
  - viii. Specific systems or institutions (Higher education institutions may designate themselves
  - ix. Advocacy on policies that incentivize innovation, futurism and equity
  - x. Mechanism for identifying signals, trends, and mega trends and data minimally across Spiritual, Social, Technological, Educational, Economic and Political (SSTEOP) factors (Typically, STEEP refers to the last four domains.)
  - xi. Articulation of values that will be part of the future related to the drivers
  - xii. Scenario development of the applicant's preferred future for Mississippi
  - xiii. Identifies futurism, equity and innovation assets and initiatives in the geographic foci
  - xiv. Sustainability, including but not limited to fundraising
  - xv. Articulates a 12-month timeline
- k. Addresses Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity (VUCA)
  - l. Infuses equity in futuristic drivers
- m. Attends a grant preparation session featuring futurists and Kellogg Foundation staff

**David's Potential Role(s):** A) Co Project Investigator for the grant in collaboration with Dr. Ira Murray, CEO

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B) Architect of Prophetic Innovation, a culturally responsive futurism framework, and catalyst for futurism in Mississippi, C) Lead knowledge producer of written materials/books/tools and advisor on other forms of knowledge production, D) Advisor on required talent/expertise, networks/partners, technologies, evaluation, and E) Other to be determined