

Proposal for the Town of Miami Lakes

Needs Assessment of Special Needs Population July 2019

Contents

Organizational Background.....	3
Scope of Services	5
Fees	6

Organizational Background

The Jorge M. Pérez Metropolitan Center at Florida International University (FIU) is the leading urban "think tank" in South Florida established in 1997 as an applied research unit under the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA). The Center has a solid record of providing technical services to communities in the areas of economic development, housing, transportation, and land use planning. The Center's approach to delivering professional services is to take into account the unique needs of individual communities while adhering to recognized methodologies for data analysis and reporting. The Center houses the ongoing South Florida Regional Database Project. This project includes asset mapping, best-practice research, proprietary data, and full in-house Remote Sensing and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) capabilities. Moreover, the Jorge M. Pérez Metropolitan Center is a Census Information Center (CIS), which allows early access to release data and data with restricted use.

The Center's unique expertise is our ability to formulate comprehensive solutions to complex public policy issues. The Center's senior leadership has experience in strategic analysis, economic development, regional and municipal economic development, transportation analysis and planning, public forums, focus groups, surveys, and public opinion analysis. One of the Center's main advantages is its extensive experience in conducting behavioral research in South Florida in English, Spanish, and Creole.

Surveys, personal interviews, and focus groups conducted by an impartial and trustworthy organization with expertise in applied research guarantee that the information will be statistically sound, action-oriented, and insightful. These services improve policy issues among local governments, community organizations, and business establishments to assist them in their efforts to enhance customer service and satisfaction. The Center offers a full range of customized behavioral research services, including instrument development, sample frame design, participant recruitment, implementation, data management, and analysis.

The Jorge M. Pérez Metropolitan Center's overarching goal is to assist local governments and organizations in improving their internal processes, governance, and relationships with customers. To that end, the Center strives to develop research practices that will result in usable data. The Center has completed multiple applied research projects that specifically relate to the collection of information from residents, households, and various organizations – government, nonprofit, and business. These organizations have been consumers of the applied research produced by the Jorge M. Pérez Metropolitan Center. They have also provided feedback and perspective on the research, and policy discussion and direction in the subsequent recommendations. For example, the Prosperity Initiatives Study funded by Citi Community Foundation entailed both extensive research, as well as several stakeholder meetings at which the Center engaged local representatives from organizations such as Catalyst, South Florida Community Development Corporation, South Florida Health Foundation, Neighborhood Housing Services, and others.

The Center has also worked with many other foundations on various research projects. In 2007, the Center prepared the Monroe County Affordable Housing Needs Assessment for the Rodel Foundation of Key West. In 2012, the Center produced the Miami Soul of the Community Indicator Study for the Miami Foundation. In 2013, the Center prepared Affordability Foreclosed: The Rental Housing Challenge report for the Community Foundation for Palm Beach and Martin counties. In 2016, we produced the report

Progress and Unmet Challenges: Sant La's Profile of The Haitian Community of Miami-Dade, 2010-2015. In 2017 and 2018, BankUnited funded our Community Development research aimed to create a new community development framework for addressing persistent poverty and income inequality. All of these research endeavors demonstrate the broad reputation of the Jorge M. Pérez Metropolitan Center as the go-to source for objective, actionable research that can garner community attention and support.

Most recently, the Jorge M. Pérez Metropolitan Center has worked with the Miami Foundation, the City of Miami and other organizations, in the successful grant proposal to JPMorgan Chase for the inaugural AdvancingCities initiative. The Jorge M. Pérez Metropolitan Center, represented by Dr. Howard Frank (Center Director) and Dr. Maria Ilcheva will be engaged in the evaluation effort of the City of Miami efforts aimed at business and workforce development.

Maria Ilcheva, Ph.D. – Principal Investigator

Dr. Ilcheva is the Assistant Director of the FIU/MC with expertise in behavioral research, including public opinion polls, focus groups, and interviews. She has completed over 100 research projects with a public opinion component, for public, private and nonprofit organizations, on a variety of topics. Some public opinion research projects include a survey of Miami-Dade County residents, Liberty City area residents, Doral residents, and a detailed survey of Texas Gulf Coast residents. She has also managed a five-county resident survey on general awareness of local Metropolitan Planning Organizations. She has also led the collection of data and analysis of a South Florida Digital Literacy survey for the South Florida Workforce Investment Board, the 311 & Web Survey for Miami-Dade County and the annual hurricane preparedness poll funded by the Florida Legislature.

In addition to quantitative data collection via surveys, Dr. Ilcheva has administered focus groups and interviews for the collection of qualitative information. Some stakeholder interview and focus group projects include research with lenders participating in the Miami Housing Authority programs, community feedback on proposed development, hurricane mitigation and preparedness of Florida homeowners, surveys and interviews with caregivers of individuals with neurodevelopmental disorders, residents assessment of Miami-Dade Expressway Authority programs, resident perceptions of climate change and sea-level rise, and many others.

Dr. Ilcheva has also taught a graduate class on research tools and methodologies at the FIU School of International and Public Affairs for the last five years.

Helen Roldan, MPA is the Research and Outreach Coordinator and for FIU Jorge M. Pérez Metropolitan Center. Helen has experience in behavioral research via overseeing the recent neighborhood meetings and focus groups for the City of Miami's Affordable Housing Masterplan. She has also conducted a training opinion poll for the Jorge M. Pérez Metropolitan Center, to ascertain which new training programs the Center will offer. As a secret shopper for Miami's 211 call center, she has measured the quality of their services and gathered data for analysis.

Moreover, Helen has experience in collecting and analyzing data for projects such as Miami Dade County's Status of Women Report. She has also created reports for the Sea Level Solutions Center and met with community residents to get feedback on infrastructure solutions to sea-level rise in Miami.

Scope of Services

The FIU Jorge M. Pérez Metropolitan Center proposes to conduct a needs assessment of individuals with special needs in the Town of Miami Lakes, FL. The assessment will include a baseline analysis of individuals with both physical and neurological disabilities. It will identify any service gaps experienced by this community via focus groups and asset mapping. The research includes the following tasks:

Task 1. Data Analysis

The Center's research team will conduct a baseline analysis of individuals with disabilities in the Town of Miami Lakes. This data will include the population size, demographic information, and disability type by detailed age (including hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, and independent living difficulty).

Task 2. Asset Mapping and Gap Analysis

The asset mapping will include a scan of all services that are available to disabled individuals in the Town of Miami Lakes. For benchmarking purposes, the research team will also look at other cities in Florida of similar size and the array of services to disabled persons provided in them, both by the local government as well as by other nonprofit organizations. The purpose of the comparison is to assess differences that may point to the need for enhancing services in the Town of Miami Lakes. If possible, we will delineate the presence or absence of individual services. We will also identify models that include "one-stop" service provisions for individuals with disabilities.

Task 3. Literature Review

The Center will conduct a comprehensive review of existing research relevant to the needs of people with disabilities and their families. This research will provide the baseline for constructing a preliminary needs-based assessment supplemented with information obtained from Task 2. Within this task, the research team will also group the target population into relevant categories depending on the type of disability and its severity.

Task 4. Focus Group and Interviews

The research team will conduct one (1) focus group and 5-10 stakeholder interviews to explore the needs of the special needs community in the Town of Miami Lakes. The focus group will consist of both caregivers and high-functioning individuals experiencing disabilities. Participants will be asked to provide observations and recommendations regarding services to individuals with disabilities.

Task 5. Summary of Findings and Recommendations

The research team will review the deliverables of each task and prepare a summary of findings, highlighting the main points derived from each task. Relevant recommendations will accompany each significant discovery to address the potential challenges it identifies.

Fees

The project costs are \$10,000, including staff compensation for time and effort. The total cost includes all fees associated with the implementation of the focus groups and the production of the report.