



Request for Proposals

Contracting Services to develop and manage nonprofit and fund associated with the City of Grand Rapids' Cannabis Social Equity Policy in Grand Rapids/Kent County, MI

Deadline:

City of Grand Rapids, Office of Equity and Engagement will receive proposals until
12:00 PM (Noon) on November 7, 2022

Deliver to:

City of Grand Rapids
Office of Equity and Engagement

Attention: Stacy Stout

Email: inclusion@grcity.us

Email Subject Line: Seeding Justice GR Proposal

Q&A Sessions: The Cannabis Justice Work Group (CJWG) will host two Q&A Sessions (Monday, Oct 24th at 12 p.m. and Tuesday, Oct 25th at 5 p.m.) for potential contractors interested in responding to this RFP. These sessions are optional and not required to respond to this RFP. Please email inclusion@grcity.us by noon the day prior to the Q&A session you'd like to attend, with email subject line: Q&A Session Sign Up. You will receive the Q&A Session invite by 9 a.m. the day of the Session.



I. Purpose

The City of Grand Rapids Office of Equity and Engagement seeks a qualified person, organization or firm to be the lead in establishing and managing a new non-profit that will manage a social equity fund (funded by revenue from cannabis industry initially, with potential expansion of funding sources in the future) to invest in efforts that undo harm to communities who are disproportionately impacted by the “war on drugs.” Essentially the contractor selected will serve as the interim/founding director of the nonprofit for the first 18 months (or less if contract deliverables on completed earlier), with legal and additional support from the City of Grand Rapids during this time. This nonprofit will be independent of the City.

I. Background Information

The replacement of underground cannabis markets with licensed cannabis businesses has the potential to have an unprecedented impact on our consumer economy and social system at all levels. As we transition into the age of legalized cannabis, it is important that we prioritize the first objective listed in the City’s Strategic Plan, which is to “embed equity throughout government operations.” With that objective in mind, we are committed to creating equitable policies and opportunities that address the historical systemic and institutional injustices often connected to cannabis. To achieve success, it is critical that we support and incentivize a diverse, equitable, and inclusive cannabis industry, as well as investing in community-led solutions to undo the many ways the inequitable “war on drugs” harmed community.

The [Strategic Plan](#) for the City of Grand Rapids details our commitment to “advancing equitable outcomes and opportunities.” The Cannabis Social Equity Policy, and associated nonprofit and fund, are important extensions of that commitment.

One of the most important methods for ensuring the advancement of equitable outcomes and opportunities within the Cannabis Social Equity Policy is through the establishment of the Social Equity Fund (also referred to the Community Reinvestment Fund). This core strategy is a nonprofit separate in legal structure from the City of Grand Rapids, yet a close partner to invest into communities most targeted and negatively impacted by the “war on drugs.” The consultant for this work is tasked with ensuring the proper foundation is laid for the fund, in addition to operations and programming of the nonprofit.

For additional background information please see the following resources:

- [Video: Cannabis Social Equity Policy’s new Transfer System](#) (2:20:00 in the video)
- Cannabis Social Equity Policies:
 - [MIVEDA](#)
 - [CISEVA](#)
- [The War on Marijuana in Black and White](#)



- [Drug Policy Alliance](#)
- [Decolonizing Wealth Project](#)

II. About the Fund

The Social Equity Fund will be administered by the nonprofit and will receive funding from voluntary donation commitments, and may receive investments by the City from other sources. Contingent upon sufficient generation of funds, the fund will operate for the public benefit via the administration of social equity programs, grants, loans, and community investments.

III. Budget

This contract shall not exceed \$100,000 and is to cover all expenses to achieve the scope of work below. It is important to note that the nonprofit, once it is fully incorporated by the IRS and able to receive tax-deductible donations, will establish a board-approved budget to support future expenses, such as deep strategic planning and ongoing operational/staff expenses.

For the duration of this contract with the City, the contractor and nonprofit will receive strategic and additional support from the City's Cannabis Justice Work Group (CJWG) comprised of staff from the Office of Equity and Engagement (OEE), Planning and Development, Department of Law, and the Executive Office, with OEE being the lead department supporting this contract.

Note that significant engagement has already taken place within Grand Rapids communities disproportionately harmed by the war on drugs as to needs, solutions and ways to strategically invest. Extensive additional engagement to establish the funding priorities is probably not needed, and if it is, the cost for this could be covered with other funding sources from the Office of Equity and Engagement.

Outreach and marketing to communities once the fund is ready to receive applications/proposals for funding will be needed. Depending on the cost, this engagement may also be covered (fully or in-part) outside of this contract through additional funds from the Office of Equity and Engagement.

Be clear in the proposed budget on what costs are specifically for community engagement and may fall outside the contract that is not to exceed \$100,000.

IV. Scope of Work

As of the release of this RFP, the nonprofit – tentatively named Seeding Justice Grand Rapids – has its Articles of Incorporation successfully filed and Employer Identification Number (EIN) secured. The electronic filing for the 1023 IRS application and the Solicitation Application with the State of Michigan



are expected to be completed by the end of October 2022. While the nonprofit awaits federal designation from the IRS, the consultant would coordinate and manage education and outreach to diverse communities to recruit potential board members of the nonprofit, as well as facilitate (directly or through sub-contracting) board training, development, and creation of board structures, such as committees and governance policies. The initial board will be appointed by the City Commission through the City's regular appointment process, with expected appointment in February 2023, and board training, development and meetings beginning in March 2023.

While not a complete list currently, we anticipate core deliverables of this 18-month contract (mid-December 2022 through mid-June 2024) to include, but not be limited to:

- A. Create and implement authentic and equitable outreach and education to quickly recruit applications from potential board members, with an emphasis on Grand Rapids residents from communities disproportionately targeted and harmed by the war on drugs. [Dec 2022/Jan 2023]. CJWG available to support co-creation and implementation.
- B. Coordinate and facilitate nonprofit board meetings in partnership with the City of Grand Rapids project liaison and board chair.
- C. Create a meaningful learning experience for board members to established shared commitment to the nonprofit mission, working agreements, equitable and sustainable board governance, board fiduciary and oversight duties, board ethics, and understanding of the racist impact of the war on drugs and the harm it has caused, particularly to communities of color, as well as foundational knowledge of equity, justice, policy solutions to undo this harm, and the City's Cannabis Social Equity Program. The nonprofit and fund are key components to achieving the Program's equity goals and investments should align with those goals. OEE Director available to support diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) training.
- D. Establish nonprofit infrastructure and written policies of governance and operations. There are many templates available as a starting place for these policies and structures.
- E. Finalize official mission, vision, and values to guide the work of the nonprofit
- F. Facilitate the creation of an equity and justice-centered 2-to-3-year work & investment plan, with the board and based on community engagement of those most harmed by the war on drugs, for the nonprofit (and written standard operating procedures) to invest dollars from the Social Equity Fund into the community for maximum equity outcomes. Basically, what core strategies to undo harm caused by the war on drugs will the fund prioritize for investments. Funding priority examples include, but not limited to:
 - a. Increase diverse business ownerships within the cannabis industry and beyond
 - b. Increase diversity of suppliers and vendors within the cannabis industry
 - c. Build capacity of existing efforts in Grand Rapids addressing systemic and institutional racism.
 - d. Expungement assistance
 - e. Homeownership and wealth creation strategies



- G. Establish a fund development and sustainability plan for the nonprofit
- H. Establish a board approved annual budget for nonprofit operations and implement procedures and infrastructure to track and report financials. While having an adequate and reasonable amount for operations and implementation is justifiable, the bulk of the funds should be to invest in community through direct gives and/or programming.
- I. Help the board develop a recruitment and on-boarding plan for first Director. If the contractor or any of the contractor's team would like to be considered for the Director position, the contractor would need to excuse themselves from the recruitment/hiring process.

Essentially, this consultant would serve as the interim director of the nonprofit, with initial reporting directly to the City's Director of Equity and Engagement throughout the contract. The primary focus of the nonprofit is to support systemic change and programming to undo the harm caused by the war on drugs and to center communities most harmed in all efforts.

We anticipate this scope of work will take 18 months to complete. Early completion is acceptable. After the completion of this contract, we envision the nonprofit to shift completely to being independent of the City with its own paid staff.

V. Proposal Submission

Responses to this request for qualifications should be no longer than 15 pages. The proposal should include the following information:

- A. A summary of understanding of contract needs including any observations on contract expectations, opportunities or challenges, and equity in the cannabis industry.
- B. Names, qualifications and brief bio of the contractor or contract project team that will be leading this scope of work. Please note we recognize and acknowledge that not all "qualifications" are gained through institutional education and certifications. We welcome and encourage lived experiences and community involvement as part of the framework for qualifications.
 - If the trainer is multilingual, please list languages spoken.
- C. If applicable, please list confirmed, prospective, and tentative partnerships/subcontractors you will or may use for the scope of work proposed. Please list principal owner(s) name, name of business, city and state of business headquarters, estimated payment amount from total proposed budget, and scope of work the partner will perform.
 - It is okay to not know what subcontractors/partners will be used at this stage in the process.
- D. Statement indicating the willingness to grant City the right to concur with changes in personnel. This is typically a sentence only.
- E. A description of project management approach towards completing this work within an 18-month time frame. Please include a timeline with key milestones.



- F. Capacity to work remotely and facilitate engaging virtual trainings and meetings. Please also list digital platforms you plan to use. While we hope to have meetings in person with COVID-19 precautions in place, we understand that virtual gatherings may be necessary to protect the health of community.
- G. Line-item cost breakdown, total cost and proposed payment schedule.
- H. (Optional) Please provide any supplemental data or information which you consider pertinent to the project and selection process.
- I. Please share 2 to 3 professional references who can speak to the lead consultant's qualifications and experience to successfully complete this scope of work. Include name, organization, role with organization, email, and phone number of each reference.

VI. Proposal Evaluation Criteria

- The Office of Equity & Engagement, in partnership with the City's Cannabis Social Justice Workgroup, will evaluate proposals based on: perceived understanding of the harm caused by the war on drugs and its impact here in Grand Rapids; qualifications and experience with non-profit management, legal requirements and DEI training coordination; references; alignment to Cannabis Social Equity goals and desired outcomes; proposed scope of work completeness, clarity and creativity; willingness to grant City the right to concur with changes in personnel; City purchasing guidelines; and cost.
- This RFP is being published with notice that the City intends to award the contract based on best value (as determined by the City). This process allows respondents to offer the most appropriate solution(s) in order to meet the needs and requirements of the City. Best value procurement also means that the selection of proposal(s) shall be determined by which offers the best performance with criteria listed above.
- A proposal other than the lowest priced may be selected if the City determines, at its sole and absolute discretion that its interests will be best served by doing so.
- If the Office of Equity & Engagement (OEE) finds that one or more proposals should be given further consideration, the OEE may select one or more respondents to be invited to interview. The OEE may alternatively choose to make an award based solely on the Proposal Evaluation Criteria.
- While not ideal nor currently desired, the Office of Equity & Engagement reserves the right to contract with multiple organizations, firms and individuals to meet the needs within this scope of work.

VII. Tentative Project Schedule

- Oct 18, 2022 – RFP Issued
- Oct 24, 2022 (12 pm) – **Optional** Q& A Session with CJWG on this RFP



- Oct 25, 2022 (5 pm) – **Optional** Q& A Session with CJWG on this RFP
- Nov 7, 2022 (12 p.m.) – RFP Responses due to the City of Grand Rapids
- Nov 8 – 14, 2022 – Proposal Review and Tentative Interviews
- Nov 18, 2022 – Notice of Contract Selection
- Nov 21 – Dec 2, 2022 – Finalize Draft Contract (Extra time for holiday)
- Dec 13, 2022 – Contract Voted on by City Commission (Final Approval Needed)
- Dec 14, 2022 – Sign Contract and Begin Work
- Dec 2022/Jan 2023 – Outreach, Education and Recruitment of Board Members
- Feb 3, 2023 – Board Applications Due
- February 2023 – City Commission votes to appoint Board Members
- March 2023 – Board training, development and meetings begin
- July 2024 – All contract deliverables completed by this time.

The Cannabis Justice Work Group (CJWG) will host two Q&A Sessions for potential contractors interested in responding to this RFP. These sessions are optional and not required to respond to this RFP. Please email inclusion@grcity.us by noon the day prior to the Q&A session you'd like to attend, with email subject line: Q&A Session Sign Up. You will receive the Q&A Session invite by 9 a.m. the day of the Session.

VIII. Reporting Structure

The Director of Equity and Engagement will be the official contract manager with a small advisory team comprised of the City's Cannabis Manager (Planning and Development), Equity Analyst (OEE) and a representative from the Executive Office to help support and guide deliverables and to also maintain the cross-departmental collaboration of the City's Cannabis Social Justice Workgroup.

-----*This concludes the RFP.*-----