



Office of
Special Events
CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS



CITY OF
GRAND
RAPIDS
Mobile GR



Office of Equity
& Engagement
CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS

GRAND RAPIDS

SPECIAL EVENTS SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

EVENTS + PEOPLE = COMMUNITY & VIBRANCY

The City of Grand Rapids Office of Special Events (OSE) is committed to generating year-round, high-quality events and activities that welcome all and display our community's vibrancy and diversity. The mission of the OSE is to reinforce Grand Rapids' position as a destination city by providing fun, safe, equitable, and inclusive special events, activities, and experiences for all Grand Rapids residents and visitors to enjoy. We believe that events and activities can bring diverse groups together around a common vision, interest, or goal to share, fellowship, celebrate, raise funds, promote causes, and just have fun. Special events occur in all of our [Wards](#), creating an opportunities for the City to engage neighborhoods and create a sense of community. Events build a social, emotional, and physical connection and engagement between neighborhoods and the community. When events happen, our city is vibrant, tourists visit, and our local economy thrives.

The economic impact of the coronavirus on events has been devastating and the social and emotional impact has been even more damaging. The City Grand Rapids has made a commitment to supporting the events industry to boost the local economy and revitalize the sense of community and hope that attract so many to our town annually. We can accomplish this by providing supportive funding to creative, responsible, and safe events and activities that re-engage our residents and visitors, encourage community unity and pride, and promote equity.

The pandemic has disproportionately affected black and brown communities and exacerbated racial disparities and inequities. Additionally, it has impacted our lower social economic communities that engage in our open and free events. The pandemic, civil unrest, and social injustice issues combined to have a greater impact on those with lesser resources. But now, we are at a moment of opportunity. Collective action that brings together public, private, and social-sector stakeholders is the most hopeful way to create broad, permanent change. In response to this reality, events that directly impact equity as it pertains to location, vendor/artist/entertainer participation, cultural education & relevance, etc. will be given particular consideration.

Sponsorship Selection Process

Recipients will be selected by an Evaluation Committee comprised of the Special Events Manager, Mobile GR Representee, Office of Equity and Engagement Representee, and the Assistant City Manager. The selection committee will review the submissions based on the degree to which their impact aligns with the [City's Strategic Plan](#). The selected events will be recommended to the City Manager's Office for final approval. Sponsorship awardees will be announced thereafter.

Event Sponsorship Cycles

Cycle 1:

- Application available May of the current year, for events occurring July 1st through December 31st of the current year
- Application deadline is May 31st at 5 p.m. (late applications will not be accepted/reviewed)
- Award Notifications will be made by June 30th of the current year

Cycle 2:

- Application available November of the current year, for events occurring January 1st through June 30th of the following year
- Application deadline is November 30th at 5 p.m. (late applications will not be accepted/reviewed)
- Award Notifications will be made by December 31st of the current year

Use of Sponsorship Funds

The City of Grand Rapids desires to support activities that promote or bring the community together in its richness and vibrancy. The purpose of the GRSESP is to allow non-profit organizations to apply for funds to help defray the costs of *Community* level events that are open and free to the public. Typically, these funds pay for City fees related to barricade placement, police services, trash receptacles, permit fees, or facility rental. In other instances, the funds may support children's activities, educational workshops, advertising, printing, or local entertainment. The funding does not cover wages nor VIP, commercial, or private events. The sponsorship direct payment or City service credit may be applied towards the following:

- Special event expenses
- On-going program costs/expenses
- Special event application or permit fee
- Reservation fees for facilities and equipment owned by the City of Grand Rapids
- City staff time, if required, including GRPD services
- Liability insurance fees (if acquired from through the City of Grand Rapids)

Event Sponsorship Criteria

The City of Grand Rapids receives many requests for financial sponsorships. While supportive in spirit of all approaches, we are limited to providing financial support to events we view as most closely aligned with our core mission as defined in our strategic plan. Organizations that are part of the Grand Rapids Special Event Sponsorship Program (GRSESP) celebrate the unique identity that makes Grand Rapids a destination community. The program is intended to help organizations immediately activate special events and jump-start long-term growth as events become established.

The City of Grand Rapids is committed to supporting special events that strengthen community vitality and foster healthy, enriched lifestyles. Our GRSESP aids not for profit, non-governmental organizations in producing special events that enhance Grand Rapids' neighborhoods in the following ways:

- Support equitable economic impact through intentionally engaging BIPOC and diverse vendors
- Provide cultural and educational enrichment
- Create ownership and a sense of belonging
- Enhance pride and a sense of community
- Celebrate our unique and diverse history and heritage and promote a positive image of the City

The goal of the GRSESP is to reactivate events and re-engage the community, by revitalizing the local economy within the City of Grand Rapids. The GRSESP will support events that build the brand and add to the cultural vibrancy of Grand Rapids, as well as elevates community, and engages in economic recovery. Events must be organized by a **not-for-profit or nonprofit, non-governmental entity and be open and free for attendees, spectators, and participants and occur on public property**. Organizations that exist primarily for political purposes or for the purpose of providing funding to or managing other groups or entities are not eligible. Eligibility is determined by the criteria listed below; the event must:

- occur during the listed cycle timeframe
- be held on public property within the City of Grand Rapids
- be free and open to the public
- not be political in nature
- align with the City's mission and values of equity to enhance the Grand Rapids community
- must be in good standing with the City of Grand Rapids. This includes organizers and fiduciaries and is determined in part by the City's Treasurer department.
- complete the permit process in a timely manner and receive a special event permit from the Office of Special Events
- not have already occurred

The City of Grand Rapids will consider entering into sponsorship agreements that further the City's mission by providing monetary or in-kind benefits for special events conducted by external, nongovernmental groups in the city. However, the City recognizes that the public trust and perception of its integrity and impartiality may be damaged by sponsorships that: a) establish or are perceived as establishing an inappropriate association; are perceived to be politically oriented; c) are offensive to segments of its residents; or d) are aesthetically displeasing. Therefore, the City will only consider sponsorships in limited circumstances as outlined in this policy. The City may allocate lower levels of funding than requested based on staff review, number of applications received, and total amount of funding available.

Event Sponsorship Application Process

Our goal is to promote economic recovery through funding events that occur in the City of Grand Rapids. We would like to encourage a variety of diverse events and event planners. Second monetary or in-kind awards may be considered for organizers planning different events at different times of the year if funding is available. Applicants are encouraged to review the [City of Grand Rapids Strategic Plan](#) prior to submitting their application. The following items must be completed:

- Special Events Sponsorship Program Application
- Special Events Permit Application (if applicable)
- Site Map (if applicable)

Complete the GRSESP application in its entirety and submit it along with your event's sponsorship package and budget to the Office of Special Events. If applicable, a special event permit application including your event site map should be submitted to the Office of Special Events. An Evaluation Committee will review your application based on alignment with the City's vision, mission, values, and strategic priorities. The Special Events Manager will be the point person regarding the status of your application and next steps. If chosen for a GRSESP award, you will be required to sign an agreement with the City of Grand Rapids that includes a marketing plan and a strategy for capturing demographic information. Payment of any and all OSE sponsorship funds is contingent on the recipient signing and returning the agreement to the OSE

within 30 days of receiving it from the OSE. Funds will be awarded prior to the event when the special event permit requirements have been met with reconciliation requirements due no later than 30 days after the event. Sponsorship funds will not be disbursed without timely receipt of the signed agreement and failure to return the agreement within 30 days of receiving it from the OSE will result in loss of any OSE sponsorship funds under the agreement. Reconciliation requirements include a brief report that includes demographic information about your event, a financial statement fully detailing all incurred expenses for/by the event and all revenues collected for/by the event including but not limited to revenues collected prior to the event and during the event.

All items must be returned via mail or in-person by the above stated deadline. Applications must fully detail the event and include a budget showing the full event expenses that the applicant/sponsor/organizer anticipates incurring. The OSE reserves the right to decline any application or provide sponsorship at a modified level based on available funds. **No event is guaranteed sponsorship;** submission of a GRSESP application does not guarantee City funding or in-kind support. The City of Grand Rapids fiscal year is July 1 through June 30 of each year.

Event Sponsorship Alignment with Strategic Priorities

Below are some important considerations to think about when completing your application. This will help us identify how your work will align with the City of Grand Rapids strategic priorities. Please provide detail for each section as complete as possible. We understand that every event is unique and will be considered on both its merits and its potential impact. Before completing the GRSESP application, please review the [City of Grand Rapids Strategic Plan](#).

Economic Prosperity, and Affordability

- **Diverse, Equitable, and Inclusive**

Is this a cultural event? Will it incorporate and promote diversity (racial/ethnic, gender, sexual identity)? Are the event activities, leadership, and promotion culturally reflective of the community? How do you plan to attract a diverse audience?

- **Destination City - Year-Round**

How is your event a distinct reflection of Grand Rapids? How will it attract tourists and visitors to the city? Will it contribute to year-round activity, or activity during off-peak seasons? Will you be promoting the event outside of Grand Rapids?

- **Promotes Local Economy**

Will you be using local BIPOC and diverse vendors for paid services? Are you partnering with local businesses, merchants, or restaurants? Is your event (or elements of your event) going to take place in the Third Ward or one of the city's Neighborhoods of Focus? Will adjacent businesses benefit? Are you featuring local talent?

Engaged and Connected Community

- **Diverse Marketing Strategy**

How will you market to and through BIPOC communities? Are you planning a variety of tools (digital, social, print, radio, outdoor, etc.) for marketing efforts? How do you plan to engage with and reach those with limited English proficiency?

- **Accessibility**
Have you planned for easy access to families with children and older adults? Is the event accommodating for those with physical, mental, or neurological impairments?
- **Family-Friendly**
Have you planned for activities that will engage a variety of ages? Will you have nursing-friendly spaces? Have you partnered with schools, libraries or community-based organizations that serve youth and families?

Mobility

- **Mobility Options**
Will you be promoting alternative means of transportation access (Rapid, DASH, scooter/bike share, autonomous EVs, etc.)? How will you incentivize using these alternatives? Do you have safe, affordable, well-lit, and accessible parking options? How have you planned to avoid traffic and parking disruptions in neighborhoods?

Health and Environment

- **Healthy Community**
Will you offer health resources, information, or services (blood pressure, lead testing, women's health, COVID screening/testing/vaccination, etc.)? What measures are you taking to reduce or eliminate waste and long-term environmental impacts? Will you improve natural public spaces?

Safe Community

- **Public Safety**
Do you have sufficient security and risk management plans in place? Are there elements of your event that contribute toward building safer neighborhoods and/or positive relationships between the community and public safety agencies?

City of Grand Rapids Strategic Plan

Values

- Accountability
- Collaboration
- Customer Service
- Equity
- Innovation
- Sustainability

Vision Statement

- Grand Rapids will be nationally recognized as an equitable, welcoming, innovative, and collaborative city with a robust economy, safe and healthy community, and the opportunity for a high quality of life for all.

Mission Statement

- To elevate quality of life through excellent City services.

Strategic Priorities

- Governmental Excellence
- Economic Prosperity, and Affordability
- Engaged and Connected Community
- Health and Environment
- Mobility
- Safe Community

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Definitions:

- Special Event or Activity- an event held within the City of Grand Rapids which provides a high profile and significant economic benefit for the City through many estimated participants and tourists, and through planned/anticipated publicity generated.
- Sports Event- an event where the athletic skills of individuals or groups are showcased or where a champion for a level of competition is determined (i.e., provincial, regional, national, international).
- Festival- an event that provides for fun and enjoyment for the public and attracts widespread spectators and tourists to the City of Grand Rapids.
- Not-For-Profit – an individual or community organization producing events that financially do not benefit the person or organization.
- Non-Profit Group – an organization, whether or not incorporated, whose entire resources are devoted to social, educational, health, charitable, or any other non-profit purpose. The members, contributors and other resource providers do not receive any financial return directly from the organization.

Contact Information:

Return your completed *Grand Rapids Special Event Sponsorship Application* to **Intern, OSE** <oseintern@grand-rapids.mi.us> or mail to Grand Rapids Special Events Sponsorship Program, Office of Special Events, 1 Monroe Center St. NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503. Note, applications sent directly to City staff members maybe missed and therefore not evaluated.

If you have questions about eligibility or criteria, please contact Evette Pittman, Special Events Manager at epittman@grand-rapids.mi.us. For questions about applying, please contact our general email at Special Events specialevents@grand-rapids.mi.us.