



## **Community Services Division**

### **Identifying Business and Community Agency Partners for the Communities for All Initiative - Ongoing - Request for Letter of Interest Amended**

The Dakota County [Communities for All Initiative](#) fosters inclusive communities where individuals with disabilities are fully integrated and can participate in all aspects of community life. By breaking down barriers, promoting understanding, and building meaningful relationships, *Communities for All* aims to transform individual lives, strengthen community ties, and ultimately enhance the quality of life for all.

This initiative seeks to partner with community organizations, businesses, and other stakeholders to provide comprehensive support through training, education, technical assistance, and accessible resources. Additionally, microgrants will be made available to entities committed to evolving and improving their accessibility for people with disabilities. As Dakota County launches this initiative, this LOI seeks to identify community partners.

#### **Background:**

Inclusion for people with disabilities is critical to building equitable and thriving communities. Historically, individuals with disabilities have faced significant barriers to full participation in society, including physical accessibility challenges, social stigmas, and limited access to resources and opportunities. These barriers have often led to isolation and marginalization, preventing many from living their lives to their fullest potential. The importance of initiatives focused on inclusion lies in their ability to address these disparities by fostering environments where people of all abilities can contribute, connect, and feel valued.

#### **Scope, Goals & Outcomes:**

The *Communities for All initiative* envisions inclusive communities where everyone, regardless of their abilities, can fully participate and thrive because there are:

- **Inclusive Programs:** Developing and promoting activities and events that are welcoming to all, regardless of ability, and ensuring that everyone can participate meaningfully.
- **Respectful Attitudes:** Cultivating a culture of dignity and understanding where every person is treated respectfully.

- **Accessible Spaces:** Ensuring that all physical spaces are equipped with features that make them accessible to everyone.

To achieve these goals, the initiative will focus on several strategic actions:

- **Educating and Raising Awareness:** Offering educational opportunities to learn about various disabilities and the challenges people face, sharing this knowledge within communities, and working to dispel myths and misconceptions about disabilities. This also includes offering platforms for individuals with disabilities to share their stories and talents within the community.
- **Creating an Inclusive and Welcoming Environment:** Ensuring that everyone, including people with disabilities, feels welcomed and valued when they enter any store or community space. This involves promoting friendliness and openness while equipping staff with the confidence and skills to provide excellent customer service.
- **Advocating for Change:** Advocating for policies that promote inclusion, working with local governments to improve accessibility and services, and supporting businesses that actively hire and accommodate people with disabilities.
- **Ensuring Accessibility:** Creating and maintaining accessible buildings and public spaces.

## Target Population:

Ultimately, the *Communities for All initiative* focuses on people with disabilities and those directly connected to them. However, to achieve the initiative’s goals, this LOI seeks to identify two types of community partners:

1. *Those wanting to become more inclusive but needing assistance:* These are local businesses, schools, public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and civic groups. These are the places everyone in Dakota County, regardless of disability status, accesses and enjoys as a part of everyday life. However, too often, the buildings, services, and supports may not have been designed with our residents with disabilities in mind. These community partners want to become more inclusive and welcoming to customers and community members with disabilities but need assistance from others to move forward in their efforts. Assistance could be in the form of training for staff, program, or service re-design with a focus on disability inclusion, purchase of adaptive supplies, modifications to the property, etc.
2. *Those with expertise in disability inclusion who are interested in sharing their knowledge.* These are community agencies, organizations, or businesses with expertise in building positive relationships with people with disabilities, creating welcoming and accessible spaces, advancing advocacy initiatives, etc. Examples of services could include offering a training curriculum to dispel myths and stigma, organizing speakers' bureaus or volunteer organizations to share lived experiences, and providing expertise in physical space accommodations beyond just ramps, etc.

As Dakota County launches this initiative, this LOI seeks to identify community partners outlined in the Target Population section above. Partners wanting to improve inclusivity (#1) will be matched with partners

with expertise to share (#2) and funding will be provided. Some examples are provided, but responses should not be limited to these examples. Dakota County is interested in hearing all ideas from any potential community partner.

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR RESPONDING TO THE LETTER OF INTEREST

To access this Letter of Interest (LOI) and related documents online, visit the Dakota County [website](#).

<b>Timeline:</b>	<b>First Round</b>	<b>Second Round</b>	<b>Third Round</b>	<b>Fourth Round</b>	<b>Fifth Round</b>
<b>LOI Proposals Due Date (by 3:30 P.M.)</b>	<b>11/30/2024</b>	<b>1/30/2025</b>	<b>3/31/2025</b>	<b>5/30/2025</b>	<b>7/31/2025</b>
<b>Informational Meeting (11:00 A.M.)</b>	11/5/2024	1/7/2025	3/4/2025	5/6/2025	7/9/2025
<b>Questions Due Date (12:00 P.M.)</b>	11/5/2024	1/7/2025	3/4/2025	5/6/2025	7/9/2025
<b>Q &amp; A Posting Date</b>	11/8/2024	1/10/2025	3/7/2025	5/9/2025	7/9/2025
<b>Estimated Contract Start Date</b>	1/1/2025	3/1/2025	5/1/2025	7/1/2025	9/1/2025

### LOI Requirements:

An original electronic LOI proposal for initial evaluation must be received by 3:30 P.M. (CST), on the **LOI Proposals Due Date** as shown in the Timeline. This LOI will remain open on the Dakota County website and selections will be completed following the timelines above or on an as needed basis and/or as funding is available. The document should be emailed to Jenn Jech, Contract Specialist, at [Jenn.Jech@co.dakota.mn.us](mailto:Jenn.Jech@co.dakota.mn.us) and must be double-spaced and be no more or less than an 11-point font. The LOI must be no more than ten pages in length, including:

1. Cover letter (including company name, website, address, and name, phone and email of contact)
2. Responses to questions #1 - #3 below.

When responding to the Letter of Interest (LOI) for the Communities for All initiative, entities, businesses, and organizations should include the following elements to ensure a clear, concise, and complete submission:

#### 1. Introduction and Background:

- A. A brief overview of the respondent’s organization, mission, and core activities.
- B. A statement of interest that expresses why the organization is interested in participating in the initiative, how it aligns with its values or goals, and the organization's readiness to contribute to the success of the Communities for All initiative.

#### 2. Proposed Ideas:

- A. A description of the services or items the organization would like to provide or receive from others to support the initiative’s goals (e.g., training, technical assistance, public education, accessibility improvements, sensory equipment, etc.).
- B. An explanation of how these services will promote inclusivity and benefit people with disabilities within Dakota County.
- C. Budgets are not a required component of the LOI response. However, if you have established costs for the services you are interested in providing (e.g., hourly wages, set rates for training, etc.) or have obtained any cost estimates for your proposal, include that information.

**3. Experience and Expertise: (only complete if you identify as Target Population #2 - sharing your knowledge or expertise)**

- A. A summary of the organization’s experience and expertise in areas related to the initiative, such as working with people with disabilities, promoting inclusion, or implementing accessibility improvements.
- B. Specific examples of past projects, programs, or services that demonstrate the organization’s ability to contribute effectively to the initiative.

## **General Information**

### **Dakota County Contact:**

Jenn Jech  
Dakota County Community Services, Contracts Unit  
Email: [Jenn.Jech@co.dakota.mn.us](mailto:Jenn.Jech@co.dakota.mn.us)

### **1:1 Meetings:**

**If you are interested in having a direct conversation to obtain more information, please contact Deann Prouty at [deann.prouty@co.dakota.mn.us](mailto:deann.prouty@co.dakota.mn.us) or 651-554-6618.**

### **Questions and Written Responses:**

Questions regarding the content of this LOI must be received no later than 12:00 P.M. (CST), on the **Questions Due Date** as shown in the Timeline, and should be directed to Jenn Jech, Contract Specialist, by email at [Jenn.Jech@co.dakota.mn.us](mailto:Jenn.Jech@co.dakota.mn.us).

Initial responses will be provided to the inquirer as soon as they are available. All questions and written responses will be posted on the Dakota County website at [Request for Bids, Proposals, and Information \(www.dakota.us\)](http://www.dakota.us) no later than 3:30 P.M. (CST), on the Q & A Posting Date as shown in the Timeline.

*Note: The County will be having conversations with community partners and meeting with businesses and agencies throughout the time of this LOI posting, providing ongoing information in regard to the Communities For All Initiative. Questions and responses provided during those interactions may not be captured on the posted Questions/Answers on our solicitation website.*

### **Informational Meetings:**

Dakota County will hold informational meetings at 11:00 A.M. (CST), on the Informational Meeting Dates as shown in the Timeline, for interested providers/applicants to answer questions and provide consultation. Attendance at Informational Meetings is not mandatory, but it is highly recommended that potential respondents attend one of the scheduled meetings.

**Informational Meeting – Round 1 November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

MS Teams Link: [Join the meeting now](#)

**Call-In Option:**

**Dial:** [+1 651-273-3070,,265540579#](tel:+16512733070265540579#)

**Meeting ID:** 271 845 159 095

**Passcode:** P6Q2FA

**Informational Meeting – Round 2 January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**Call-In Option:**

**Dial:** +1 651-273-3070,,216851238#

**Meeting ID:** 231 400 576 818

**Passcode:** yj2tu7TZ

**Informational Meeting – Round 3 March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

MS Teams Link: [Join the meeting now](#)

**Call-In Option:**

**Dial:** [+1 651-273-3070,,493774501#](tel:+16512733070493774501#)

**Meeting ID:** 252 290 779 263

**Passcode:** 4tk3vP3i

**Informational Meeting – Round 4 May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

MS Teams Link: [Join the meeting now](#)

**Call-In Option:**

**Dial:** [+1 651-273-3070,,633437546#](tel:+16512733070633437546#)

**Meeting ID:** 257 699 883 575

**Passcode:** Rc7dD29q

**Informational Meeting – Round 5 July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

MS Teams Link: [Join the meeting now](#)

**Call-In Option:**

**Dial:** [+1 651-273-3070,,623926387#](tel:+16512733070623926387#)

**Meeting ID:** 252 019 011 483

**Passcode:** xA2aJ7Hv

**Important Notes:**

Dakota County anticipates entering into contracts with selected respondents (community partners) during this

LOI process in 2024 and 2025. Selected Contractors will need to comply with the County's procurement policies and contract terms, and assistance may be available to help respondents work through the County's procurement process (e.g., insurance waivers, document translation, etc.) prior to contracting with the County. Dakota County will not be liable for any expenses incurred by the potential provider in the preparation or submittal of the LOI.

Responders may be contacted by County staff to request additional information or to meet with County staff for further discussion.

County staff will evaluate the responses it receives from interested organizations and then determine whether it is prudent to proceed with the contracting process for these initiatives.

Sincerely,

Jenn Jech  
Contract Specialist