

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:

Unity Trail Project – Program Support Material Development

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KEY DATES:

- Release Date: 9/26/2025
- Submissions are due: 10/25/2025 at 4:30 p.m. by email to the project manager at anna.ferris@co.dakota.mn.us. No responses will be accepted after this date and time.
- See Schedule section below for more details.

SCOPE OF WORK

The Unity Trail will be a 5-mile loop made up of existing pedestrian pathways along the Mississippi River Greenway that, at different stops along the route, will highlight the contributions from Dakota County's diverse community members – and provide a space for educational activities. The project is a partnership of Dakota County Parks, Inver Hills Community College, ISD 199, City of Inver Grove Heights Parks and Recreation and Dakota County Library – Inver Glen Branch. The vision of the Unity Trail is to honor and recognize the contributions of Black, Indigenous and communities of color and emphasize the connection between racial equity, sustainability and environmental conservation. It will connect community spaces including the Mississippi River Greenway, library, schools and Inver Hills Community College to reach new and underrepresented users.

Unity Trail Project Components:

- Activities that highlight themes of the Unity Trail project, including opportunities for public educational materials and County programs and events.
- An interpretive trail that recognizes the contributions and experiences of Black, Indigenous and people of color. This will include seven interpretive points located on the Mississippi River Greenway as well at Inver Hills Community College, Inver Grove Heights Community Center, Simley Island Park and Inver Glen Library. The interpretive points will include mosaic art benches that celebrate and honor the contributions of Black, Indigenous and Communities of Color as well as sidewalk poetry.

During the project's public engagement phase, community members expressed a strong interest in public art as the format for the installations, increased seating and gathering spaces and themes that celebrate Black, Indigenous and people of color, including:

- Influential Black, Indigenous and individuals of color who have had an impact on the world
- Representation of a broad diversity of cultural groups.
- Locally focused stories, such as histories of the land, locally focused Indigenous representation, and stories of Black, Indigenous and people of color that live in Inver Grove Heights.
- Highlighting different countries and cultures through symbols such as flags, food, art, and history.
- Stories of activism, resilience, and social change that highlight fighting injustice and overcoming discrimination to make a positive difference in the world.

Due to the interest in both public art and additional seating spaces, the planned format for the installations is mosaic art benches, which depict the themes of the project, along with poetry inlays in the sidewalks near the installations. It will also include a permanent interchangeable Storywalk and the installation of native plants at the Inver Glen Library. The interpretive point at Inver Hills Community College is planned to include a Native Trail Project consisting of soft-surface trails and signage focused on the interpretation of culturally significant native plants, developed following the leadership and recommendations of Indigenous stakeholders. The goal of this project is to honor Dakota heritage and culture and educate users on the proper recognition of the land on which Inver Hills land resides. Installation of these components is planned for Spring-Summer 2026. A map of the locations of these future installations can be found here:

https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1TK6n2TrWRN9mE_dA_PGRiUsknb1OW8U&usp=sharing

This solicitation seeks qualified individuals to develop program support materials for the Unity Trail and its themes that can be used by the public to enhance their experience and provide educational information associated with the trail. The goals of this project are to connect youth and adults with the trail and its themes, making connections between racial equity, sustainability, and environmental conservation. These materials will be posted online to the project webpage so that they can be used by the public as free learning resources.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- Experience designing and implementing educational activities
- Understanding of the Unity Trail project and its themes, which are described on pages 1-2.

PROPOSAL EVALUATION RUBRIC:

Clarity and Engagement

- Proposed public educational activity or informational material should be clear and easy for the public to understand, follow and use.
- The activity should have a clear objective so that the public can understand what they can gain or learn from the activity
- Activities should be engaging to the public and encourage exploration of the Unity Trail and its themes

Unity Trail Incorporation

- Incorporates the trail spaces and themes into the activity
- Education related to the Unity Trail and its themes should be a central part of public informational material

Repeatability or Adaptability

- Activity can be adapted for a variety of ages or contexts
- Is repeatable

Connections to a Field or Subject Area

- Makes important connections with a specific field or subject area of focus. For example, biology, literacy, art, math, etc.
- Highlights racial equity/justice themes within the subject of focus
- Integrates the connections as substantial both to the Unity Trail and to the subject area

Age Groups

- Activities engage different age ranges to connect them to the Unity Trail and its themes.

Future Applicability

- Subject matter will be relevant for the foreseeable future
- Materials can be used in by the County and the public in multiple modalities/formats (e.g., can be in-person, hybrid, or online)

PROPOSER REQUIREMENTS:

- Applicants must be 18 years old or older.
- Current Dakota County employees are **not** eligible to apply. This includes full-time, part-time, and temporary and seasonal employees.
- Selected applicants must enter into a contract with Dakota County identifying the scope of work, payment for services, liability, responsibility for data that is created, collected or received in performing the services and other legal requirements. This will include granting the County a perpetual non-exclusive royalty free license to use, copy, display and permit public access to the educational support materials developed as part of the contract.

- Selected applicants who have not contracted with Dakota County previously, will be required to provide a W-9 form in order to execute a contract.
- After the completion of work, the contractor will send an invoice to Anna Ferris. County will make payment within thirty-five (35) days after the date on which the County receives the invoice.

SUBMIT A PROPOSAL:

To submit a proposal, please send a word or PDF document to anna.ferris@co.dakota.mn.us that includes the following:

1. Resume, CV, or document that describes your qualifications and experience developing educational activities.
2. Work Sample (educational activity developed for a class, public program, etc.)
3. Statement of interest (1 page maximum) that describes the following:
 - a. Why you are interested in the project.
 - b. Describe the public educational activity you propose developing, its goals, and intended outcomes.
 - c. How the materials you propose developing would meet the criteria on the rubric above.
 - d. The target audience for your activity (youth of a certain age group, parents, the public, etc.)
 - e. Your proposed amount of compensation.

COMPENSATION:

- Maximum amount of \$200 for creating a light activity for public use that celebrates the Unity Trail and its themes. Examples of a light activity could be a 1-to-3-page printable public educational activity or a plan for a 1-hour County program. This could be a plan for a County-led activity, with supporting materials, or a discussion-based activity.
- Maximum amount of \$500 for creating a robust County program activity that celebrates the Unity Trail and its themes. This would be the equivalent of 2-3 hours of public information and educational content or 3-to-6 pages of printable public activities.
- Maximum amount of \$1,000 for creating an activity packet of 6 or more pages that could provide the public with 4+ hours of activities that connect them to the Unity Trail and its themes.

TIMELINE:

- Friday, September 26, 2025 - Solicitation released.
- Wednesday, October 8, 2025; 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. – Pre-award meeting via Microsoft Teams
 - **Microsoft Teams** [Need help?](#)
 - [Join the meeting now](#)
 - Meeting ID: 295 933 716 333 5
 - Passcode: Wz36Tv3X
 - **Dial in by phone**
 - [+1 651-273-3070,,158262434#](#) United States, Hastings
 - [Find a local number](#)
 - Phone conference ID: 158 262 434#
 - For organizers: [Meeting options](#) | [Reset dial-in PIN](#)
- Monday, October 20, 2025 – Deadline for questions
- Friday, October 24, 2025, at 4:30 p.m.– Deadline for submissions.

PLEASE NOTE:

- All questions about this solicitation **must** be sent by email to Anna Ferris at Anna.Ferris@co.dakota.mn.us
- Dakota County staff will **not** be able to respond to questions via phone, in-person, or text. All questions must be submitted by email.
- Answers to all questions be posted in the addendum which will be uploaded to the Dakota County website.
- No submissions will be received after the final deadline of Friday, October 24, 2025, at 4:30 p.m.