

Request for Qualifications

Unity Trail Mosaic Art Bench Project in Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota

Dakota County seeks an artist or a team of artists to create and install seven mosaic art benches for placement at seven stops along existing paved trails and sidewalks in Inver Grove Heights. These stops will form the Unity Trail. The letters of intent and proposals should be submitted by one lead primary artist and include the qualifications of all artists on the team. The vision of the Unity Trail is to honor and recognize the contributions of Indigenous, Black and communities of color and emphasize the connection between racial equity, sustainability, and environmental conservation. The art included on the mosaic benches must represent this vision, including specific themes that were identified as important during the project's community engagement phase. Artists must be 18 or older.

Background and General Information

Unity Trail Project Background

The Unity Trail will be a 5-mile loop 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. Funding for the project is provided through the MET Council Equity Grant.

Identified Art Bench Sites

Benches will be placed in parks at each of the following locations in the City of Inver Grove Heights:

- Veterans Memorial Community Center
- Simley Island Park
- Dakota County Library – Inver Glen Branch
- Inver Hills Community College
- Three benches at locations along the Mississippi River Greenway in Inver Grove Heights

Solicitation Process

This Request for Qualifications (RFQ) will consist of a two-part process:

Part 1: Interested artists should submit an initial response to this RFQ by **Friday, August 15 at 4:30pm**. Finalists will be chosen in partnership with stakeholders of the project including representation from Inver Hills Community College, ISD 199, Dakota County Library and the City of Inver Grove Heights.

Part 2: Finalists will be notified and invited to prepare a full proposal, for which they will receive a \$400 stipend. As a condition of receiving the stipend, Finalists will be required to sign an agreement with the County granting the County a perpetual non-exclusive royalty free license to use, copy, display and permit public access to the submitted proposal. These proposals will be due on **Friday, September 26 at 4:30pm**. The selection committee representing key project and community partners will make the final selection. Participation in step two will be on invitation only.

Project Deliverables

Design

Development of artistic themes focused on topics that honor and celebrate Black, Indigenous and communities of color. Public engagement was conducted that identified priority topics. The artist should use the topics identified in public engagement to identify the primary interpretive themes to be included in the art.

1. Influential Black, Indigenous and individuals of color who have had an impact on the world, particularly those who impacted social change, but also individuals who influenced science, athletics, the arts, or literature.
2. Representation of a diversity of cultural groups including Indigenous representation, Black and African American representation, Latino/Latine/Latinx/Hispanic representation, Somali and East African representation, Asian American and Pacific Islander representation and representation of people of color in general.
3. Locally focused stories, such as histories of the land, locally focused Indigenous representation, stories of Black, Indigenous and people of color that live in Inver Grove Heights, including truthful and uncomfortable stories.
4. Highlight different countries and cultures through flags of different nationalities, and symbols of culture including food, art, and history.
5. Stories of activism, resilience, and social change such as fighting injustice and facing discrimination to make a positive difference, fighting for rights, the struggles faced by immigrants and people who made an impact.

To view a summary of the feedback shared during public engagement, visit this link: [Unity Trail Presentation](#)

- Maximum bench length, 6 feet. Entire bench design must stay within 6 feet. Additional sculptural elements can be included if they are either part of the bench or self-standing as long as they stay within 6 feet.
- The benches at Simley Island Park and Veterans Memorial Community Center (two total benches) should be backless flat-top benches. The other five benches are flexible in format.
- Must accommodate up to 500 pounds for seating.
- Height should 17-19 inches off the ground as per ADA accessibility requirements.
- Mosaic bench must be permanent (should last for minimum 25 years) and artist must be able to explain the durability of the artwork for Minnesota weather conditions including snow, rain, salt and other elements.
- Designs will be reviewed by the Dakota County staff and project partners.

Fabrication & Installation:

- Bench must include mounting mechanism for surface installation to a concrete pad. A concrete pad will be installed at each location.
- Artist is responsible for artwork transport to designated location and for final installation.

Process

- Administrative tasks associated with the artwork development, including site visits, meetings as needed, correspondence, and coordination with partners.

Student Engagement

Artists selected to develop a full proposal should include a plan for engaging students from Simley High School, including the student affinity groups and art students, and Inver Hills Community College in the design and/or creation of the benches. Please describe how you would involve students in the project in a meaningful way.

Budget

Total project budget for all seven benches is \$70,000 (\$10,000 per bench), inclusive of all costs, including student engagement, conceptualization, fabrication, delivery, installation, all material costs, and any additional expenses. Selected finalists will be paid \$400 for proposal development.

Selection Criteria

- Quality of artist's past work as demonstrated in the submitted materials.
- Indication that artist or artist team has the expertise to undertake project solely or can demonstrate a plan for accessing outside expertise to successfully complete the proposed project.
- Grasp of project requirements - Understanding of the Unity Trail project vision and themes and commitment to representing them meaningfully in the project.
- Ability to meet project timeline.
- Demonstrated ability to engage with students and project partners to inform design, content, and fabrication.
- Fee estimate – understanding of total project cost toward the project deliverables.

Submission Requirements

Step 1: Interested artists should submit the following materials by email to anna.ferris@co.dakota.mn.us by **Friday, August 15 at 4:30pm.**

- Letter of Interest: A letter of interest of 500 words maximum, with contact information, artistic approach and why your artwork would be compatible for this project and would celebrate the vision of the Unity Trail, which is to honor and recognize the contributions of Indigenous, Black and communities of color and emphasize the connection between racial equity, sustainability, and environmental conservation.
- Images: Up to 5 images of previously completed projects showing your experience with public art projects including title, descriptions, location, and date of work. Please select images that express your technical ability and artistic vision.
- Resume: Artist resume that describes your art background and experience, maximum two pages.
- Format: One combined PDF document, please.

- Professional References: Two professional references including email, phone number, and the nature of your professional relationship.
- Submission process: Submissions must be sent to: anna.ferris@co.dakota.mn.us. All applications will receive an e-mail acknowledgement within five days of receipt.
- Questions: Please direct questions about the project to Anna Ferris at anna.ferris@co.dakota.mn.us.

Step 2: Finalists will be notified and invited to submit the following by email to anna.ferris@co.dakota.mn.us by **Friday, September 26 at 4:30pm**:

- Develop a proposal for the benches including drawings or mock-ups of the content you would include on each of the seven benches.
- The proposal should include a student engagement plan that describes how you would engage Simley High School and Inver Hills Community College in the design and/or creation of the benches.
- Project plan for the creation and content of the benches including timeline, budget, materials and supplies and installation.
- Proposal must explain the durability of the mosaic benches for Minnesota weather conditions and a plan for any ongoing maintenance needed after their installation.
- Include all fees for the project, including the design, fabrication, delivery and installation of the artwork.
- Describe how the artist or artist team will complete the work within the timeframe outlined by this Request for Qualifications.

Submission Process

E-mail submissions must be sent to: anna.ferris@co.dakota.mn.us. All applications will receive an e-mail acknowledgement within five days of receipt. Please direct questions about the project to Anna Ferris at anna.ferris@co.dakota.mn.us.

Joint Submissions

Artists may propose as a collaborative with one artist as the primary contract, artists may not apply both as an individual and collaboratively. To submit with another person or persons, one person must act as the primary and another as the subArtist. Please indicate in your application which person would be the primary and which would be the subArtist(s). Please include the qualifications of all parties submitting together.

Automobile Liability

Business Automobile Liability insurance covering liability for Bodily Injury and Property Damage arising out of the ownership, use, maintenance, or operation of all owned, non-owned and hired automobiles and other motor vehicles utilized by Artist in connection with its performance under this Contract. Such policy shall provide total liability limits for combined Bodily Injury and/or Property Damage in the amount of at least \$1,000,000 per accident.

Such policy shall include Dakota County, its officers, employees, and agents as Additional Insureds thereunder.

General Liability

"Commercial General Liability Insurance" coverage, providing coverage on an "occurrence" basis. Policy shall include, but not be limited to, coverage for Bodily Injury, Property Damage, Personal Injury, Contractual Liability (applying to this Contract), Independent Artists, "XC&U" and Products-Completed Operations liability (if applicable). An Insurance Services Office "Comprehensive General Liability" policy which includes a Broad Form Endorsement GL 0404 (Insurance Services Office designation) shall be an acceptable equivalent policy form. Claims-made coverage is acceptable.

A total combined general liability policy limit of at least \$1,000,000 per occurrence and aggregate, applying to liability for Bodily Injury, Personal Injury, and Property Damage, which total limit may be satisfied by the limit afforded under its Commercial General Liability policy, or equivalent policy, or by such policy in combination with the limits afforded by an Umbrella or Excess Liability policy (or policies); provided, that the coverage afforded under any such Umbrella or Excess Liability policy is at least as broad as that afforded by the underlying Commercial General Liability policy (or equivalent underlying policy). Coverage under such policy may be subject to a deductible, not to exceed \$25,000 per occurrence. Artist agrees to maintain such insurance for at least one (1) year from Contract termination.

Such policy shall include Dakota County, its officers, employees, and agents as Additional Insureds thereunder.

Evidence of Insurance

Artist shall promptly provide Dakota County with a Certificate of Insurance prior to commencement of any work. At least 10 days prior to termination of any such coverage, Artist shall provide Dakota County with evidence that such coverage will be renewed or replaced upon termination with insurance that complies with these provisions.

Policies

All policies of insurance shall be issued by financially responsible insurers licensed to do business in the State of Minnesota by an insurer with a current A.M. Best Company rating of at least A:VII.

Release and Waiver

Artist agrees to rely entirely upon its own property insurance for recovery with respect to any damage, loss, or injury to the property interests of Artist. Artist hereby releases Dakota County, its officers, employees, agents, and others acting on their behalf, from all claims, and all liability or responsibility to Artist, and to anyone claiming through or under Artist, by way of subrogation or otherwise, for any loss of or damage to Artist's business or property caused by fire or other peril or event, even if such fire or other peril or event was caused in whole or in part by the negligence or other act or omission of Dakota County or other party who is to be released by the terms here of, or by anyone for whom such party may be responsible.

Artist agrees to affect such revision of any property insurance and Workers Compensation policy as may be necessary to permit the release and waiver of subrogation agreed to herein. Artist shall, upon the request of Dakota County, promptly provide a Certificate of Insurance, or other form of evidence as may be reasonably requested by Dakota County, evidencing that the full waiver of subrogation privilege contemplated by this provision is present; and/or, if so, requested by Dakota County, Artist shall provide a full and complete copy of the pertinent insurance policy(ies).

Indemnification

In addition to the provisions in Sections of this Contract, artist agrees to defend, indemnify and hold harmless the County, its officers, employees and agents against any liability, claims, charges, damages, costs, judgments, or expenses, of any nature whatsoever, including reasonable attorneys fee, arising from or attributable to Artist's, its officers, employees and agents, actual or alleged:

- A. Intentional, willful, or negligent acts or omissions; or
- B. Actions or omissions that give rise to strict liability; or
- C. Breach of contract or warranty.

Artist agrees to perform all services and make all payments, the legal obligations for which arise as a result of its services in connection with this Contract, including obligations to third persons and government entities.

Contract

The selected Artist will be required to execute a contract with the County defining the parties' responsibilities. The County will use its standard professional services contract, a copy of which will be available on request.

Timeline

- Friday, July 25, 2025 – Request for Qualifications released.
- Tuesday, July 29, 2025; 4:00pm-6:00pm – Pre-award meeting - Virtual Meeting Via Teams can be accessed at the link below:
 - **Microsoft Teams** [Need help?](#)
 - [Join the meeting now](#)
 - Meeting ID: 279 554 743 714 1
 - Passcode: 4PN9F2ao
 - **Dial in by phone**
 - [+1 651-273-3070,,639910229#](#) United States, Hastings
 - [Find a local number](#)
 - Phone conference ID: 639 910 229#
- Monday, August 11, 2025; 4:30pm – Final submission of questions about the letters of interest (Step 1)
- Friday, August 15, 2025; 4:30pm – Letters of interest due by email (Step 1)
- Wednesday, August 27, 2025 – Finalists notified and invited for proposal development

- Monday, September 22, 2025; 4:30pm – Final submission of questions about the proposals (Step 2)
- Friday, September 26; 4:30pm – Final proposals due by email (Step 2)
- Thursday, October 10, 2025; 11:00am-3:00pm – Finalist interviews at the Dakota County Western Service Center
- October 2025 to June 2026; Project implementation. Project must be completed by June 30, 2026. The implementation timeline is the following:
 - Fall-Winter 2025: Student and partner engagement and mosaic art bench design.
 - Spring 2026: Mosaic art bench creation and installation at Veterans Memorial Community Center, Simley Island Park, Dakota County – Inver Glen Branch, Inver Hills Community College and three benches at locations along the Mississippi River Greenway in Inver Grove Heights (7 total benches)

** Timelines are subject to change.*