



**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)  
STRATEGIC FACILITATION & WORKPLAN DEVELOPMENT**

## **1. Background**

The Southtown Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA) is seeking proposals from qualified facilitators or consulting teams to support the Board and staff in clarifying our strategic and tactical focus areas for the next phase of the organization's work.

The Southtown CIA has been in existence for several years and has reached a point of organizational maturity marked by increased revenue capacity, a strong standing in the community, and emerging opportunities for long-term impact. This moment feels particularly timely given:

- The creation of a new Executive Director role to drive new investment
- Growing interest and potential around the Southside Creekway project
- The CIA's expanding ability to move from foundational efforts to strategic investment

The Board is seeking a structured, facilitated process that helps us think ahead, prioritize effectively, and align our resources toward shared outcomes.

## **2. Current State, Challenges & Needs**

The Southtown CIA is transitioning from an early-stage organization to one that can operate more strategically and proactively.

We are now positioned to:

- Make more intentional decisions about where and how to invest
- Align our work around equitable development, local ownership and wealth creation, and small business support
- Translate high-level goals into clear priorities and actionable steps

At the same time, the CIA faces several challenges that must be considered as part of this work:

- Large geographic boundaries with significant need related to development, occupancy, and ongoing operations across multiple business corridors
- Limited coordinated and targeted support in area of focus
- A need to be highly selective and strategic to achieve maximum impact with finite resources

The Board believes that many potential strategic focus areas already exist within current (TIF Plan), and that the work of this engagement should emphasize refinement, prioritization, and alignment, rather than starting from scratch.

### **3. Desired Outcomes & Deliverables**

We are emphasizing a tactical, decision-ready product, not simply a planning exercise.

The goal of this engagement is to walk away with an agreed-upon plan of impactful priorities and investments, along with a clear path to operation and implementation.

At minimum, the engagement should result in:

#### **1. Strategic Focus Framework (3–5 Years)**

- A small number of clearly articulated priority areas to guide investments, partnerships, and programming
- Alignment with equitable economic development, local ownership and wealth creation, and business support goals
- Recognition of capacity constraints and external conditions

#### **2. Multi-Year Operational Workplan**

- Specific, actionable initiatives to go along with focus areas
- Clear sequencing and prioritization
- Practical guidance on how priorities move from strategy to execution
- Identification of roles (Board vs. staff) where appropriate

#### **3. Facilitated Engagement Process**

- One or more facilitated working sessions with the Board (and staff, as appropriate)
- Structured conversations that help clarify the problem, the opportunity, and the most effective solutions
- A process that balances vision, realism, and accountability

Proposers are encouraged to recommend a scope and process that best achieves these outcomes.

#### **4. Resources to Inform the Work**

The selected facilitator will be expected to review and incorporate the following existing materials:

- [Southtown CIA Tax Increment and Development Plan](#)

- [Southtown Business Area Specific Plan](#)
- [Equitable Economic Development & Mobility Strategic Plan](#)
- [Southtown Corridor Improvement Authority Map](#)

These documents should serve as foundational inputs, with further focusing and refinement occurring through the facilitated sessions.

## **5. Ideal Proposer Qualifications**

While not required, preference may be given to proposers who demonstrate:

- Experience facilitating public-sector, quasi-public, or place-based organizations
- Familiarity with equitable economic development concepts and strategies
- Strong ability to translate strategy into clear, actionable priorities and workplans
- Use of user-centered, design thinking, or other creative facilitation approaches to help clarify complex problems and develop practical solutions
- A facilitation style that is inclusive, disciplined, and outcomes-oriented

## **6. Proposal Requirements**

Proposals should include:

- 1. Approach & Methodology**
  - Proposed facilitation process
  - How the proposer would move from existing plans to refined strategic focus and tactical priorities
- 2. Scope of Work & Deliverables**
  - Anticipated sessions, outputs, and timeline
- 3. Relevant Experience**
  - Brief examples of similar engagements
- 4. Proposed Budget**
  - Total cost and any assumptions
- 5. Team & Point of Contact**

## **7. Evaluation Criteria**

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Approach & Methodology (30%)
- Relevant Experience (25%)
- Budget & Value (20%)
- Timeline & Feasibility (15%)
- Commitment to Equity & Inclusion (10%)

## **8. Timeline (Proposed)**

- RFP Issued: January 26, 2026
- Questions Due: February 9, 2026
- Proposals Due: February 23, 2026
- Review and Selection: March 11, 2026
- Anticipated Project Start: March 16, 2026

## **9. Submission Instructions**

- Proposals must be submitted to the Economic Development Department at [econdevshrd@grand-rapids.mi.us](mailto:econdevshrd@grand-rapids.mi.us) or mailed to 300 Monroe Ave NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503 by 11:59 PM on **February 23, 2026**.
- Proposals must be submitted in PDF format
- For questions, email Verah Narh Kamara at [vnarh@grcity.us](mailto:vnarh@grcity.us)