

# AGENDA



## GR Forward GOAL 4 ALLIANCE

### Members:

Ace Marasigan • Alex Caceres • Ana Jose • Attah Obande • Brandy McCallum • Brianna Vasquez de Pereira • Caylie Peet • Farida Islam • Jason McClearen • Jorge Gonzalez • Kara Wood • Kareem Scales • Kristian Grant • Mark Breon • Omar Cuevas • Scott Stenstrom • Tim Mroz

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August 20, 2019

3:00p – 4:00p

29 Pearl Street, NW Suite #1

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of July 16, 2019 Meeting Minutes\*
3. Retail Grant Proposal: Mel Styles\*
4. Purchasing/Contracting Policy Discussion
5. Other Business
6. Public Comment
7. Next Meeting – September 17, 2019
8. Adjournment

**\*Denotes Action Item**



## Goal 4 Alliance

July 16, 2019

1. Call to order: Jorge Gonzales called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm
2. Members Present: Jorge Gonzalez, Kristian Grant, Ana Jose, Attah Obande, Alex Caceres, Kareem Scales, Caylie Peet, and Brianna Vasquez de Pereira

Members Absent: Farida Islam, Ace Marasigan, Brandy McCallum, Jason McClearen, Scott Stenstrom, Mark Breon, Kara Wood, Omar Cuevas and Tim Mroz

Others Present: Kyama Kitavi, Marion Bonneaux, Amanda Sloan (DGRI Staff)

3. Approval of Minutes  
Mr. Obande, supported by Mr. Scales, motioned to approve June 18, 2019 Meeting Minutes. None opposed. Motion approved.
4. Revised Retail Grant RFP Review  
Mr. Gonzales stated we will review an updated RFP with an open discussion to be sure we are all of the same mindset as we prepare to receive additional proposals. The DDA just approved funding of \$45,000 to Mosby's Popcorn through this RFP. Mr. Gonzales stated he and Ms. Grant were pleased to inform the DGRI Board of Advisors of the impact Goal 4 is making downtown in supporting Tamales Mary, Ambiance, and now Mosby's Popcorn. Kyama Kitavi stated we have looked at 4 proposals so far this year and gained some clarity on this process. This RFP was purposely vague and intentionally open ended but meant to invoke 2 types of proposals: vacant retail space activation and incubator space for resource providers. Administratively going through this process, we have learned more about how eligible funds can and cannot be used. This proposed updated RFP is now focused on individual businesses and provides more detail on what we are looking for in a proposal. Funds awarded will be determined by eligible uses, notably a maximum of 50% of lease support for up to 18 months. Mr. Kitavi stated this program will not support the build out or renovation of a space but added that may be available through other DGRI programs such as the Downtown Enhancement Grant (DEG) or Activate This Place Grant. Businesses proposing to do permanent

improvements to a space, internal or external, would be eligible, assuming it is within public space, though we may still need further legal interpretation to confirm. Some additional adjustments to this RFP are in regards to Proposal Requirements. Mr. Kitavi stated that by providing explicit details in this proposal, any presentation to the board should be clear and concise. Added to the Description of Approach is the request to highlight the uniqueness and expected impact of this business. Relevant experience should include education, business experience, and utilization of other Entrepreneurial Support Organizations. Mr. Kitavi stated business support should happen before they come to us with this RFP being an additional support. We will want to know if they have worked with other ESOs and implemented any directives, also, any other technical assistance resources that have been used. A clear budget outline that lists fund sources is being requested under project costs. This will be important as far as understanding all of the moving pieces of a project and if our support will make the appropriate impact to move forward with the opportunity. This likely means we will be able to fund less in terms of dollars per project, but support more businesses in total. Mr. Kitavi asked the board if any other details should be requested.

Ms. Grant asked if there is a way to leverage a referral or somehow streamline the process for businesses to apply for additional grants at DGRI. Mr. Gonzales stated the number one reason businesses state they do not want to open a retail establishment downtown is the high cost of rent. If we can address this issue with our RFP and partner with another program, such as the DEG for buildout, we can make a greater impact for minority owned businesses. Mr. Kitavi agreed, stating we do need to still consider how we can assist with buildout, even if that means partnering with other organizations. Mr. Caceres stated he supports the idea that we focus on rent support. This gives a clear opportunity that be shared with the community and allows us to connect businesses to other ESOs for resources. Mr. Gonzales and Mr. Kitavi agreed. Mr. Scales stated it is good to provide this additional clarity on what are we looking for in a proposal as we move forward. Mr. Kitavi stated he will be meeting with Jessica (legal) this week for final feedback. If anyone on the board has other notes or suggested changes to this RFP please provide that to Mr. Kitavi as soon as possible.

5. Contracting/Purchasing Policy Discussion

Mr. Kitavi stated an ongoing conversation within the DDA has been determining a process for acquiring a diverse set of applications for contracts and formulating a policy for making equitable purchases. There is a small working group for this discussion that includes Diane Sieger, Rick Winn and Jermain Eddie. Larger contracts are mostly always in conjunction with other organizations but we could make an effort to break up those contracts to allow for minority contractors to submit competitive bids. At this point there is no clear concrete plan other than to be this voice and share RFPs on a broader scope in order to get in front of more minorities. Mr. Gonzales stated with Goal 4 being the most diverse alliance, he would love for this board to be a voice in this discussion if there are suggestions or recommendations that we can provide to the DDA regarding this policy. Start Garden attempts to diversify contracts and purchasing having

implemented a section on every purchase agreement inquiring if it is a minority owned business. Mr. Gonzales stated we must be intentional with every order we make from hiring cleaning crews to purchasing toilet paper.

Ms. Grant stated several years ago as a steering committee involved contractors in the renovation of Calder Plaza, first to engage the community and second to design the project, there were no options to engage or hire people of color. We need to reevaluate this process. This initial conversation was around hiring consultants, but we can apply this to making purchases from minority owned businesses as well. The official policy should include language that we will partner with organizations that allow people of color to be at the table. Mr. Gonzales stated the current policy is basically about price and obtaining multiple quotes; it provides no direction on diversity or inclusion of minorities. Mr. Kitavi stated we would love to have your feedback and recommendations for integrating that into this policy and best practice.

6. Discussion:

Mr. Kitavi stated on August 29<sup>th</sup> the Small Business Expo will take place with two discussion panels (one for retail providers and another for small business owners). This is free to attend as a business owner or \$25 to attend as a vendor or provider. On August 24<sup>th</sup> The City is hosting a class on how to become a registered vendor. Aug 27<sup>th</sup> is Demo Day 100 ideas.

7. Next Meeting- August 13, 2019

8. Public Comment:

None

9. Adjournment:

Jorge Gonzalez adjourned the meeting at 3:53 pm.

Minutes taken by:

Amanda Sloan

Administrative Assistant

Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.



## **RETAIL BUSINESS ATTRACTION, INCUBATION & DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION**

**Business Name:** Mel Styles LLC

**Business Owner:** Archie Sudue

**Building Location:** 315 S. Division Ave Grand Rapids, MI 49503

# MEL STYLES



## BEST QUALITY TAILORED SUITS

### 1. Description of Approach (a summary of your venture, strategy, partnerships, and/or distinguishing points of the proposed action to achieve community goals)

- As a fashion guru and avid suit wearer I quickly noticed that the prices of custom fitted suits aren't remotely affordable for young professionals who are entering the workforce. Furthermore, I noticed that the average costs to rent a suit is more affordable, but the suit is not fitted to your body, and you do not get to own the suit(why rent when you can own the suits for similar price). There were too many times that I experienced purchasing a suit that was overpriced and oversized. Many of my peers experienced the same thing, and this deterred them from purchasing and wearing suits. I also noticed that the way young people dress is lacking professionalism, as a young professional and manager I noticed young men coming in for job interviews lacking the proper attire, and if they were dressed professionally, they were not wearing their suits correctly. I decided to tap into this niche market and develop suits that are custom fitted and affordable for your average young professional. I decided to take this market a step further and offer education to my customers on how to wear your professional attire. From styling my customers to teaching them how to put

clothing together, manage accessories, and even when to button your suits jacket, etc.

- With the success of going a step further for my customers, I received a lot of positive reviews from customers that appreciated me helping them pair their suits with appropriate accessories and how to wear their suits. I was inspired to continue to encourage young professionals to take their professionalism seriously. With the help with my business associate Ibrahim Foryoh, we developed a mentorship program that is conducted for male high school seniors and freshmen in college. Ibrahim is a seasoned recruiter and knows exactly what employers are looking for in the workforce. With his recruiting expertise we simply stress the importance of a successful appearance when pursuing employment opportunities, conduct interview preparation, provide wardrobe maintenance and styling tips, as well as providing affordable custom fitted suits. We aim to change the culture of how young professionals dress in Grand Rapids by inspiring them to dress well and providing affordable suits for them to do so. Downtown Grand Rapids has many young professionals and people entering the workforce. With many colleges downtown and medical mile, Mel Styles has many clients in the downtown area and can utilize the culture that is already present in Grand Rapids by providing affordable custom suits which is currently not offered anywhere downtown for a realistic and affordable price for young professionals.
- Having marketed my business nationwide through fashion shows and prominent social media influencers with millions of followers like Irvin Randle, Men's Fashion Review, and Black Men with Style I am now outgrowing my home office space and am opening a storefront downtown Grand Rapids, with the opening of the store I will adequately be able to fulfill orders as well as bring more business to downtown Grand Rapids with my clientele from various states.

**2. Relevant Experience (description of your previous experience and qualifications on similar or related types of ventures or initiatives proposed to achieve the community goals)**

- My love for fashion began to develop at a young age. I grew up in West Africa Liberia where fashion is a huge part of our culture. I grew up watching my grandfather, a disciplined Vietnam veteran iron his clothing and polish his shoes daily until you could see the bone in his pants. He always stressed the importance of a responsible appearance. As the father of three young African American boys, it is important for me to instill the importance of first impressions, and that perception is reality.
- I worked as a stylist and sales associate at Men's Wearhouse for 6 years. During my employment at Men's Wearhouse I also began taking sewing classes to improve my sewing skills. I became manager and was offered an additional managerial position at Macy's suit department. Following positive public review from coworkers, friends, and family I launched my business Mel Styles. Working as a stylist, sales associate, and manager at Men's Wearhouse and Macy's Tuxedo department taught me management and leadership skills, it helped perfect my tailoring skills, and gave me substantial experience in managing inventory, running the POS systems, customer service and scheduling employees
- I am frequently featured as a designer in fashion shows nationwide. I was a designer in LA Fashion week 2018 and 2019 in Los Angeles, CA, New York Fashion Week in NY 2017 and 2018, Walk fashion show Detroit, MI 2017, 2018, and 2019, Springfield High School fashion show, Art Basel Fashion show Miami FL 2018, Chicago Fashion week 2019, Wayne State Poise annual Fashion show, Monrovia Fashion Week 2017 and 2018, Walk Fashion show Atlanta edition 2017 and upcoming Glimpse of Africa in August of 2019.
- Mel Styles has been featured in an article in Legal news and the New York Beacon for my role as a designer in New York Fashion Week. These features help market Mel Styles to a larger demographic

- Mel Styles was nominated for extraordinary gentleman for the Beat awards drawing more attention to the business with clientele in Grand Rapids
- I have styled and provided suits for 10 international clienteles, provided suits prominent government officials in Liberia, and Liberian celebrities.
- March 9, 2019, I launched our first annual Passion for Fashion charity event show. Each year in March I will have an annual charity event show with the name Passion for Fashion with proceeds going to a different organization each year. At this year's show we had about 400 guests in attendance, 10 local designers/small business owners, 70 local models, and 14 local small business vendors. We had 10 representatives from Bethany Christian Refugee services with a portion of proceeds donated to Bethany Christian Services. This show brought awareness to the needs of refugees in our community and increased business for over 24 local small businesses in Grand Rapids. This experience also increased my knowledge in hosting a fashion show and increased the popularity of my brand.
- I successfully graduated from sewing trade school classes in Liberia during my high school years and continued my sewing education in 6 months' worth of classes at Fields Fabric in Grand Rapids, MI and brief one on one classes with popular sewing seamstress in Charlotte, NC
- I successfully completed SpringGR business course and won third place in the pitch contest following graduation. With this course I was able to grow and maintain a close working relationship with SpringGR and have received mentorship, assistance, and education about business procedures
- I was the Start Garden 5x5 Pitch contest winner May 2019

**3. Team (description of the individual, business, organization, and or partners involved.**

**Key personnel will be an important factor considered by the review committee)**

- Archie Sudue: Owner, designer, creative director, tailor and style consultant at Mel Styles. Archie is a Liberian native immigrated to the US in 2006. Before coming to the United States, Archie travelled to various countries in West Africa

and experienced different cultures and the importance of style and traditional dress and how it varies from country to country. Archie attended GRCC for 2 years for Civil engineering, transferred to Rochester College on a soccer scholarship, and finished undergrad at NDSU in 2015. After realizing his passion was for fashion he began working as a stylist and tailor at Men's Wearhouse and Macy's tuxedo department and successfully launched Mel Styles in 2017.

- Keslyn Slater: Assistant; Keslyn has an undergraduate degree from Grand Valley State University. She has extensive business administration, data entry, and marketing experience. She assists in various aspects of the business including maintaining inventory, book keeping, sales, marketing, and customer service.
- Spring GR: Close business relationship and assists with mentorship
- Edward Szumowski: SCORE Mentor with experience in business finance, strategy and operations.
- Kev Couture: Celebrity Stylist and has worked in the fashion industry for 15+ years; Brand Ambassador and assists with business marketing (wears Mel Styles at prominent events such as Oscars, Bet Awards, and NAACP Awards etc.)



- Ibrahim Foryoh: Recruiter; Ibrahim is a Liberian native who immigrated to the US in 2004 and has a bachelor's degree in business administration from Rochester College. Ibrahim assists with marketing and the mentorship aspect of the business.
- Future Employees: Mel Styles will be employing an additional tailor and sales associate to work in the store. Mel Styles will be employing the most suitable candidate and will not discriminate based on sex, race, religion, sexuality etc.

#### **4. Schedule (overview of timeline and important project milestones to ensure measurable movement toward the community goals)**

- March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019: Passion for Fashion Charity Event
- April 1-31<sup>st</sup>, 2019: Find storefront location, choose location, and begin lease negotiation
- May 1-31<sup>st</sup>, 2019: Prom program: Mel Styles sends over 15 less fortunate young men to prom in custom fitted suits
- July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019: Negotiate lease, pay lease fees, and sign lease agreement
- July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019: Begin storefront renovations (estimated 30-45 days of renovation)
- August 17, 2019: Website Launch Party/Website Launching
- August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019: Back to school Barbecue for community (to provide school supplies to community, make contacts for Prom season)
- September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019: Mel Styles Pre-Grand Opening for exclusive Grand Rapids figures, friends, and Family
- September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019: Mel Styles Grand Opening for the public
- February 2020: New York Fashion Week showcase
- March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020: 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Passion for Fashion Charity Event Show
- May 1-31<sup>st</sup>, 2020: Prom Program, Prom Season, Wedding etc.

**5. Project Costs (outline of proposed costs, professional fees, or other expenses required to complete the proposed approach)**

- Building Permits: \$200
- Security system: \$800
- Furniture/Design: \$9,000
- Contractor Fee: 1500
- Electrical: \$2,300
- Signage: \$1,000
- Construction\Buildout: \$11,375

Total = \$26,175

Monthly Rent = \$1,200

**Amount Requested - \$10,800: This represents 50% of the rent for 18 months**


# MEMORANDUM

CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS · DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Agenda Item 10.  
May 8, 2013  
DDA Meeting

DATE: May 3, 2013

TO: Downtown Development Authority

FROM: Kristopher Larson, AICP   
Executive Director

**SUBJECT: Recommendation to Adopt Bidding and Purchasing Policy**

From time to time, and in the course of performing the regular business of the Downtown Development Authority (DDA), an undefined purchasing policy results in unnecessary project implementation delays. In the interest of expediting many of the minor purchasing decisions that arise in course of mobilizing the DDA Board-approved annual budget and priority plan, this policy recommendation seeks to establish Board-approved limits of authority for the DDA Executive Director related to purchasing and contracting.

## **DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (DDA) BIDDING AND PURCHASING POLICY**

- a) All purchases of materials, supplies or services in an amount of more than fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000.00) must be competitively bid and submitted to the DDA Board of Directors for approval. Notification of competitive bids shall be published in a local and/or area newspaper or on the DDA website. In the event no bids are received or all bids are rejected, the DDA Board of Directors may, after stating the reasons therefor, direct the DDA Executive Director to make the purchase in the open market without bids.
- b) All purchases of budgeted materials, supplies or services in amounts between two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500.00) and fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000.00) may be made without competitive bids, but shall be made upon (i) obtaining at least three (3) vendor quotes and (ii) approval of the DDA Executive Director. If at least three (3) vendor quotes cannot be secured, a written explanation shall be filed with the DDA Treasurer along with the invoice for payment.
- c) All purchases of budgeted materials, supplies or services in amounts less than two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500.00) may be made without competitive bids or quotes upon approval of the DDA Executive Director, however, every effort must be made to obtain the best price.
- d) All purchases of unbudgeted materials, supplies or services may be made by the DDA Executive Director upon approval of the DDA Board of Directors. At least three (3) vendor quotes shall be obtained for amounts greater than two thousand dollars (\$2,000.00). If at least three (3) vendor quotes cannot be secured, a written explanation by the DDA Executive Director shall be filed with the DDA Treasurer.
- e) If two (2) or more qualified local vendors are located within the DDA boundaries, the requirement of obtaining competitive bids or quotations may be limited to such local vendors upon prior approval of the DDA Executive Director.

- f) The DDA reserves the right at any time to accept, reject or modify all or portions of competitive bids or quotes or to select a vendor other than the vendor providing the lowest bid, quote or price when it deems it would otherwise be in the best interests of the DDA.
- g) The competitive bidding or quotation requirements of this policy may be waived by majority vote of the DDA Board of Directors where there is a sole supplier or other conditions exist which inhibit the bidding or quotation process.

**Recommendation: Approve the DDA Bidding and Purchasing Policy as included herein.**