ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ORGANIZER

POSITION DESCRIPTION

The Economic Opportunity Organizer works as part of a collaborative team to connect Grand Rapidians with the employment opportunities presented by the revitalization of the Grand River Corridor. This critical position builds on several years of work, undertaken by numerous partners, to translate the idea of revitalizing the Grand River into reality and ensure the community benefits directly from this new civic space.

The successful candidate will possess deep knowledge of the communities adjacent to the Grand River as it flows through the urban core; excellent project management skills and experience; as well as strong communications and public speaking skills.

This position is made possible through a partnership of Grand Rapids Community College, the City of Grand Rapids and Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. We seek a highly collaborative and creative individual as we aim to partner with a diverse array of employers, government and nonprofit entities and neighborhood stakeholders to successfully carry out this work.

ESSENTIAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Recruit and encourage employers to hire diverse candidates from the City of Grand Rapids and Kent County.
- Engage with employers and trade associations to understand talent needs and expand candidate sourcing.
- Engage with grassroots and neighborhood leaders to help raise awareness of training and job opportunities.
- Build capacity and support within existing and related local workforce development strategies.
- Establish, maintain and deepen positive relationships with key stakeholders – grassroots leaders, educational professionals, contractors and public works professionals – to strengthen the network that helps connect people to opportunities.
- Promote coordination and collaboration among the education, labor and public sector partners to align learning opportunities – apprenticeship programs, workforce training programs, etc – with the river-revitalization talent needs of the public sector and its vendors.

- Support the process to develop an equity framework that defines, among other things, clear and achievable economic opportunity goals to guide strategic investment in river corridor revitalization.

- Coordinate with select peer cities working on similar public works projects to understand promising workforce development practices and support innovative local implementation efforts.

- Thoroughly understand the Grand River Corridor Revitalization project and how the effort will unfold. Develop comprehensive knowledge of the project's purpose, potential opportunities and intended results.

- Ensure that all position-related activities are in line with and advance on the community's mission to establish a River for All.

Other duties as required to advance the mission of DGRI and Grand River corridor revitalization on behalf of its project partner and stakeholders.

EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE:

- Bachelor's and/or Associate's degree or equivalent real-world experience in social/human services, community organizing, recruitment or workforce development.
- A demonstrated track record of genuinely connecting with community and/or employers, preferably in Grand Rapids.
- Experience collaborating and coordinating with outside agencies and organizational partners.

Other Required Knowledge, Skills & Abilities:

- Excellent written and verbal communication.
- Able to set short- and long-term planning goals aligned with project priorities and deliverables.
- Able to develop and move projects forward with independence and autonomy and little supervision.
- Organizational and prioritization skills, with the ability to meet deadlines and manage multi-step projects in a fast-paced environment. Excellent project management and follow-through.
- Team- and results-oriented; ability to receive guidance and effectively work with others in a collaborative environment.
- Strong research and analytical skills. Ability to investigate an issue, ask thoughtful questions and recommend potential solutions.
- Intellectually curious, creative and strategic thinker. Able to think outside the box, challenge conventional norms and try new approaches.
- Polite, positive and professional demeanor.

WORK ENVIRONMENT:

The successful applicant will report to the Chief Outcomes Officer at Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. and enjoy full access to, and the support of, the DGRI office. The DGRI team continues to work remotely amidst the ongoing COVID situation. This position offers similar flexibility in terms of where

and when the work occurs. As the COVID situation lifts, this position also likely requires minimal travel around the greater Grand Rapids area to attend meetings and other in person activities.

START DATE & SCHEDULE

This work will begin in July 2021. The majority of the work is anticipated to occur during traditional daytime business hours with frequent evening events and activities.

COMPENSATION:

Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. is open-minded about the professional arrangement to carry out this work ie direct hire employee or contracted worker. If a direct hire employee, compensation will be competitive and dependent on experience. Medical, vision, dental and life insurance benefits included, as are generous vacation, PTO and sick leave policies. Individual retirement account with employer match contributions also available.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY:

Downtown Grand Rapids Inc and the project partners strongly support equal employment opportunity for all applicants regardless of race, color, religion, sex, gender identity and expression, pregnancy, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, age, marital status, physical ability, sexual orientation or any other characteristic protected by state or federal law.

TO APPLY:

Qualified applicants are invited to submit their interest and resume package via email to jobs@downtowngr.org. **Applications will be received until June 25, 2021.**

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND ON GRAND RIVER CORRIDOR REVITALIZATION:

The full vision for a revitalized run of the Grand River thru Grand Rapids' urban core involves intimately intertwined restorative initiatives along the *waterway* and the *waterfront*:

- Waterway. The removal of obsolete low-head dams through the urban core to – among other far-reaching social, economic and environmental benefits – put the rapids back in the City of Grand Rapids. This $45 million catalyst project recently entered the formal government permitting process, currently stands at 75+ percent funded and will "break ground" in 2022 on a multi-year construction effort.

  The project, spearheaded by the nonprofit Grand Rapids Whitewater, is a designated member of the Urban Waters Federal Partnership. The cultural significance of restoring the whitewater rapids cannot be overstated. The project literally restores the namesake of the City and with it the icon of the community's natural heritage. The project also will transform the river channel from a divider of east and west into a central gathering place for the community.

- Waterfront. Transforming the east and west riverbanks into an approximately 9-mile multi-use trail and network of public amenities that loop around Downtown and link two major regional park assets – the City's Riverside Park to the north and the County's Millennium Park to the south.

  While the full build-out of the trail and new public spaces will follow the work in the waterway, the project partners have already begun to advance on strategic improvements at the water's

edge. This includes substantial investment in community-based planning processes, the demonstration of new nature-based flood management measures, pop up community events to begin changing the community's relationship with the river and the acquisition of waterfront property to facilitate key trail connections. The project partners also will begin major renovation of a central waterfront space – Lyon Square – in 2021 and have completed conceptual redevelopment plans for six other riverfront "opportunity sites." Ultimately the community envisions developing some two dozen riverfront opportunity sites in the urban core.

The specific scope and schedule for these subsequent improvements remains in development but the total public and private investment is anticipated to leverage hundreds of millions of dollars and occur over the next decade.

Grand Rapidians envision this restored and revitalized run of the Grand River as a signature public amenity in a class with such ambitious civic projects as The High Line in New York City, Atlanta's BeltLine and the waterfront revitalization initiatives underway in Toronto, Chicago and Detroit.

Put simply, this transformative project offers enormous potential to serve the needs and desires of various local stakeholders, constituents and communities – particularly underinvested neighborhoods and those affected by generations of racial and ethnic segregation, unequal growth and poverty.

The project partners estimate the construction of in-channel improvements, riverfront parks and trail connections will generate significant economic benefits and, in the initial phases, create some 1,500 one-time jobs. The revitalized river corridor also will generate permanent annual jobs thru the stewardship and management of the amenities and, perhaps most excitingly, yet-to-be-determined economic opportunity as the outdoor recreation economy grows around the waterway.

Indeed the revitalization of the Grand River corridor promises to help drive the region's next generation of growth and prosperity.