



assembly.
FOR THE ARTS

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

RACIAL EQUITY IN THE ARTS – PROGRAM DESIGN

Proposals should be submitted by
November 5, 2021 5 p.m. ET

ASSEMBLY REQUIRED

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ASSEMBLY FOR THE ARTS BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Assembly for the Arts (Assembly) is a new 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that works in coordination with the 501c4 political action committee. Both are led by the same President and CEO and operate in Cleveland, Ohio. It offers services for nonprofits, artists, and creative businesses and is governed by a volunteer board with a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion. More than 50% of Assembly for the Arts board members are women or non-binary people and more than 40% are BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color). For more than a year, community partners Cuyahoga Arts & Culture, Arts Cleveland, and the Arts and Culture Action Committee, with support from the Cleveland Foundation and the George Gund Foundation, have led the planning for this new organization to serve the entire creative sector.

The result of that collaboration, Assembly, was launched in June 2021, with an aim to establish a body of like-minded artists, storytellers, non-profit organizations, creative enterprises and professionals that unite around a shared set of values. Empowering all through advocacy, activism, racial equity, and creative resources for the arts. With a promise of creating a more inclusive and equitable arts and culture community, members will gather from all artistic disciplines, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and abilities to build a better Greater Cleveland.

Assembly is led by its mission to convene, coordinate, and collaborate with everyone who lives and works in Greater Cleveland to strengthen and support those in the region who create, present, experience and appreciate all forms of arts and culture.

The organization operates with a vision to ensure that everyone who lives and works in Greater Cleveland benefits from a diverse and equitable arts and cultural sector, and recognizes that the arts are an essential, defining element in the quality of life, social fabric, and economic vitality of the region.

RACIAL EQUITY PROGRAMMING FOR THE ARTS

Assembly has received generous seed funding to ensure that it is built on the premise of racial equity led by a robust community engagement process. Notably, The George Gund Foundation has provided Assembly with a two-year grant to design and implement a series of programs to increase racial equity throughout the arts and culture industries. Programs will be focused on serving three types of arts entities: artists, creative businesses, and nonprofits.

Assembly recognizes that there are a number of exciting and innovative initiatives and alliances forming to address racial equity in arts and culture locally and nationwide. Assembly is seeking a firm through this RFP process to help us understand the scope of the work happening in our local community, the key focus areas of this work needed, and design a program or suite of programs that will fill gaps in racial equity programming. Our goal is to be a complementary partner and elevator of the racial equity work happening in our community.

At present, Assembly has utilized Creative Vitality Suite (CVSuite) to assess basic demographic measures for arts and cultural occupations and industries that are available in

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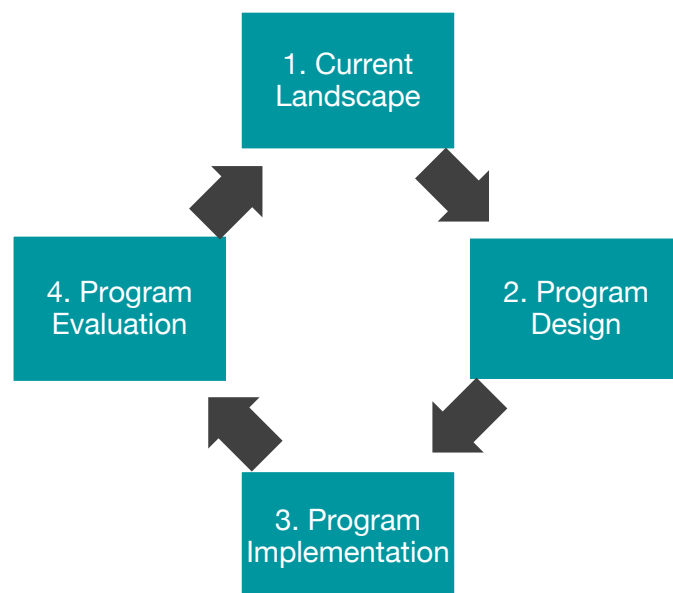
the platform by race/ethnicity, gender and age. A key limitation in this dataset is its reliance on the categories used by the Bureau of Labor Statistics for these measures. Still the findings are telling, reinforcing the significant disparities that exist in the arts and cultural workforce of Cuyahoga County when compared to our County’s overall demographic composition. The philanthropic community has also been mindful of these disparities as it too looks inward at its grant making practices. For example, a key partner in Assembly’s work, Cuyahoga Arts & Culture (CAC), has assessed its own arts and cultural grant making to gain a stronger understanding of how funds are being distributed. Our goal for this RFP is to find a firm who can help us use such information as a starting point for further discussion, reflection and program development.

Ideas are already pouring out from the arts and culture communities as well as funders themselves. The following have been included as possible programs in grant proposals:

- a “mentorship exchange” among established and emerging artists and/or leadership positions in arts organizations and businesses;
- targeted supports for Black and minority-owned creative enterprises that are empowering young people of color to build career skills in creative fields and industries;
- assessing the state of Greater Cleveland’s Black and Brown arts community;
- investing in promotion of artists of color;
- capacity building supports such as provision of space; encouraging forgivable business loans for artists and businesses in partnership with existing organizations that are driving entrepreneurship and creative capital in the region.

PROJECT PHASES

Assembly assumes the following four phases of racial equity program design:



At this juncture, Assembly is seeking a planning firm with significant expertise in racial equity to support the first two phases of work.

Specifically, Assembly expects our contractor would be able to complete the following:

- **Phase 1 – Current Landscape:** Fully develop and implement a set of research strategies to assess the current landscape of racial equity programming in Cuyahoga County. This process may draw upon work already implemented by Cuyahoga Arts & Culture (CAC), as well as initiatives underway led by artists of color such as Shooting without Bullets, Acerbic, and Black Local Artists of Cleveland – Kuumba. National best practices of relevance would also be of interest during this discovery process. This assessment would also include review of Assembly’s internal racial equity practices to ensure the organization is best suited to implement these programs.
- **Phase 2 – Program Design:** Organize and lead a planning process based on the findings of Phase 1 to design a program or suite of programs that Assembly will implement. This portion of work should include a community-informed process, which can utilize existing platforms such as monthly “Assemblies” and quarterly Arts and Culture Network Nights (CAC) to gather feedback, share progress and connect allied voices. Phase 2 will culminate in a completed program recommendation.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Please include the following in your proposal:

- Name of facilitator(s), firm, and contact information
- Proposed design, engagement activities, and suggested outcomes for the consultancy
- Project Budget including expenses that are the responsibility of Assembly for the Arts
- Responsibilities of consultant(s) and Assembly staff and board
- Please provide résumés for each facilitator who will work on the project and his/her specific responsibilities
- List of three references of clients with which you conducted similar work
- Response to Request for Qualifications detailed below

Request for qualifications

Due to the unique nature of Assembly for the Arts, and the complexity of equity, diversity and inclusion work, it is essential that the selected vendor have extensive experience in each of these areas. Assembly respectfully requests that each proposal include a detailed description of the company or organization’s abilities to successfully deliver the needed services.

PROPOSAL SELECTION CRITERIA

Proposals will be reviewed by Assembly’s leadership staff and board subcommittee. Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Clarity of proposed strategies and outcomes
- Proven success in delivering similar services to other clients
- Knowledge of, and experience working with, service organizations or trade associations

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- Capability of establishing an effective working relationship with client
- Budget and costs

BUDGET

Assembly has budgeted \$40,000 (all inclusive) for assessment of the current racial equity landscape (Phase I) and program design (Phase II). Costs should include stipends for any community focus groups or taskforces. Upon completion, Assembly will enter Phase III for implementation with additional resources to be determined.

PROPOSED SCHEDULE

- **October 19, 2021:** Request Proposals
- **November 5, 2021:** Proposal Deadline
- **December 1, 2021:** Consultant Selected
- **January 1, 2022 – June 30, 2022:** Phase I and Phase II Completed by Consultant
- **July 2, 2022:** Public Program Launch

Proposals should be submitted by Friday, November 5, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. ET to

Assembly for the Arts

Attn: Jeremy Johnson –info@assemblycle.org