



# CITY OF IOWA CITY COUNCIL ACTION REPORT

March 21, 2023

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Resolution Adopting the Racial Equity and Social Justice Grant Allocations for Fiscal Year 2023.

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Prepared By:	Stefanie Bowers, Human Rights Coordinator
Reviewed By:	Geoff Fruin, City Manager Sue Dulek, Assistant City Attorney
Fiscal Impact:	\$100,000.00
Staff Recommendation:	Approval
Commission Recommendations:	The Human Rights Commission by a 5-0 vote recommends to the City Council the following organizations for funding: Great Plains Action Society, Wright House of Fashion, Neighborhood Centers of Johnson County, Community Crisis Services, Natural Talent Music, Al-Iman Center of Iowa, Center for Worker Justice of Eastern Iowa, and Houses into Homes.
Attachments:	<a href="#">SJRE resolution 2023</a> <a href="#">SJRE allocations Exhibit A .pdf</a>

## Executive Summary:

The Human Rights Commission recommends full funding for Great Plains Action Society, Wright House of Fashion, Neighborhood Centers of Johnson County, and partial funding and Community Crisis Service, Natural Talent Music, Al-Iman Center of Iowa, Center for Worker Justice, and Houses into Homes.

## Background / Analysis:

This grant opportunity is available to Iowa City-based organizations, both non and for-profit, with the purpose of encouraging, empowering, and engaging racial equity and social justice initiatives through programs, activities, or services that help eliminate inequities in the Iowa City community. The City Council established the grant in 2017. Programs that address one or more of the six priority service areas receive preference: Building Communities, Criminal Justice, Education, Employment, Health, and Housing. The Human Rights Commission reviews applications and then forwards its recommendations to the City Council for review and approval. Grant requirements:

- The organization must be physically located in Iowa City.
- The proposal should seek to eliminate inequity in the community (individual, institutional, or structural).
- The proposal must be a new project. Exception, organizations previously funded in the

last grant cycle may reapply for the same project to be funded for one additional grant cycle.

- Governments, public schools, and colleges/universities cannot be primary applicants.
- Applicants can request no more than \$25,000.
- There are no restrictions on whether applicants are for-profit or not-for-profit.

Applications were received from December 1, 2022, to January 6, 2023. Twenty submissions were received.

A subcommittee of the Commission met on February 23, 2023, to look over the grants, and a formal decision and recommendation was made at the Commission's February meeting date on the 28th.

**Great Plains Action Society:** Great Plains Action Society will partner for the seventh annual, Truthsgiving. A night of truth-telling, music, and laughter celebrating Indigenous culture and history and uplifting the good in Thanksgiving, which is about family, being thankful and celebrating the harvest season. It is also a celebration of Indigenous culture & history and a time, to tell the truth about current issues our community faces. It decreases the erasure and racism that indigenous folks face in Iowa City as well as provides folks with a true understanding of what Thanksgiving is about but does not cancel the idea.

**Wright House of Fashion:** Wright House of Fashion will put together a social justice, racial equity fashion experience called the Big Dream Fashion Festival. The Big Dreams Fashion Festival will offer an entertaining, family-friendly, fun, and diverse community experience. The festival will be an opportunity to foster healthy relationships in the diverse community and promote overall community solidarity. The festival will highlight BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ youth as future leaders in the community. The festival will be an excellent venue for the people of Iowa City to have fun in a safe and entertaining way while learning more about racial and social justice, fashion, and the opportunities available for people who have an interest in pursuing careers in fashion and design. The project includes four weeks of model and designer training before the fashion show. These workshops will provide the training to be a commercial, walkway, editorial, and professional model. Each of the participants from the workshops will participate in the Big Dream Fashion Festival.

**Neighborhood Centers of Johnson County (NCJC):** CommUNITY University (Pilot Program) is a neighborhood-level approach that embodies all three of the Better Together 2030 guiding principles: “REPRESENTATIVE LEADERSHIP to dismantle systemic inequity and deepen a culture of inclusion and belonging COLLABORATION among public, private, nonprofit, neighborhood and University players to develop innovative scaled solutions GROWTH MINDSET with the willingness to try new things —because growth and skill are improved with effort and persistence Use Circles, Strategic Doing, Collective Impact, and other participatory models to identify and empower solutions at the most local level. This pilot program will launch at NCJC Pheasant Ridge Neighborhood Center alongside the establishment of a Pheasant Ridge/Westwind neighborhood association. NCJC will coordinating and host six (6), 5-week cohort learning experiences that utilize elements of the Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT) framework for participants to “heal from the wounds of the past, to build a mutually respectful relationship, across racial and ethnic lines that honor and value each person’s humanity, and to build trusting intergenerational and diverse community relationships that better reflect our common humanity.” This framework,

expert facilitation, and collaborative nature of CommUNITY University support the building of relationships, connecting of people, and expanding circles of engagement needed for overcoming racial division and isolation, developing emerging neighborhood leadership, and building both personal and political will.

**Community Crisis Services:** Often, immigrants face health challenges and cardiovascular risks after relocating to America, because they are forced to adjust to new foods that have higher carbohydrates and more preservatives. (United Way of Olmsted County) Access to culturally appropriate foods, such as mas, dry rice, dry beans, and fresh fruits and vegetables, can help sustain health by maintaining a more familiar, traditional diet and also help immigrants and descendants of immigrants maintain their cultural identities. Community Crisis Center will partner with two minority-owned businesses in Iowa City that distribute African and Mexican foods—Alcapulco Mexican Bakery & Grocery Store and Modina African Market. The grant funding would allow Community Crisis Services to source \$1,000 each month from each business for a year (totaling \$24,000). If awarded, Community Crisis Services will seek out matching funds to double the amount of food we purchase from each of these vendors. The goal is for this initiative to result in \$48,000 worth of purchases from minority-owned businesses in Iowa City's South District while also supporting the health and cultural identity of food-insecure individuals in our area.

**Natural Talent Music:** This project strives to uncover and nurture artistic talent and expression within the South District area in Iowa City especially focusing on people of color and international origins. This project strives to expand the diversity of performers, styles of music, and venues in which entertainment is presented in Iowa City. The project has 3 stages:

- A. Incubation of up and coming talent.
- B. Concert Series.
- C. Community Celebration Festival.

**Al-Iman Center of Iowa:**

The 1,000 Book Nook project aims to offer an alternative narrative for the children in our community. This children's' mini library at Al-Iman Center will serve our young children (5-14 years of age) throughout the years at no cost to them. Fiction, non-fiction, and bilingual books will be carefully selected to provide our children with the opportunity to read and learn about characters and stories similar to themselves. Al-Iman Center currently has a collection of 250 books that were donated over the course of the past 4 years, but with the grant, Al-Iman Center is hoping to make a significant difference by growing the collection to 1,000 books and greatly increasing the accessibility of the children to the mini-library.

**Center for Worker Justice of Eastern Iowa (CWJ):** As part of the Community Technology and Education Improvement Initiative, CWJ will purchase a SMART Board for our newly built computer lab and hire instructors to host free educational workshops for Iowa City community members. The SMART Board will play an essential role in many of CWJ's educational initiatives. CWJ will use the SMART Board in English as a Second Language (ESL) workshops, tutoring program, and most workshops including entrepreneurship and computer literacy workshops. CWJ will host 12 computer literacy workshops that will be taught in English, but the instructors we will hire will be bilingual. The bilingual instructors will allow us to have 4 workshops for Spanish/English speakers, 4 for Arabic/English speakers, and 4 for French/English speakers.

**Houses into Homes:** While the substance of our volunteer academy has remained the same, as planned last year Houses into Homes convened an advisory committee over the summer to help create the Youth Volunteer Academy (YVA). This group met twice, in June and July, and they formed a curriculum subcommittee, which met three times and created a weekly curriculum that incorporates Houses into Homes' work turning shelter into a home. The curriculum also visits important topics connected to social justice, starting with trust-building and an examination of identity. Other topics are stereotypes/prejudice, ACES; historical systems of oppression; the power of language; cycles of poverty, eviction, domestic violence; privilege; equity/inequity; microaggressions, and implicit bias. The vision of the YVA is to foster social justice-centered leaders, and the academy will end with students writing their personal mission and vision statements.