

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST: Artist Mentor – Arts Empowerment Initiative - Photovoice Project

Opportunity

Position: Artist Mentor

Deadline for Submissions: 3:00 p.m. PST, Thursday, November 4, 2021

Introduction

The City of New Westminster (City), through a grant realized by the Community Poverty Reduction Committee, and in collaboration with Douglas College, is seeking an **Artist Mentor**. This individual will have experience in photography and knowledge of photovoice, and will work with tenants of three affordable housing developments over a 10-week period. As envisioned, this opportunity will be open to up to five tenants in each development, with the maximum number of project participants being 15.

The project, through photography and storytelling, will highlight the importance of home, belonging and community, and culminate in a virtual and mobile exhibit. The exhibit will facilitate a dialogue about the transformative nature of affordable housing, and address misconceptions and stereotypes about those living in poverty and experiencing homelessness. A core theme of the project is to generate compassion and empathy in the community. Through the exhibit and dialogue, it is hoped that there will be greater community acceptance and support for affordable housing developments, and increased receptivity to involve tenants of such developments in all aspects of community life.

To plan for and implement the project, the **Artist Mentor** will be compensated in the amount of **\$10,600** (inclusive of equipment and materials). This funding is derived from a Union of BC Municipalities (UBMC) grant as part of the Poverty Reduction Planning and Action Program.

Photovoice Project

The photovoice project is an opportunity for tenants of three affordable housing developments to express themselves and to share their experiences and hopes through photography and storytelling. The intention is to empower project participants, to facilitate connection and a sense of belonging, and to engage the larger community in a dialogue about the transformative nature of affordable housing.

Participants will learn about photovoice, which uses photography and storytelling, and which will be delivered through workshops, either remotely or in person, by the **Artist Mentor**. Participants will also learn about exhibit design and presentation, which will culminate in a virtual and mobile exhibit, in which participants will be given the opportunity to attend and present their work.

The virtual exhibit will be hosted on the City's website with links on the New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society and Douglas College websites. The mobile exhibit will be displayed throughout New Westminster in order to engage the larger community in a dialogue about the transformative nature of affordable housing, and to generate compassion and empathy in the community for such housing.

Background

Poverty and homelessness continue to be pervasive issues in New Westminster, and have been aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The City is taking an active role in addressing these and other social issues. The City is also partnering with the senior levels of government to realize new affordable housing, which, when combined with supports, lifts people out of poverty and homelessness.

While affordable housing is transformative, it is also potentially contentious. Recently, the Aboriginal Land Trust Society went through a development approvals process for an affordable housing development with 96 units for Indigenous and Swahili community members. While Council approved the application, there was widespread neighbourhood opposition, with some of the feedback being discriminatory and racist.

<https://www.newwestrecord.ca/local-news/new-west-supports-affordable-housing-project-for-indigenous-and-swahili-communities-3835384>

The City is embarking on two new affordable housing developments – i.e., one with 52 modular supportive housing units for men and women experiencing homelessness and one with 58 non-market housing unit for Indigenous community members. The City is also embarking on a five-year plan to realize 238 affordable units on an annual basis.

As part of the Affordable Housing and Child Care Task Force, member Councillors have called for a larger, more compassionate and not project specific dialogue regarding the need for affordable housing. The goal is to generate discussion of housing issues at a general level outside the context of specific engagement processes related to the approval of particular sites with strict timelines. Such a dialogue will address the transformative nature of affordable housing and tackle misconceptions and stereotypes regarding those living in poverty and experiencing homelessness, and generate compassion and empathy in the community for such housing.

Central Themes

This project will build on and reference the innovative work being undertaken by Dr. Elliot Rossiter, Philosophy and Humanities, Douglas College, and titled ‘Changing the Conversation.’ It will be intended to elicit greater community support for future affordable housing developments by documenting the transformative nature for tenants of such developments, and through photography and storytelling, facilitate understanding, compassion, empathy and acceptance among community members.

Some possible themes could include:

- Home – How has realizing affordable housing affected your quality of life? What changes have you made? What elements of housing make it feel like home for you? How does it increase stability and security?
- Belonging and Community – Do you feel connected to others in your building? Do you feel part of the larger community? Why or why not? What are some considerations that increase your feelings of belonging to the community around you?

Other related themes could be explored, and additional ones could emerge as part of project implementation.

Workshops

The project will be comprised of a series of workshops as follows:

- One pre-workshop where prospective participants can learn about the project.
- Three individual workshops with participants from each of the three affordable housing developments to learn about photovoice, photography and storytelling (cameras and other materials will be distributed at the workshops, or if remotely, prior to the workshops).
- One workshop at which participants will plan the virtual exhibit to present their work.
- One workshop at which participants will plan the mobile exhibit that will be displayed throughout New Westminster.

If the workshops are held in person, then arrangements will be made for catering, child care, and transportation.

Artist Mentor Role

Through the project, the City is looking to retain the services of an **Artist Mentor** with experience in photography and knowledge of photovoice. It is anticipated that the time commitment will be approximately 20-hours per week over the course of a 10-week period. The **Artist Mentor** will work closely with the three affordable housing providers, and regularly update City staff as to the status of the project, and will plan and facilitate the workshops, including but not limited to the following:

- planning all of the workshops and working with City staff and affordable housing providers to coordinate the logistics required for the workshops to function smoothly, including booking venues, if in person, and obtaining required supplies;
- facilitating and leading the workshops;
- planning the virtual and mobile exhibits, including coordinating the set-up, material framing and installation required for the exhibits;
- supporting City staff in the development of marketing for the exhibit launch;
- working with City staff to develop and implement health and safety provisions as necessary and required for the project in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with Provincial Health Orders;
- working with Douglas College and City staff to coordinate exit interviews with all participants of the project, including the **Artist Mentor**; and,
- approaching this opportunity with compassion, empathy, openness, and understanding.

The **Artist Mentor** will only be required to attend the first mobile exhibit event, which may also involve participants. Additional mobile exhibit events will be facilitated by City staff.

City Role

City staff will provide project oversight and support from the Housing/Social Planner (up to one hour per week) and from a Senior Planning Analyst (up to two hours per week) for the duration of the project.

The City, through the Poverty Reduction Planning and Action Program Grant, will compensate the **Artist Mentor** for the following expenses;

- funding for the workshops and exhibits such as for:
 - the venues and workshop catering;
 - the camera rental, and required art supplies, including framing;
 - the costs related to the virtual and mobile exhibits; and,
 - the costs associated with mileage if in person.

The City will cover the venue costs, marketing, transport and any catering related to mobile exhibit events.

Project Budget

The budget available for the **Artist Mentor** position is **\$10,600**. This compensation amount is in exchange for services of the individual selected for this role. This budget includes related expenses as included under the **Artist Mentor** Role.

- 20 hours per week x 10 weeks x \$40 per hour = \$8,000
- Equipment (camera) rental = \$1,600
- Exhibit equipment = \$1,000
- Expenses (catering, travel, etc.) = \$1,000 (covered by the City)

Qualifications

This project is open to artists with experience in photography and knowledge of photovoice. Interested applicants should have experience working collaboratively and with teaching or mentoring and must be proficient with the medium of photography and storytelling. Having lived and/or living experiences of poverty and/or homelessness or experience working with individuals with lived and living experiences in poverty and homelessness is an asset.

Timeframe

Work for this project is anticipated to begin around November 15, 2021 for a period of 10-weeks, ending around February 25, 2022.

Submission Materials

Letter of interest (2 page maximum); provide perspective on your specific interest in this project. Applicants should clearly indicate their experience with photography and experience and/or knowledge of photovoice, and should indicate what specific experience and skill set you will bring to this role.

Current CV (3 page maximum); provide your name, address, phone number, e-mail address and details of all related experience other relevant information to this role.

A selection of work samples (if applicable); provide the following information to support the samples: title, date completed, medium.

References (1 page maximum); provide two (2) references who have knowledge of work or experience you have that may relate to this role. Include the references name, company (if applicable), address, contact name, telephone number, e-mail address and a brief description of your relationship with the reference. The City may be used as a reference, if work of a similar nature has been provided to the City. The City reserves the right to contact the references to confirm the nature and performance of the work provided by the Proponent.

Submission Information

Submissions are to be provided to the City by e-mail electronically in one PDF file at nwpurchasing@newwestcity.ca. Note that the maximum file size the City can receive is 10 MB. Any questions about the project or scope of work can be directed to Patrick Shannon, Purchasing Manager.

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