

Contracts between the Office of Violence Prevention and “Community Groups”

There are three programs initiated by the Office of Violence Prevention (OVP) within the Minneapolis Health Department. Each involves its own Request for Proposals (RFP), its own authorization by the City Council with a LIMS file and Request for Committee Action (RCA), its own purpose and methods, and its own list of groups that have been selected for the work. In the interest of keeping them straight, the three are outlined below with relevant information and links. There is information at the end on other programs outside of the OVP.

General: The RFPs have a number of common features. Most sections of the RFPs are identical and apply to most city government contracts. In each, a very short summary of the purpose and activities is in Section I: INVITATION. The full Scope of Services is in Appendix B in each case.

Data Practices: Each RFP has data practice provisions in Appendix A, Section 14. Each contractor is required to comply with data practice requests. Here is the contract language:

“The Consultant agrees to comply with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act (Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 13) and all other applicable state and federal laws relating to data privacy or confidentiality. The requirements of Minnesota Statutes, Section 13.05, subd. 11 apply to companies or individuals who perform under a government contract. The Consultant and any of the Consultant's sub-consultants or sub-contractors retained to provide services under this Contract shall comply with the Act and be subject to penalties for noncompliance as though they were a "governmental entity." The Consultant must immediately report to the City any requests from third parties for information relating to this Contract. The City agrees to promptly respond to inquiries from the Consultant concerning data requests. The Consultant agrees to hold the City, its officers, and employees harmless from any claims resulting from the Consultant's unlawful disclosure or use of data protected under state and federal laws.”

The language of Statute 13.05, subd. 11:

“Privatization. (a) If a government entity enters into a contract with a private person to perform any of its functions, all of the data created, collected, received, stored, used, maintained, or disseminated by the private person in performing those functions is subject to the requirements of this chapter and the private person must comply with those requirements as if it were a government entity. All contracts entered into by a government entity must include a notice that the requirements of this subdivision apply to the contract. Failure to include the notice in the contract does not invalidate the application of this subdivision. The remedies in section 13.08 apply to the private person under this subdivision. (b) This subdivision does not create a duty on the part of the private person to provide access to public data to the public if the public data are available from the government entity, except as required by the terms of the contract.”

Note that the contract does comply with the notice requirement. We can submit a data practice request to any of the contractors in the same way as to a government agency. The one significant exception is that they do not need to release public data that is available directly from the city. I am sure that this will be interpreted to mean “supposed to be available from the city”, even if the city refuses to provide it in a timely matter, or at all.

Employment: The contracts create no new employment relations with the city. All people working on the projects work for the agency, as either employees of the agency, or as independent contractors. The agency handles all payroll.

Liability: The agency is responsible for essentially all possible types of liability. Each agency must show that they have insurance coverage for Commercial General Liability, workers compensation, auto, breaches of privacy, network security, and professional liability (errors & omissions). The agency is also liable to the city for any damages caused by acts that violate the contract.

Identification: Workers “are identifiable as being part of these efforts (t-shirt uniform) in a way that is mutually agreeable between the organizations and the City. However, the organization We Push for Peace is participating in two of the contracts; I doubt that we will be able to tell which function they are engaged in.

1) Community Outreach (also known as Community Navigators)

Program full heading: “Community Outreach and Support Services During and After the Trials of the Former Officers Involved in the Killing of George Floyd”

RFP published 2/17/21; applications due by 3/17/21. We have been unable to locate any official City Council action to approve the contracts and the agencies selected.

The selected agencies were exempted from the two nights of curfew in April.

The selected agencies are identified in a [4/08/21 city press release](#). The [StarTribune reported on the selection](#) on April 9.

From the RFP: “Contracts are expected to be made available for up to \$175,000 for activities to take place between April 1, 2021 and December 31, 2021 in one or more geographic areas of the City.” “Specifically, services are expected to include: 1) positive, proactive and responsive outreach and community engagement; 2) supporting two-way communication between community and the City; 3) informal de-escalation, mediation, and conflict resolution; and 4) sharing information about existing City resources and community resources and supports and helping community members access those resources when appropriate.”

Enough money was appropriated for 6 agencies at \$175,000 each, total \$1,050,000 plus funds for administrative costs. Seven agencies were selected:

- A Mother’s Love
- Center for Multicultural Mediation
- NACDI (Native American Community Development Institute)
- Corcoran Neighborhood Organization and T.O.U.C.H. Outreach
- C.E.O. (Change Equals Opportunity)
- Restoration Inc.
- We Push for Peace

2) Minneapolis Strategic Outreach Initiative (also known as Violence Interrupters)

RFP published 2/11/21; applications due by 3/11/21. Program period is from May 1 to December 31, 2021. The selection of the agencies was approved by City Council on April 30. The LIMS file is [2021-00465](#) with the RCA [here](#).

The program is based on an international project, [Cure Violence](#). Through their website, they make a number of claims about the value of their work but the reliability of these claims is undermined by the obviously ridiculous claim on their “impact” page that their program caused a 48% reduction in shootings in Chicago *in its first week*.

Roberto Aspholm with the University of St. Thomas, researched Cure Violence’s work in Chicago and found that the city’s homicide rate held steady from 2004 to 2015 and [shot up in 2016, despite Cure Violence’s work](#). Further, Jeffrey Butts, director of the Research and Evaluation Center at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, citing the lack of studies validating these concepts, referred to the initiatives as “[clever branding of an unproven product](#).” Thus, the City is doling out substantial sums of money on unproven theories that amount to little more than wishful thinking.

From the RFP: “Recipient agencies will contract with or employ and oversee Outreach Workers/Violence Interrupters serving on neighborhood-specific teams to 1) detect potentially violent situations and use informal

mediation, non-physical conflict resolution, and interruption expertise to de-escalate before they become violent; and 2) address barriers and reduce risk by providing resources and service referrals to those who need them.”

A similar pilot program was in effect from September, 2020 through the end of the year.

The recipients of the money for 2021 are:

- Central Area Neighborhood Development Organization – contract amount will be up to \$350,000 for services in parts of South Minneapolis
- Corcoran Neighborhood Organization – contract amount will be up to \$700,000 for services in 1) parts of South Minneapolis and 2) downtown
- Metro Youth Diversion Center – contract amount will be up to \$350,000 in and around Cedar Riverside
- Restoration Incorporated – contract amount will be up to \$275,000 for services in parts of North Minneapolis
- Urban Youth Conservation - contract amount will be up to \$275,000 for services in parts of North Minneapolis
- We Push for Peace – contract amount will be up to \$275,000 for services in parts of North Minneapolis

Total funding of \$2,225,000 was allocated for these six agencies.

3) Office of Violence Prevention Fund

RFP published 3/1/21; applications due by 3/29/21. Program period is from May 15 to December 31, 2021. The selection of the agencies was approved by City Council on May 14. The LIMS file is [2021-00528](#). The RCA is [here](#).

From the RFP: “Applicant agencies may apply for up to \$60,000 (Category A), up to \$25,000 (Category B), or up to \$10,000 (Category C) for violence prevention activities to take place between May 15, 2021 and December 31, 2021. Existing activities, expansion activities, and new activities will all be considered for this funding.” “Proposed projects can be focused on prevention of one or more forms of violence. The intent of the OVPF is to support community-led strategies. With that in mind, applicants are encouraged to propose activities that reflect their own expertise, experience, and knowledge and that have the potential for tangible violence prevention impact on the specific issues identified within the intended project areas or communities.”

This program was also carried out in 2019 and 2020. “Building on the success of the Violence Prevention Fund initiative in past years, the OVP is again making fund awards available in 2021.”

The recipients of the money for 2021 are:

Category A (\$43,750 each)

- Somali Community Resettlement Services will implement a mentoring program and provide employment services for East African youth.
- Sewa-AIFW will offer healing workshops, storytelling circles, and two community events focused on South Asian immigrants.
- Worldwide Outreach for Christ will pair youth with adult mentors in South Minneapolis to work on a community project.
- Northside Residents Redevelopment Council will provide block patrols in the Willard Hay & Near North neighborhoods.

Category B (\$20,833 each)

- Hennepin Theatre Trust will host a series of community events called 5 to 10 on Hennepin (partnering with Youthprise/Kulture Klub Collaborative and Streetworks)
- Webber Camden Neighborhood will hire neighborhood youth to lead a community engagement project, host a police dialog session with the 4th precinct, and hold a safety resource fair.

- The Sanctuary Covenant Church will host a series of events over the summer in their parking lot in North Minneapolis. They will also commission a local artist to create a community mural.
- Art is my Weapon will hire youth to create and produce public service announcements focused on solutions that creatively address violence prevention.
- HIRED will offer career counseling services as well as providing support services funding (housing, food, technology, transportation, fines and fees, etc.)
- Phumulani MN African Women will host monthly healing circles for African immigrant and refugee families living in Minneapolis.

Category C (\$10,000 each)

- Lutheran Social Services of MN will implement the Imhotep Freedom School, an affiliate of the Children's Defense Fund, to be held in the heart of North Minneapolis.
- Restorative Justice Community action will hire a part-time staff member to set-up a database, social media plan, and roll out the community bulletin board platform for the Minnesota TRUST Network.
- Dynamic Family Solutions will offer coaching, classes & will provide home and child care resources for African American parents.
- Lateshia Carter will hold ten healing circle gathering sessions for African American women healing from the intersectional impact of community violence, children affected by gun and gang/group violence, and their own experience of intimate partner violence.
- Kente Circle Training Institute will host a conference designed to provide space and support for BIPOC professionals working in mental health, education, social work, juvenile justice and the corrections systems to engage with community, nonprofit, and faith leaders in professional development and thoughtful community building.

Agencies funded by the OVP Fund in 2019 and 2020 were:

- A Mother's Love
- The Camden Promise
- JXTA
- Hennepin Theatre Trust
- Minnesota Peacebuilding Leadership Institute
- Art is My Weapon
- Green Minneapolis
- Banyan Community
- Lake Street Council
- St. Stephen's
- MADDADS
- YouthLink
- The Man Up Club
- Guns Down Love Up
- Domestic Abuse Project
- Lao Center of Minnesota
- Pillsbury United Communities
- Growing North Minneapolis
- We Rise, The Ostara Initiative

The total of the 2020 OVP Fund grants is \$350,000. For all 3 of these programs: \$3,625,000 in 8 months plus the city's administrative costs. That is a lot of money to spread around in the "community". It not only pays for the work, it buys a lot of loyalty and subservience to the city's ideology.

Keep in mind that not one penny of this money is directed at ending police violence. The clear message is that the community is the problem, not the MPD.

Agape Movement Contract

This contract is unique in that it was issued without a formal RFP and without approval by the City Council. Instead, Mayor Jacob Frey used his emergency powers under COVID to [issue a \\$359,000 contract](#) to this group to run interference while city crews cleared George Floyd Square. As a result, there is little public information available about this contract.

Other Projects

There are 3 other projects with ongoing funding and direction from the Office of Violence Prevention.

- 1) Project LIFE/Group Violence Intervention (GVI): “Group Violence Intervention (GVI) reduces street group-involved homicide and gun violence. Our strategy is to reduce peer dynamics in the group that promote violence. We help create accountability, foster internal social pressure that deters violence, and set clear community standards against violence. GVI offers group members an “honorable exit” from committing acts of violence, and provides a path for those who want to change.” The OVP website does not indicate who is doing this work. It is based on a model from Cities United: <https://citiesunited.org/>
- 2) Next Step: “The program works with people who are in the hospital because they are the victim of a stabbing or gunshot.” They meet with victims in the hospital and provide support afterward. The OVP website does not say who is doing this work.
- 3) Blueprint Approved Institute (BPAI): “Through BPAI, we support grassroots community organizations doing violence prevention work. We work with them to build skills and increase their organizational capacity. Our office also provides funding for them to put their capacity building into practice. They use those funds for summer youth violence prevention programming.” The grassroots community organizations are not identified on the OVP website.