



Memorandum

To: Planning & Development Committee
Alderman Janessa Wilkins, Chairman

From: Sarah Leys, Director
Community & Economic Development

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sarah Leys".

Re: Proposed 2026 Rockford REGROW Grant Program funded by the Cannabis Fund.

Date: January 5, 2026

In alignment with the City of Rockford Resolution 2021-7-R, the Rockford 2026 REGROW Grant Program shall be used for:

- programs for economic and business development; education; youth programming; job training; housing; health; or other financial assistance to individuals, businesses, and communities that have been disproportionately impacted by cannabis-related laws,
- programs to substantially reduce both the total amount of gun violence and concentrated poverty in the City of Rockford
- programs to protect communities from gun violence through targeted investments and intervention programs, including economic growth and improving family violence prevention, community trauma treatment rates, gun injury victim services, and public health prevention activities,
- programs to promote employment infrastructure and capacity building related to the social determinants of health in the eligible community areas,
- programs to address economic development, violence prevention services, zero entry and re-entry services, and youth development.

Staff is proposing that the 2026 funding cycle allocate \$500,000 for Rockford REGROW Grant Program through the following funding opportunities:

- TWO (2) two-year grant at \$100,000 total per grant
- FOUR (4) one-year grants at \$50,000 total per grant
- TEN (10) quick deployment grants at \$10,000 per grant to support smaller, shorter-term projects

Upon consideration and approval by City Council, Community and Economic Development Department will finalize a schedule and facilitate the grant process to be completed through winter 2026. Grant applications will be reviewed and recommended by the Community Relations Committee of the City, with final allocation of grants subject to Council approval.

The last REGROW Grant process had a number of great outcomes that may be reviewed in the attached 2024/2025 REGROW Status Report.

The Rockford Regrow Grant Program aims to aid, strengthen, and foster community reinvestment and wealth creation in disproportionately impacted communities, individuals, and families suffering long-lasting negative impacts caused by over 80 years of cannabis prohibition laws. Cannabis policies and disparate cannabis-related arrests, convictions, and sentencing have had life-altering and inter-generational consequences for these specific communities. The grant program is one small step for the City in acknowledging and addressing the decades of harm caused to vulnerable communities by cannabis criminalization and stigmatization

Staff requests the Planning and Development Committee review and recommend approval by the City Council of the attached 2026 Rockford REGROW Grant Program funded by the Cannabis Fund. An equity-driving and community reinvestment grant program funded by the City of Rockford's 3% local tax on adult-use recreational cannabis retail sales.

Please let me know if you have any questions - 779-348-7442.