



Date: September 19, 2022

To: Wanda S. Page, City Manager
Through: Bertha T. Johnson, Deputy City Manager
From: Jina B. Propst, Director, General Services Department
Subject: Fellowship Placement Agreement between the City of Durham and FUSE Corps for Sustainable Land Use in Cemeteries project

Executive Summary

FUSE Corps is a national nonprofit working to expand social and economic opportunities, particularly for communities that have been limited by a history of systemic and institutionalized racism. FUSE partners with local governments and communities to more effectively address pressing challenges by placing experienced professionals within city and county agencies. These FUSE Executive Fellows lead strategic projects designed to advance racial equity and accelerate systems change.

The City of Durham has been accepted to partner with the FUSE Corps to identify alternatives to traditional burial which will curb environmental impacts and support both Beachwood and Maplewood cemeteries enriching legacies. Traditional burials have a negative environmental impact and take up significant space in cities where land supply is limited. As Durham plans the future of its public cemeteries, it seeks to provide burial options that are environmentally sensitive, affordable, space efficient and culturally appropriate. The FUSE Executive Fellow will identify alternatives to traditional burial that provide equity, dignity and choice. Philanthropic support will be utilized by FUSE to cover \$100,000 of the Program Fee and the City's participatory program fee will be \$80,000.

Motion

To authorize the City Manager to execute a Fellowship Placement Agreement with the nonprofit FUSE Corps in the amount of \$80,000 for an Executive Fellowship Project for sustainable land use in cemeteries project.

Background

The City of Durham has been accepted to participate with FUSE Corps, a national nonprofit organization, to examine and evaluate alternatives to traditional burials in furtherance of sustainability goals, affordability options and cultural awareness. FUSE Corps is working to expand social and economic opportunities, particularly for communities that have been limited by a history of systemic and institutionalized racism. FUSE partners with local governments and communities to more effectively address pressing challenges by placing experienced professionals within city and county agencies. These FUSE Executive Fellows lead strategic projects designed to advance racial equity and accelerate systems change. Since 2012, FUSE has led over 250 projects in 40 governments across 20 states, impacting the lives of 25 million people.

When designing each fellowship project, FUSE Corps works closely with government partners and local stakeholders to define a scope of work that will achieve substantive progress toward regional priorities. FUSE Corps then conducts an individualized search for each project to ensure that the selected candidate has at least 15 years of professional experience, the required competencies for the role, and deep connections to the communities being served. The Executive Fellows are data-driven and results-oriented, and able to effectively manage complex projects by developing actionable roadmaps and monitoring progress to completion.

Executive Fellows are hired as FUSE employees and embedded in government agencies for at least one year of full-time work. Throughout their fellowships, they receive training, coaching, and professional support from FUSE to help achieve their project goals. FUSE Executive Fellows bring diverse perspectives and new approaches to their projects. They build strong relationships with diverse arrays of stakeholders, foster alignment within and across various layers of government, and build partnerships between governments and communities. The City has partnered with FUSE Corps in the past to incorporate FUSE Executive Fellows into various projects across the city. General Services successfully leveraged a shorter-term fellowship program with the Environmental Defense Fund for a fleet electrification study.

Durham's segregated past resulted in the creation of two public cemeteries: Maplewood (historically white) and Beechwood (historically Black). Beechwood is running out of space; with limited availability for traditional burials. Given the history of segregation and the generations of families that are already buried in Beechwood, many Black Durham residents are hesitant to transition to Maplewood. This could result in Black residents using private cemeteries instead, which could cost more than what white residents pay at the publicly owned Maplewood.

At the same time, traditional burials are expensive, take up a lot of space, and have a negative impact on the environment. According to the [Green Burial Council](#), traditional burials in the United States annually use 4.3M gallons of embalming fluid (including known carcinogens); 20M feet of hardwood boards; 1.6M tons of concrete; 17,000 tons of copper and bronze; and 64,500 tons of steel. In addition, traditional burial methods leach lead and other materials into the ground or nearby water sources. Climate change also exacerbates the environmental impact of cemeteries, as flooding and erosion can disinter coffins, inflicting physical, environmental, and emotional damage on the surrounding area.

The City of Durham will partner with FUSE Corps to identify alternatives to traditional burial to curb environmental impacts and support Beechwood's enriching legacy. The Executive Fellow will investigate various options, with an emphasis on practices that are environmentally sustainable, affordable, and space efficient. Next, the Executive Fellow will explore which options are feasible for the City of Durham, given the city's resources, constraints, and cultural responses to burial options. This may include piloting education or public affairs programs with funeral homes, faith communities, and community members to ensure that the final choice(s) are responsive to residents' preferences and needs. In addition, the Executive Fellow will make an action plan and conduct long-term analyses to make the chosen alternative(s) a reality. This work will ensure that all members of the Durham community are able to access affordable, dignified burial services that are culturally appropriate and environmentally sustainable.

Issues and Analysis

Starting in October 2022, the FUSE Executive Fellow will build relationships with stakeholders across Durham, including but not limited to the city's General Services Department, Black-owned funeral homes, historically Black faith communities (taking steps to ensure Muslim, Jewish, non-Abrahamic faiths, and secular communities are included), community-based organizations

(including environmental justice organizations), and Durham residents. During this time, the Executive Fellow will build an understanding of the assets, opportunities, and constraints that cemetery- and burial-management professionals face in serving residents, as well as preferences and aspirations that residents have for burials in their community. This may include community engagement pilots to determine which burial and funeral approaches meet community needs and what forms of communication or education help community members make sustainable burial choices. At the same time, the Executive Fellow will conduct extensive research on best practices, innovations, and new approaches that other cities have adopted regarding green cemetery management and environmentally sustainable, affordable burial practices.

Next, the Executive Fellow will identify which models are appropriate for Durham’s context and develop the plans necessary to implement these new options. This analytical support will include environmental impact analysis, climate change resilience analysis, funding and resource plans, and legislation and regulation adaptation plans.

Finally, the Executive Fellow will analyze the long-term implications of the chosen approach(es). This could include analysis of the additional capacity of the cemetery, the anticipated environmental progress of the new model(s), and cost-benefit analysis of the new practice(s). By October 2023, the Executive Fellow will have accomplished the following:

- *Conduct a Stakeholder Listening Tour* – Develop relationships with stakeholders in Durham city government, funeral homes, faith communities, community-based organizations and members of the public to understand the resources, constraints, and cultural factors affecting this work; the listening tour should also include a review of approaches that cities similar to Durham have successfully adopted in regards to ‘green burials’
- *Landscape Analysis* – Further develop and analyze which recommendations make sense for Durham; examine the economic and environmental impact of burial options, as well as the cultural relevance of each option; conduct community engagement and education pilots to help residents learn about alternatives and to gauge community receptivity to and build buy-in for these new choices
- *Recommendations for Action* – Identify the most feasible option(s) in collaboration with the City of Durham; develop an action plan to pursue the preferred option(s) within an appropriate timeline, the action plan should include resource planning and the legislative or regulatory changes necessary to implement the preferred option(s).
- *Long-Term Impact Analysis* – Analyze the long-term implications of pursuing the preferred course of action, including a cost-benefit analysis and environmental analysis, as well as long-term recommendations for continued community engagement

Alternatives

City Council could choose not to authorize the City Manager to enter into the Fellowship Placement Agreement with FUSE Corps.

Financial Impact

Funds are available in the General Services Department budget, through a reallocation of lapsed salaries, to execute the City’s proportionate share of the Executive Fellowship Placement Agreement.

FUSE philanthropic support	\$100,000
General Services Department	<u>\$80,000</u>
Total commitment	\$180,000

Equal Business Opportunity Summary

Due to the nature of this agenda item, it was not reviewed for compliance with the Ordinance to Promote Equal Business Opportunities in city contracting.

Contractor Workforce Diversity & Hiring Practices

Due to the nature of this agenda item, obtaining Contractor Workforce Diversity & Hiring Practices information is not applicable.

Attachments

Fellowship Placement Master Agreement
Exhibit 1A – Individual Placement Agreement
Exemption Memo