REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Flint & Genesee County Youth Sports and Recreation Ecosystem Assessment

Issued by the Crim Fitness Foundation on behalf of the Flint Sports Collaborative

I. BACKGROUND

The Flint Sports Collaborative Partners are committed to ensuring that every young person in Flint has meaningful opportunities to participate in sports, recreation, physical activity, and play in ways that support physical health, mental well-being, social connection, skill development, belonging, and positive youth development.

Flint and Genesee County have significant assets on which to build. The community has a strong athletic identity, committed youth-serving organizations, schools, parks, recreation facilities, nonprofits, neighborhood programs, higher-education institutions, private providers, and a long history of using sports to bring people together.

At the same time, existing research indicates that in the City of Flint access to these opportunities remains fragmented and unequal. Transportation, cost, equipment, facility availability and condition, neighborhood geography, limited developmental pathways, adaptive access, inconsistent communication, and uneven coach and volunteer capacity all affect a young person's ability to participate.

The 2021 Flint K-12 Youth Sports & Recreation Landscape Scan provided valuable insight into youth and provider experiences, it focused primarily on the City of Flint and was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional planning work, including the City of Flint's comprehensive planning efforts, Genesee County Parks planning, and the 2026 sports-facility feasibility analysis provide important information about facilities, public infrastructure, regional economic opportunity, and potential future investment.

A 2026 literature review prepared for the Flint Sports Collaborative Partners identified a central opportunity: **Flint and Genesee County do not lack sports assets. The challenge is understanding how those assets can be connected, strengthened, equitably accessed, and sustained.**

Based on recommendations from the literature review and discussion among partners engaged in sports work, we are interested in an evidence-led assessment that begins with community

needs. It should address evaluating existing neighborhood assets, shared infrastructure, program quality, transportation, affordability, facilities, governance, and connectivity within the system.

The selected consultant will build upon this body of work to create a current,comprehensive, and actionable picture of the youth sports and recreation ecosystem in Flint. This assessment will be focused on the City of Flint with an inventory of facilities throughout the County that Flint kids may use.

II. PROJECT PURPOSE

The purpose of this project is to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the youth sports and recreation ecosystem in Flint and Genesee County and develop a strategic roadmap for creating a more accessible, equitable, high-quality, coordinated, and sustainable system.

The assessment should answer five fundamental questions:

1. **What exists?**
   What programs, organizations, facilities, spaces, resources, and pathways currently serve young people?
2. **Who has access?**
   Who participates, who does not, where are opportunities located, and what barriers prevent participation?
3. **What do young people and families want and need?**
   What experiences, sports, recreational opportunities, facilities, supports, and pathways are most important to them?
4. **What would make the ecosystem stronger?**
   What shared infrastructure, standards, partnerships, governance, funding, workforce development, communications, and other system-level supports are needed?
5. **Where should future investment occur?**
   What are some immediate/quick wins that could have a broad community impact? What are recommended 1-3 year priorities? What are some longer term investments that could have a broad community impact?

The final product should provide decision-makers with credible evidence and practical recommendations—not simply an inventory or report.

III. SCOPE OF WORK

The selected consultant will conduct a comprehensive assessment incorporating, at minimum, the following components.

1. Update and Expand the Existing Youth Sports Landscape

The consultant will build upon the 2021 Flint K-12 Youth Sports & Recreation Landscape Scan and Partnerships Highlights Report.

The assessment should:

- Re-engage organizations and stakeholders involved in the previous research.
- Verify current organizations, programs, facilities, contacts, and operating status.
- Identify organizations and populations that were not adequately represented in the previous work.
- Document current programs by:
    - Sport/activity
    - Age range
    - Season
    - Location
    - Schedule
    - Cost
    - Scholarships or financial assistance
    - Equipment requirements
    - Transportation availability
    - Enrollment/capacity
    - Waitlists
    - Retention
    - Adaptive capacity
    - Language accessibility
    - Participant demographics
    - Developmental pathways
- Identify gaps, duplication, and opportunities for greater coordination.

The final inventory should be designed as a usable dataset that can be updated over time.

2. Youth and Family Voice

Meaningful engagement with young people and families should be central to the assessment.

Particular attention should be given to:

- Engagement with youth who currently participate
- Engagement with youth who do not currently participate
- Middle-school youth
- Youth from neighborhoods with fewer opportunities
- Youth with disabilities
- Girls and gender-diverse youth

- Latinx and multilingual families
- Youth from rural and suburban communities
- Families facing transportation or financial barriers
- Youth participating in nontraditional or individual activities

Youth participation should be accessible, age-appropriate, and connected to actual decisions.

The final report should clearly identify:

- **What young people said**
- **What families said**
- **Where perspectives differed**
- **How community input influenced recommendations**
- **Where decision-makers ultimately chose a different direction and why**

3. Access and Demand Analysis

The consultant will assess the practical ability of young people to access sports and recreation opportunities.

The analysis should include:

Transportation

- Walking
- Biking
- Public transit
- Paratransit
- School transportation
- Driving
- Travel time during after-school and weekend hours
- Major road and geographic barriers
- Safe routes

Affordability

Assess the full cost of participation, including:

- Registration
- Uniforms
- Equipment
- Transportation
- Tournament fees
- Travel
- Lodging

- Private instruction
- Other required expenses

The assessment should examine both direct costs and less visible costs that may prevent participation.

Geographic access

Using GIS and other appropriate tools, analyze access at approximately:

- 10 minutes
- 15 minutes
- 30 minutes

by relevant transportation modes.

The analysis should identify areas where youth have limited access to opportunities and distinguish between facilities that are currently active and facilities or spaces that could potentially be activated.

4. Youth Sports Opportunity and Funding Analysis

The consultant will examine how family resources, public investment, philanthropy, corporate support, commercial investment, and program design influence access to youth sports and recreation.

At minimum, the assessment should examine:

- What families currently pay by sport, age, and participation level
- The distribution of costs between recreational and competitive opportunities
- Public funding
- School funding
- Philanthropic funding
- Corporate sponsorship
- Government investment
- Private/commercial investment
- Scholarships and financial assistance
- Equipment assistance
- Transportation support
- Facility subsidies

The consultant should identify funding gaps and opportunities for more coordinated investment.

The assessment should also examine whether current funding structures unintentionally favor certain populations, geographic areas, organizations, or types of programming.

5. Facilities, Fields, Parks, Equipment, and Shared Spaces

The consultant will develop a comprehensive inventory and assessment of youth sports and recreation assets throughout Flint and Genesee County.

This should include, at minimum:

- Municipal facilities
- County facilities
- School facilities
- Higher-education facilities
- Nonprofit facilities
- Faith-based facilities
- Commercial facilities
- Parks
- Athletic fields
- Gyms
- Courts
- Playgrounds
- Walking and biking infrastructure
- Indoor recreation facilities
- Informal and nontraditional spaces
- Facilities serving adaptive sports
- Other spaces with potential for youth recreation

For each major asset, the consultant should assess, where feasible:

- Ownership
- Condition
- Accessibility
- Safety
- Lighting
- Restrooms
- Storage
- Parking
- Transit access
- Utilization
- Scheduling
- Operating hours
- Operating costs

- Staffing
- Deferred maintenance
- Capital needs
- Joint-use potential
- Ability to support additional programming

The assessment should identify opportunities to better utilize existing facilities and underused spaces before assuming that new construction is necessary. The final inventory should be designed as a usable dataset that can be updated over time.

6. Program Quality, Coach Development, and Safeguarding

The assessment should evaluate the quality and safety infrastructure supporting youth sports and recreation.

The consultant should assess provider practices related to:

- Volunteer recruitment
- Applications and screening
- Background checks
- References
- Coach onboarding
- Coach education
- Ongoing training
- Developmentally appropriate programming
- Inclusive practices
- Parent education
- Youth voice
- Emergency action planning
- CPR/AED readiness
- Concussion protocols
- Heat and weather safety
- Injury prevention
- Mental health and emotional well-being
- Trauma-informed practices
- Facility inspections
- Abuse prevention
- Appropriate adult/youth interactions
- Electronic communications
- Travel and overnight policies
- Reporting and response procedures

The consultant should conduct a system-wide gap analysis and identify practical minimum standards that can be applied proportionately to organizations of different sizes and capacities.

Recommendations should recognize the capacity limitations of smaller grassroots organizations and include opportunities for technical assistance, shared services, and capacity building.

7. Youth Development and Participation Pathways

The assessment should examine whether Flint and Genesee County provide meaningful pathways from introductory participation through skill development, recreation, school athletics, and competitive opportunities.

The consultant should examine:

- Opportunities for free and informal play
- Introduction to multiple sports and activities
- Recreational opportunities
- Developmental programming
- Middle-school opportunities
- School-based athletics
- Community-based leagues
- Competitive opportunities
- Adaptive opportunities
- Outdoor recreation
- Individual and nontraditional activities
- Leadership opportunities
- Transitions between programs and developmental stages

The goal should be to understand whether young people can find an appropriate entry point and continue participating as their interests, abilities, and circumstances change.

8. Governance, Coordination, and Shared Infrastructure

The assessment should evaluate the current level of coordination among youth-serving organizations and recommend a sustainable structure for collaboration.

The consultant should examine potential shared infrastructure such as:

- Centralized program information
- Shared communications
- Referral systems
- Shared registration tools
- Shared calendars
- Equipment lending
- Coach training

- Referee development and shared referee pools
- Volunteer resources
- Data collection
- Shared funding opportunities
- Facility-use agreements
- Transportation coordination
- Technical assistance

The assessment should recommend areas that could be better coordinated across the system; it should determine what functions are required and what structure would realistically support it.

IV. EXPECTED DELIVERABLES

The selected consultant will provide, at minimum:

1. Comprehensive Youth Sports and Recreation Ecosystem Assessment

A current analysis of programs, providers, facilities, access, participation, demand, barriers, quality, funding, and system capacity across Flint and Genesee County.

2. Youth and Family Voice Report

A clear summary of youth and family perspectives, including how those perspectives influenced recommendations.

3. Countywide Youth Sports and Recreation Asset Inventory

A searchable dataset documenting programs, providers, facilities, fields, parks, equipment, and other relevant assets.

4. GIS Access and Equity Analysis

Maps showing geographic access, transportation barriers, neighborhood disparities, and potential opportunities for investment.

5. Facility and Shared-Space Assessment

An analysis of facility condition, accessibility, utilization, operating capacity, joint-use opportunities, and future potential.

6. Participation, Demand, and Affordability Analysis

An assessment of participation, costs, demand, capacity, waitlists, and barriers.

7. Quality, Safety, and Safeguarding Assessment

A system-level assessment of provider practices and recommendations for common standards, accountability, and technical assistance.

8. Governance and Shared Infrastructure Recommendations

A recommended model for coordination, including roles, responsibilities, authority, funding, staffing, data, standards, and accountability.

9. Five-Year Strategic Roadmap

A prioritized implementation plan identifying:

- Immediate/quick-win actions
- 1–3 year priorities
- Longer-term priorities
- Responsible parties
- Potential funding sources
- Estimated resource requirements
- Performance measures
- Key dependencies

10. Public-Facing Summary

A concise, accessible version of the findings suitable for youth, families, community partners, elected officials, funders, and the broader public.

11. Presentation of Findings

Presentation(s) to the Flint Sports Collaborative Partners and key community stakeholders.

V. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EXPECTATIONS

The selected consultant should develop a robust and inclusive engagement strategy.

At minimum, engagement should include:

- Youth
- Parents and caregivers
- Coaches
- Referees
- Schools
- School districts

- Community organizations
- Grassroots providers
- Faith-based organizations
- Parks and recreation leaders
- Municipal leaders
- County leadership
- Funders
- Health and mental-health organizations
- Transportation providers
- Disability organizations
- Sports medicine professionals
- Neighborhood organizations
- Higher-education institutions
- Private sports providers

The consultant should intentionally engage organizations and populations that may not have participated in previous planning efforts.

Engagement should be designed to minimize barriers to participation, including transportation, language, scheduling, disability, technology access, and compensation.

Youth participation should include appropriate compensation and should result in documented influence on the assessment.

VI. DATA AND RESEARCH EXPECTATIONS

The selected consultant should use a mixed-methods approach that combines:

- Existing research
- Surveys
- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Youth participatory methods
- Provider data
- Facility data
- GIS analysis
- Financial analysis
- Market/demand analysis
- Community engagement
- Comparative research
- Other appropriate quantitative and qualitative methods

The consultant should clearly distinguish between:

- Existing data
- Newly collected data
- Estimates
- Assumptions
- Data limitations

The final assessment should identify important evidence gaps that remain and recommend systems for improving data collection over time.

VII. PROJECT TIMELINE

The anticipated timeline is:

October 7, 2026
RFP released

December 11, 2026
Proposals due

January 2027
Consultant selection and contracting

February–June 2027
Project launch; stakeholder engagement; provider and facility inventory; data collection; GIS setup. Demand and access analysis; youth and family engagement; quality and safeguarding assessment; facility analysis; financial and operating analysis

August–October 2027
Scenario development; governance analysis; investment scenarios; community testing; preliminary recommendations

November 2027
Draft assessment, strategic roadmap, dashboard, and stakeholder review

December 2027
Final assessment, datasets, maps, public summary, presentation, and handoff

The selected consultant may propose an alternative timeline if it can be demonstrated that the proposed approach will produce a stronger final product.

VIII. CONSULTANT QUALIFICATIONS

The ideal consultant or consulting team will demonstrate experience in several of the following areas:

- Youth sports and recreation
- Community needs assessment
- Equity and access analysis
- Youth engagement
- GIS and geographic accessibility analysis
- Parks and recreation planning
- Facility planning
- Sports facility feasibility
- Program quality and youth development
- Child safeguarding and safety
- Organizational capacity assessment
- Governance and network development
- Financial and operating analysis
- Economic impact analysis
- Community engagement
- Strategic planning
- Implementation planning

Experience working in communities with significant socioeconomic disparities and complex public, nonprofit, school, and philanthropic ecosystems is strongly preferred.

A multidisciplinary team is encouraged.

XI. PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Proposals should include:

1. Organizational/consultant background
2. Relevant experience and qualifications
3. Proposed project team and roles
4. Understanding of the Flint and Genesee County context
5. Proposed methodology
6. Community engagement strategy
7. Youth engagement strategy
8. Data and GIS methodology
9. Facility and investment analysis methodology
10. Quality and safety assessment methodology
11. Governance and network-development approach
12. Proposed timeline
13. Deliverables
14. References for comparable projects
15. Detailed project budget
16. Identification of assumptions, exclusions, and potential additional costs

Proposals should clearly identify which portions of the work will be completed directly by the consultant and which, if any, will be subcontracted.

Please submit all Proposals via e-mail to Lauren Holaly-Zembo, Crim Fitness Foundation CEO, at lholay@crim.org. Any questions can be directed to lholaly@crim.org or 810-235-7130. All proposals are due by December 11, 2026 at 5 pm EST.

X. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Demonstrated understanding of the project
- Quality and feasibility of proposed methodology
- Experience with youth sports/recreation ecosystems
- Experience conducting community-based assessments
- Demonstrated capacity for youth and family engagement
- Data and GIS expertise
- Facility and financial analysis expertise
- Understanding of equity and accessibility
- Experience with youth safety and quality standards
- Ability to translate research into actionable recommendations
- Qualifications of proposed team
- Quality of references
- Cost and value
- Ability to complete the work within the proposed timeframe

XI. DESIRED END PRODUCT

The goal of this project is not simply to produce another report.

The desired outcome is a **shared, evidence-based roadmap for the future of youth sports and recreation in Flint and Genesee County.**

The final recommendations should help community leaders answer:

- What should we protect?
- What should we improve?
- What should we connect?
- What should we stop doing or do differently?
- Where are the greatest gaps?
- What infrastructure is needed?
- What should be shared across organizations?
- What standards should apply to organizations serving young people?
- How can we make participation more affordable and accessible?

- How can young people and families have a meaningful voice?
- What investments should happen first?
- Where could new facilities add value?
- What resources will be required to sustain those investments?
- Who needs to be responsible for implementation?
- How will we know whether the system is improving?

The assessment should provide decision-makers with a clear understanding of the tradeoffs and opportunities associated with different approaches, including a distributed network of strengthened neighborhood assets, strategic anchor investments, or a combination of both.

Ultimately, the work should establish a foundation for a youth sports and recreation system in which **where a young person lives, what a family can afford, whether a child has a disability, or whether a family has access to transportation does not determine whether that young person can participate.**

The goal is a system that is accessible, connected, safe, developmentally appropriate, sustainable, and responsive to the young people and families it serves.