

Work Session

Agenda Item #	6
Meeting Date	March 23, 2016
Prepared By	Sara Anne Daines HCD Director
Approved By	Suzanne R. Ludlow City Manager

Discussion Item	Review of Community Grant Program
Background	<p>The Community Grants Program, established by Council action in 2014, provides funding support in three program areas: Capital Project Grants, Cultural and S.T.E.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Grants, and Program and Operational Support Grants. Applications for funding, solicited by staff, are reviewed by the Grants Review Committee for Council consideration. Over the past two funding cycles, twenty-seven Community Grants totaling \$297,570 have been awarded to nineteen organizations.</p> <p>The Grants Review Committee, in preparation for the upcoming funding cycle, met on March 1 to discuss aspects of the program. The majority of committee members agreed that the application and evaluation process were working and that no significant changes were needed at this time.</p> <p>The Committee also discussed its understanding of the Council’s funding priorities and considered questions that had been raised by members of the Council regarding mid-cycle funding requests and the appropriateness of the current three-year limitation on providing funding to a single organization for ongoing programming.</p> <p><u>Funding Priorities:</u> The program guidelines state that funding priority will be given to projects or programming which primarily benefit the residents of Takoma Park and include one or more of the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide services to at-risk populations; • Engage diverse members of the community; • Promote civic involvement by under-represented populations; • Further the economic or environmental sustainability of the community; • Are offered in partnership with another organization; or • Are free and open to the public <p>The Committee has asked the Council to confirm the appropriateness of the identified funding priorities and provide guidance on the weight that should be given to each as they begin to plan for the upcoming grants cycle.</p> <p><u>Mid-Cycle Funding Requests:</u></p> <p>The Committee, in response to a question forwarded by the City Manager, encourages the Council not to award grant funds outside of the normal application and evaluation process as the practice may be seen as giving an organization an</p>

	<p>advantage over others who have complied with the requirements of the program.</p> <p>The Committee encourages the Council to refer these organizations to other granting agencies such as the Takoma Foundation and encouraged to submit their request during the normal application process.</p> <p><u>Limitation on Consecutive Grant Awards:</u></p> <p>The current program guidelines limit the award of grant funds to a maximum of three consecutive years for a specific program offered by an organization or for general operational support. The limitation, based on the guidelines adopted by the City for the CDBG program, was intended to encourage organizations to secure alternative funding for long term program or operational expenses rather than to rely on the City for ongoing funding. In response to a question raised by the Council following last year’s funding recommendations, the Committee expressed support for the limitation but agreed that there should be some flexibility.</p> <p>Representatives of the Grants Review Committee will be present to discuss the results of its March 1 meeting and to respond to questions regarding the grants program.</p>
Policy	<p>“A Livable Community for All.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">2016 Council Priorities</p>
Fiscal Impact	TBD (Proposed FY17 Community Grants Budget: \$165,000)
Attachments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants Review Committee – Membership Roster • Community Grants Program Guidelines • Minutes - Grant Review Committee Meeting March 1, 2016 (DRAFT)
Recommendation	Discuss funding priorities and recommendations of the Grants Review Committee
Special Consideration	

GRANTS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Last Name	First Name	Ward	Initial Appointment	Current Term Expires
Allen	Akena	5	5/12/2014	4/30/2018
Bloch	Nadine	3	12/14/2015	4/30/2017
Boyd	Elizabeth	6	5/12/2014	4/30/2016
Cardillo	Gary	2	5/12/2014	4/30/2018
Coffey	Pamela	1	5/12/2014	4/30/2016
Keller	Jay	3	12/14/2015	4/30/2017
Perry	Lesley	2	5/12/2014	4/30/2016
Wofford	Jennifer	3	5/12/2014	4/30/2017
Vacant				



City of Takoma Park Maryland
**COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM
PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

The City of Takoma Park Maryland’s Community Grants Program provides funding for a range of activities. Funds are awarded by the Takoma Park City Council following a competitive application process and evaluation by the Grants Review Committee.

PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Cultural and STEM Grants

This category includes projects, programs and events that contribute to the livability of Takoma Park, engage diverse populations, and strengthen the community’s commitment to the arts, humanities and sciences. Examples of eligible projects include but are not limited to community festivals, public art installations, workshops, spoken word events, history or science lectures, film screenings or series, and S.T.E.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) related projects and events, etc.

Eligible Applicants	Nonprofit Organizations and Business Associations
Grant Awards	Minimum \$2,500 / Maximum \$15,000
Match Requirement	\$1 per \$1 grant award Match may include cash, in-kind donations or volunteer hours

Program and Operational Support Grants

Programming designed to have a long term impact, providing Takoma Park residents and organizations benefitting the residents of Takoma Park with the support and resources needed to address current or future challenges and develop sustainable skills needed to realize their full social, economic, and physical potential. Applicants are encouraged, though not required, to partner with other organizations and City Departments to leverage available resources. Examples of eligible projects include but are not limited to educational and mentoring programs, job training, microenterprise development, wellness and nutritional programs, energy conservation and environmental sustainability programs, and general operational support for community based or economic development organizations.

Eligible Applicants	Nonprofit Organizations, Business Associations, Registered Tenant Associations, Neighborhood Associations, Grassroots Community Groups, and Parent Teacher Associations
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Grant Awards	Minimum \$2,500 / Maximum \$30,000
Match Requirement	\$1 per \$1 grant award Match may include cash, in-kind donations or volunteer hours

Capital Project Grants

Funding for one time capital projects designed to advance Takoma Park’s desire to create a vibrant and sustainable community that is economically efficient, environmentally sound, and socially equitable. Applicants are encouraged, though not required, to partner with City Departments in the development and implement of projects. Examples of eligible projects include but are not limited to construction of shared community facilities, development of community gardens, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, creation of public commons spaces, energy upgrades/retrofits, ADA improvements, etc. Requests for Capital Grant funds for projects primarily benefiting a for-profit enterprise or religious institution are not eligible for funding. Project must be located within the municipal boundaries of Takoma Park.

Eligible Applicants	Nonprofit Organizations and Business Associations
Grant Awards	Minimum \$5,000 / Maximum \$22,000
Match Requirement	\$1 per \$1 grant award Match may include cash or in-kind donations of materials

GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Funding Priorities

Funding priority will be given to projects or programming which primarily benefits the residents of Takoma Park and includes one or more of the following elements:

- Provide services to at-risk populations;
- Engage diverse members of the community;
- Promote civic involvement by under-represented populations;
- Further the economic or environmental sustainability of the community;
- Are offered in partnership with another organization; or
- Are free and open to the public

Funding Limitations

An individual organization may not receive more than two grant awards per fiscal year.

Effective July 1, 2014, a maximum of three consecutive years of funding may be awarded for a specific grant activity undertaken by an organization or for general operational

support awarded to a specific organization through the Program and Operational Support Grant Program.

Match Requirements

A match is required for all grants and may include, unless otherwise noted, cash, donations of goods and professional services, and volunteer time. Volunteer time is valued at \$25.43 per hour as determined by Independent Sector.

Living Wage Requirements

All business associations and nonprofit grant recipients, regardless of the amount of the grant award or their individual exemption status, are required to pay each employee assigned to the approved project or program a living wage as determined by City Code, Chapter 7.08 Article 5 [Living Wage Requirement](#).

Reporting Requirements

Grant recipients will be required to provide at least a quarterly accounting of all grant activity. A final narrative, due upon completion of approved project or programming, is required.

Grant recipients will be required to submit documentation of all grant expenditures (invoices, cancelled checks, etc.) and required match (receipts, award letters, volunteer time sheets, copy of checks, etc.).

Disbursement of Grant Funds

The disbursement of grant funds will be negotiated on a case by case basis and may include reimbursement of expenditures by grantee, direct payment to vendors, or quarterly disbursement of grant funds following submission of required reports.

APPLICATION PROCESS

A Letter of Intent is required of all applicants. If selected for further consideration, the applicant will be contacted by the Grants Review Committee and invited to submit a full application for funding. Applications will be evaluated based on established funding priorities, program guidelines and available funding. Recommendations of the Grants Review Committee will be forwarded to the City Council for consideration. Unsolicited applications will not be considered.

The final determination of awards is the sole responsibility of the Takoma Park City Council.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT

City of Takoma Park Housing and Community Development Department
301.891.7119 / housing@takomaparkmd.gov

City of Takoma Park Maryland
GRANTS REVIEW COMMITTEE
WORKSESSION MINUTES

DATE: Tuesday, March 1, 2016
TIME: 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
LOCATION: Takoma Park Community Center-Sam Abbott Citizen's Center
Hydrangea Room, 7500 Maple Avenue, Takoma Park

Members Present: Nadine Bloch, Elizabeth Boyd, Gary Cardillo, Pamela Coffey, Jay Keller, Lesley Perry, and Jennifer Wofford

Members Absent: Akena Allen

City Staff Present: Sara Anne Daines, HCD Director

Also Attending: Joan Schaffer, Montgomery County Council Grants Manager
Norka Ruiz Bravo, Resident
T.J. Mathews, Resident

1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 7:30 p.m. Copies of all current grant instructions, guidelines, and review procedures were distributed.

2. Welcome and Introductions

Joan Schaffer, Montgomery County Council Grants Manager, facilitated the meeting.

3. Facilitated Discussion of Grants Review Process and Funding Priorities

a. Program Guidelines and Priorities:

- Are the Council's established funding priorities clear? If not, what type of clarification is needed?

The committee agrees that the priorities are clear, but the weight of each priority is not as understood. After talking through what considerations the committee members saw as the Council's preferences, it was decided that the committee members would take time to think about their suggestions for the weight of the written priorities and submit them to the group. Based on the

responses, the committee will submit their recommendations to the Council.

- Are the current three-year funding limitations and the limit on the number of grants that can be awarded to single entity in a given funding cycle appropriate?

Discussion centered on whether systemic change can happen in three years and if organizations need more time with City funding before being able to create sustainable outside funding for their projects. The current three-year requirement was based on the Community Development Block Grant's three-year limitation. The committee agreed that there could be some flexibility on the three-year guideline.

b. Grants Review Process and Procedures:

- Does the current application process work? If not, what modifications should be considered?

The committee agreed that moving to using the Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers' common grant application was a wise move, both for city processing and for applicants to apply for other grants using the same framework. The committee will review the application further and submit any suggestions for improvement.

- Does the current evaluation process work? If not, what modifications should be considered?

The committee debated the need for interviews. The current process does not include interviews and relies upon the Letter of Intent (to be changed to Letter of Inquiry) and application responses and the opportunity for the committee to ask clarifying questions. The question was posed: What problem with the current application process would introducing interviews solve? The committee decided to table discussions until the end of the year for a final decision. A straw poll indicated that the committee was in favor of continuing without interviews.

- Newly formed groups or groups the committee members are not experienced with may be at a disadvantage in the selection process. How can the process allow the committee to develop familiarity with such groups?

The majority of the committee did not see an issue with new organizations having a disadvantage. Jen stated that it was an issue before she joined the committee, and in fact was asked to join by Council members because of the decisions made in the funding round before her joining.

- How should mid-year funding requests be handled by the Council?

The Council should advise applicants requesting mid-year funding to apply for City of Takoma Park grants during their active cycles or apply for Takoma Foundation funds, since they have more than one funding cycle per year.

c. City Council Expectations for Committee Recommendations:

- What kind of direction from Council would be helpful to the committee – e.g. ranked priorities?

The committee ran out of time to thoroughly discuss this question. It was somewhat handled in our discussion of weighting priorities.

- What is the best way to present funding recommendations to the City Council?

The committee ran out of time to thoroughly discuss this question.

d. Norms for Committee's Application Review Process

- Should the committee consider adoption of rules of conduct to govern discussions?

Nadine is tailoring an example list of norms for this particular committee, using a different name than rules of conduct, focusing on the need for respect within discussions.

- Are there ways to restructure the process to systematize the decision making?

The committee ran out of time to thoroughly discuss this question. It was somewhat handled in our discussion of the grants review process.

4. Selection of Next Committee Meeting

The next meeting will be Tuesday, April 12 at 7:15 p.m. in the third floor conference room at the Community Center.

5. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted
Lesley Perry, Grants Review Committee Secretary