

Business Item 2019-131

Regional Parks System Competitive Equity Grant Program Fund Distribution Plan

June 17, 2019

Community Development Committee



Today

Discuss and
recommend Fund
Distribution Plan for
the Equity Grant
Program



Background

- Activity since in 2014
 - 2014: Use of Parks by Select Communities of Color
 - 2015: Regional Parks Policy Plan
 - 2016-17: Engagement to outline program
 - 2017-18: Focus groups with non-park users for policy plan update
 - 2018: Regional Parks Policy Plan update
- 2019 program development
 - Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission, Equity Advisory Committee, Implementing Agency staff, Community Development Committee, Council staff
 - Question burst, priorities and values, internal vetting, scenarios discussions

Purpose of the Equity Grant Program

- Strengthen the equitable use of regional parks and trails
- Corollary benefits
 - Increased agency and community capacity to address equity issues
 - Increased awareness
- 2019 Equity Focus Areas
 - Welcoming underserved populations to regional parks system
 - Accessibility to people living with disabilities
 - Racial equity
 - Equitable use of regional trails

Eligible Applicants

- Implementing Agencies
 - Counties of Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Ramsey, Scott and Washington, cities of Saint Paul and Bloomington, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and Three Rivers Park District.
 - Agencies can apply together or individually
 - Must have, or substantially working toward, an ADA self-assessment or transition plan
- Partnerships with communities/equity organizations are rewarded in scoring

Available Funds

- \$300,000 Council capital bonds in 2019 budget
- Potential to award additional \$331,000
 - Currently in Council's six-year Capital Improvement Plan
 - If enough quality projects identified
- Individual grants \$30,000 minimum, \$200,000 maximum
- Each agency limited to two grants with \$200,000 total
- Council reserves the right to not allocate funds based on project quality

Eligible Uses

- One or more 2019 equity focus area
- In or connect visitors to regional parks or trails
- Consistent with *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*
- Broadly consistent with a Council-approved master plan prior to grant
- Capital in nature
- Compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act
- Approved by local elected board prior to grant

Examples

- Multiple implementing agencies work with equity advisors to engage community in identifying and shaping capital projects that advance equitable usage.
- Implementing agency conducts community engagement to directly inform proposed capital projects.
- Implementing agency partners with a community-led effort to identify and produce a capital project.
- Public art created with underserved communities as a welcoming vehicle into regional parks and trails.

Review process

- Staff screens proposals for completeness and qualifying criteria
- Review team scores and recommends projects
 - 3 Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission members
 - 2 Equity Advisory Committee members
 - 2 Community Development Committee members
 - 2 outside community members
- Council staff provides support for review team

Project and Program Evaluation

- Program evaluation will begin in 2020 after first round of grants for program revision and evolving equity needs
- Project evaluation will begin after completion of first round of projects to evaluate impacts on defined equity focus area

Selection Criteria

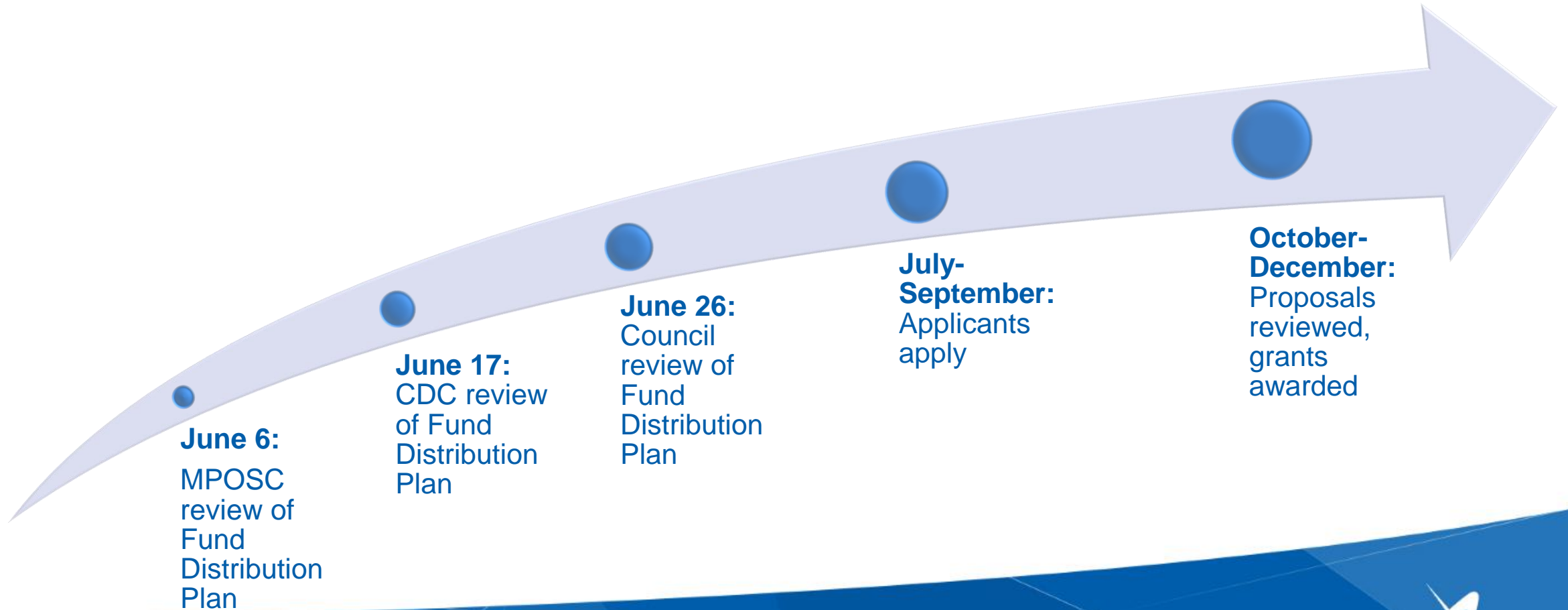
Criteria	Points	Detail
Impact on equitable use	25	Does project identify an underserved population and impact?
Community partnerships	20	Are community partners actively involved throughout project?
Community engagement	20	Are affected communities included in engagement process?
Capacity building	15	Does project increase agency and partner skills?
Geographic impact	5	How broadly are project benefits spread?
Local match and leveraged funds	5	Does project commit additional resources to effort?
Innovation	5	Does project use a new approach to regional parks?
Replicability	5	Can approach be used across the region?
	100	

Recommendation

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Adopt the 2019 Fund Distribution Plan for the Competitive Equity Grant Program for the Regional Parks System.
2. Recommend that as the equity program moves forward, additional money be provided to create awareness of the Metropolitan Council's emphasis on expanding equitable usage of the Regional Parks and Trails system.

Where we are and where we are going





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