

Information Item

Community Development Committee



Meeting Date: March 18, 2024

Topic

Proposed LCA 2025 Program Update Work Plan

District(s), Member(s):	All
Policy/Legal Reference:	Minn. Stat. § 473.25
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Sarah Berke, Senior Manager, Livable Communities, 651-602-1198
Division/Department:	Community Development / Livable Communities

Background

The Livable Communities Act directs the Council to “*establish criteria for uses of the fund ... that are consistent with and promote the purposes of this article and the policies of the Metropolitan Development Guide adopted by the council including, but not limited to:*

- (1) helping to change long-term market incentives that adversely impact creation and preservation of living-wage jobs in the fully developed area;*
- (2) creating incentives for developing communities to include a full range of housing opportunities;*
- (3) creating incentives to preserve and rehabilitate affordable housing in the fully developed area; and*
- (4) creating incentives for all communities to implement compact and efficient development.”*

As part of the recent discussion related to the regular annual approval process for the Livable Communities Act (LCA) Fund Distribution Plan for 2024, Committee members committed to work with staff and community stakeholders to develop proposed program changes for the 2025 program cycle.

There are two major proposed goals for the 2025 program update:

1. Ensuring the **alignment** of program design with the regional goals identified for the forthcoming [Imagine 2050](#) regional development guide
2. Encouraging broad **participation** from communities in the region and reducing barriers to entry to the grant programs

Timeframe

To ensure LCA grant funds continue to be available for applicants in 2025, changes that impact the Fund Distribution Plan for 2025 should be considered by the fourth quarter of 2024 and adopted no later than January 2025.

References

The Committee’s 2024 work plan for LCA program updates builds and follow on from Committee workshop discussions on [July 17](#), [August 21](#), and [October 2](#), 2023, and discussions on [December 4](#), [December 18](#), [January 18](#), [February 5](#), and [February 14](#).

Proposed Approach

1. Consultant role

The Community Development budget includes funding for a consultant in 2024 to provide program evaluation and facilitation services to advance LCA program update process. Staff intend to seek bids from qualified consultants to begin work in April or May 2024.

The proposed scope of services will include:

- Review and evaluate LCA program data, including application and grant records, as well as survey and interview findings collected on an ongoing basis. This would include an evaluation of the impact of the program framework initially implemented in the 2021 program year.
- Compile and analyze key questions from Committee members and other stakeholders.
- Facilitate sessions with program stakeholders and Committee members to explore key questions and inform and advance program update recommendations. Tentatively, this would include at least 2 workshops co-hosted with MetroCities, engaging cities, public development entities, and development team members.
- Provide a written report, by September 2024, evaluating the impact of the program and opportunities for improvement to better meet the two identified goals.
- The report should include:
 - o Strengths of current approach
 - o Opportunities to improve the impact of the programs
 - o Potential strategies for reducing barriers to entry and increasing participation
 - o Opportunities for better aligning program offerings with statutory and Imagine 2050 goals

2. Community Development Committee role

- The Committee would identify 2-3 members to serve as liaisons to the stakeholder engagement sessions, and to report back on learnings at the full Committee's workshop session.
- The Committee would plan one full two-hour workshop session, in July or August, to convene as a full body to compare Imagine 2050 goals and emerging policy plan recommendations with LCA program goals.
- The Committee would receive the Consultant's report in the fall and provide direction to staff to implement any needed program updates in 2025.
- The Committee may also direct staff to consider changes that need further research and development time and could be deployed in future program years.

Discussion questions

1. Are these two proposed goals the right focus for this year's work?
 - Ensuring the **alignment** of program design with the regional goals identified for the forthcoming [Imagine 2050](#) regional development guide
 - Encouraging broad **participation** from communities in the region and reducing barriers to entry to the grant programs
2. What opportunity do you see for continued/better alignment of LCA programs with the Imagine 2050 regional goals?
 - Our region is equitable and inclusive
 - Our communities are healthy and safe
 - Our region is dynamic and resilient
 - We lead on addressing climate change
 - We protect and restore natural systems