

Business Item 2021-161

Regional Parks System 2021 Equity Grant Program Funding Recommendations

July 1, 2021

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



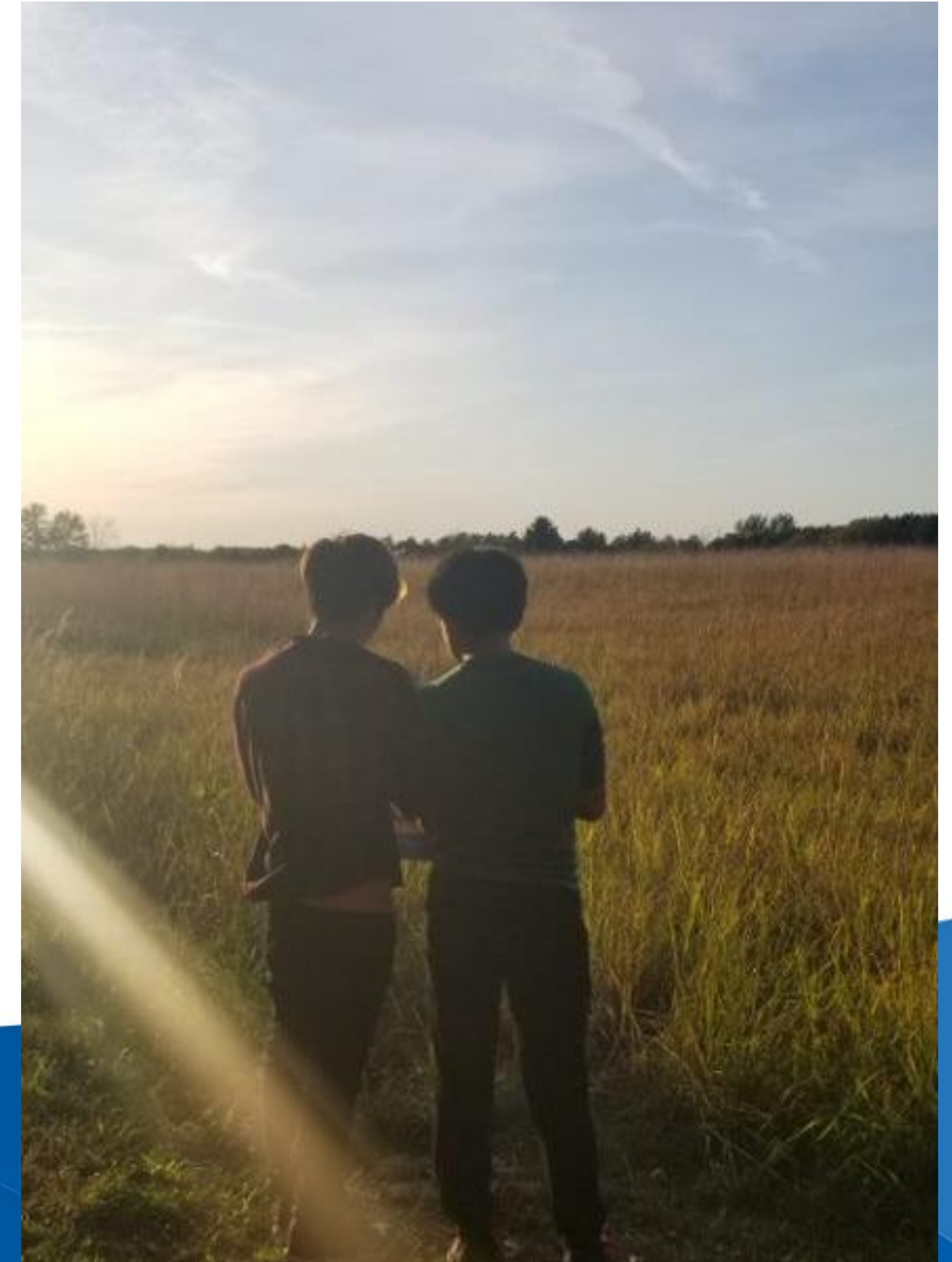
Background

- *Thrive 2040 and the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*
 - Strengthen equitable use of regional parks and trails across age, race, ethnicity, income, national origin and ability
 - Create and fund a competitive equity grant program for projects that strengthen equitable use of the Regional Parks System
- 2019 Pilot Program
 - \$300,000 available for capital projects
 - 3 of 15 applications funded
 - Demonstrated a great need for more funding, especially programming funds



2021 Funding Amounts

- \$2,064,000 available
 - \$664,000 in Council bonds for capital projects
 - \$1.4M in parks interest earnings prioritized for non-capital, programming projects



Applications and Review Process

- All 10 Regional Parks Implementing Agencies submitted applications
- 37 applications total, requesting \$3.8 million
- Review team scored the applications and met on May 14 to develop funding recommendations
 - Members from the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission, Community Development Committee, Equity Advisory Committee, and Implementing Agency staff
- 23 projects recommended for funding, for a total of \$2,054,000



16 Programming Projects Recommended for Funding

Agency and Project Name	Score	Amount
Saint Paul Wakáŋ Tipi Center Exhibit Concept Plan at Bruce Vento RT	95	\$ 55,090
Washington County Community Outreach Staff Position	92	\$ 150,000
MPRB Youth Employment as a Catalyst for Regional Park Awareness and Increased Visits	92	\$ 150,000
TRPD Growth of Pathways Internship Program	90	\$ 45,000
TRPD Bike Outreach and Engagement	90	\$ 80,000
Saint Paul Aquatics Water Safety and Drowning Prevention Program at Como and Phalen RP	90	\$ 94,910
TRPD Growth of Recreation Pass Plus Fee Assistance Program	90	\$ 61,500
Bloomington Introducing BIPOC Residents to Regional Parks (Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes RP)	89	\$ 33,500
MPRB Multicultural and Multilingual Advertising Promoting Minneapolis Regional Parks and Programs	85	\$ 40,000
Ramsey County Unlocking Winter Recreation - A Robust and Equitable Learn-to-Ski Program at Battle Creek RP	84	\$ 161,300
Scott County Mental Health & Nature-Based Wellness Programming for Disproportionately Impacted Communities	81	\$ 162,000
Anoka County Partnerships in Translation	80	\$ 20,000
Anoka County Learn to Ride Bike Program (partner with Washington County)	79	\$ 34,000
Ramsey County Cultural Liaisons for Parks	78	\$ 38,700
Anoka County Inspiring Youth through an Augmented Reality Trail Program at Wargo Nature Center	76	\$ 52,500
Carver County ADA Assessment(s) Update for the Regional Park Units	71	\$ 20,000
	Total	\$ 1,198,500

7 Capital Projects Recommended for Funding

Agency and Project Name	Score	Grant Amount
Washington County Parks-on-the-Go Outreach Vehicle**	96	\$ 60,000
Dakota County Building and Bridging Community by Creating Equitable Spaces along the Mississippi River Greenway RT**	95	\$ 160,000
Saint Paul BIPOC Ambassador Program**	84	\$ 100,000
Washington County Paddle Sport Rental Equipment and Learn to Paddle Programming at Square Lake SRF and Cottage Grove Ravine RP**	89	\$ 70,000
Washington County Accessibility Improvements	88	\$ 80,000
MPRB Pathways to Nature: Creating Welcoming Ways to Access Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary at Theodore Wirth RP*	87	\$ 200,000
Scott County Equitable Shorefishing Access Improvements Shaped by Community Stakeholders at Cedar Lake Farm RP*	82	\$ 185,500
	Total	\$ 855,500

**Projects that are a blend of capital and programming*

***Projects with at least 25% of the grant going towards programming*



Total Funding By Agency

Agency	Proposed Capital Funding	Proposed Interest Earnings Funding	Total Funding
Anoka County	\$ -	\$ 106,500	\$ 106,500
Bloomington	\$ -	\$ 33,500	\$ 33,500
Carver County	\$ -	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000
Dakota County	\$ 83,500	\$ 76,500	\$ 160,000
Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board	\$ 190,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 390,000
Ramsey County	\$ -	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000
Saint Paul	\$ 50,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 250,000
Scott County	\$ 180,500	\$ 167,000	\$ 347,500
Three Rivers Park District	\$ -	\$ 186,500	\$ 186,500
Washington	\$ 160,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 360,000
<i>Totals</i>	\$ 664,000	\$ 1,390,000	\$ 2,054,000

Takeaways from the Review Committee

- Overall, really impressed with the applications, especially the programming and blend of capital and programming
- Funding programming is a priority- use interest earnings for programming
- Agencies have other funding for capital projects
- Accessibility projects need to go beyond ADA requirements
- Proposals that scored high seemed to be developed specifically for the equity grant program, versus trying to fit existing projects into this program (such as capital projects that are already in an agencies capital improvement plan)
- Top projects were those with strong community engagement and partnerships
- Would like to see a more diverse representation of the community involved in the design of the projects
- Concerns around hiring BIPOC staff at low pay (temporary, part-time, etc.) - doesn't help towards equity unless there is a pathway towards permanent
- Funding needs to go beyond the urban core

Recommended Action

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve funding 23 projects totaling \$2,054,000 for the Regional Parks System 2021 Equity Grant Program, as shown in Table 1 of the report.
2. Authorize the Community Development Director to execute the grant agreements on behalf of the Council.