

2024 Regional Parks and Trails System Competitive Equity Grant Program Funding Recommendations

Business Item 2024-91

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

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April 4, 2024



Equity Grant Program Background



- Purpose: to provide funding to Regional Park Implementing Agencies for projects to advance equitable use of the Regional Parks and Trails System, with a focus on race, ethnicity, income, ability, age, and/or national origin.
- 2019 Pilot Program
 - Funded 3 of 15 applications for capital projects for a total of \$300,000
- 2021 Program
 - Funded 23 of 37 applications for a mix of capital and non-capital/programming projects for a total of \$2,054,000

2024 Applications and Review Process



- 8 of 10 Regional Park Implementing Agencies submitted applications
- 22 applications submitted, requesting \$2,165,500
- Technical review committee scored the applications and met on March 1st to develop funding recommendations
 - Members form the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission, the Community Development Committee, and Implementing Agency staff
- All 22 applications are recommended for funding, with 2 projects receiving partial funding, for a total of \$2,055,500

Projects Recommended for Funding

Implementing Agency	Project Name	Score	Grant Amount
City of Saint Paul	Saint Paul Water Safety and Drowning Prevention Program	93.9	\$100,000
Anoka County	Mobilizing inclusivity: Adaptive Equipment Solutions	92.6	\$131,500
Three Rivers Park District	Water Safety Education	92.5	\$65,000
Three Rivers Park District	Expanding Engagement with Latino Communities	89	\$60,000
Ramsey County	Premiere Tuj Lub & Sepak Takraw Courts at Keller Regional Park	88.6	\$200,000
Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board	Loppet Adventures Outdoor Programs	88.5	\$150,000
Washington County	Inclusive Playground with Sensory Features at St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park	87.9	\$100,000
City of Saint Paul	Rec Check Outdoors	87.3	\$100,000
Washington County	Water Safety Outreach Programs	87.1	\$20,000
Scott County	Phase II - Mental Health & Nature-Based Wellness Programming for Disproportionately Impacted Communities	87	\$192,000
City of Saint Paul	Hmong Plaza at the Saint Paul Changsha China Friendship Garden in Phalen Keller Regional Park	86.3	\$200,000
Three Rivers Park District	Brooklyn Center Farm to School Outdoor Classroom and Internship Program	86.3	\$75,000
Washington County/Anoka County	Social Media Influencer awareness Campaign for Regional Parks and Trails	86	\$20,000
Washington County	Washington County Parks-American Indian Historical Cultural Study	85.8	\$125,000
Washington County	Action Trackchair Outdoor Accessibility Wheelchair	85.8	\$25,000
Three Rivers Park District	In-Park Bike Rental Stations	83.7	\$50,000
Washington County	Mountain Bike Beginner Skills Area at Lake Elmo Park Reserve	83.3	\$75,000
Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board	Minnehaha Parkway Bike Skills Park	83.1	\$40,000
Ramsey County	Art Engagement Across Regional Parks in Ramsey County	83	\$67,000
Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board	Re-envisioning Minneapolis Grand Rounds Kiosk Graphics	82.3	\$160,000
Washington County	Washington County Cultural Arts Festival	80.1	\$45,000
Carver County	Outdoor Recreation & Community Outreach Expansion - Portable Rock-Climbing Unit	78	\$55,000
			\$2,055,500

Takeaways from the Review Committee



- While agencies submitted fewer projects for this 3rd grant cycle, it seems that the projects are more refined and prioritized
- All projects have merit and are worth funding; some of the lower scores might reflect the application more than the project itself
- A lot of support for water safety and drowning prevention projects, glad to see 3 agencies submit for these
- Would like to see more engagement with schools; schools could make excellent partners with most of these projects
- More than half of the projects are programming efforts for entire agency districts, rather than focused at one park or trail
- Need to add language in the Notice of Funding Availability clarifying whether or not this program supports expanding or continuing to fund existing programs
- Find a way to incentivize agencies to work together so it doesn't take away from their individual project ideas (i.e., doesn't count towards their funding limit)
- Presentation to the Committee of the Whole after the current grants close

Rationale for recommendation

The *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*, Finance Chapter 8, Strategy 4 states that equity is a consideration in the Regional Parks System funding and investment. The equity grant program is one key Council strategy for advancing equity in the region.

Recommendations

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve funding 22 projects totaling up to \$2,055,500 for the Regional Parks and Trails System 2024 Equity Grant Program, as shown in Table 1 of this report.
2. Authorize the Executive Director of Community Development to execute the grant agreements and associated amendments on behalf of the Council.