CDBG Pocket Parks Application Workshop
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Agenda for the Session

- Definitions & Application Logistics

- What is Allowable Work Under the Program?

- Meeting a National Objective

- Application First Steps

- Other Program Requirements

- Application Walk Through & Next Steps

Context & Definitions

- **CDBG: Community Development Block Grant**
  - Funded by HUD (Department of Housing and Urban Development)
  - Comes with federal requirements

- **Community Development & Facilities Fund**
  - Creating sustainable living environments in the community
  - Two programs: Pocket Parks and Community Facilities

- **"Pocket Parks"**
  - New greenspace and recreational areas
  - Lot no bigger than quarter acre

Context & Definitions

○ Funding overview
  - Community Development & Facilities Fund: approx. $2.4M
  - Pocket Parks Program: $620,865
  - Maximum individual Streetscapes award: $150,000

○ Match requirement
  - Minimum 25%
  - Can be cash or in-kind (labor and/or materials)

Who Applies?

○ City is both <u>applicant</u> and <u>(sub)recipient</u>
- Responsible for ensuring that all HUD requirements are met
- Usually involves contracting with a grant administrator
- City is still the Responsible Entity
- City procures for architect/engineer, general contractor, etc.

○ Note: only one Pocket Parks project can be open at a time

Application Cycle Logistics

○ Dates and deadlines:

- Applications are scheduled to open March 2, 2026
- Deadline for submittal scheduled for May 1, 2026.
- Apply online via IowaGrants.gov

○ A few notes…

- Anticipate approximately 4 awards
- Unawarded funds will roll into Community Facilities

What Kind of Work is Allowable?

- What is a "Pocket" Park?
    - Size of lot: no more than quarter acre
    - Not a full-blown / city park
- Created new
    - No upgrades to existing parks
    - Want to bring new green space and/or recreation options to an area of the city that doesn't yet have it
- Location matters
    - Can be anywhere
    - Think about floodplain restrictions
    - Bonus point for locating the park in the downtown/commercial area

What Kind of Work is Allowable (or not)?

○ Expectations:
  - Must be permanently installed
  - Designed/bid out by a professional
  - At least some component(s) must be ADA-accessible

○ What's not allowed?
  - Seasonal/temporary/movable items
  - Work on private property
  - Water features

Eligible Expenses

- Design professionals
  - Architects / Engineers
  - Post-award costs only

- Pocket Park components/construction
  - Labor & materials
  - Contingency (10%)

- Grant administration & Project Delivery
  - Assists with project compliance
  - See slides from this morning's Overview session

Meeting a National Objective

○ Low-to-moderate income (LMI)
- Under 80% area median income (AMI)
- Household

○ On an area basis (LMA)
- Various sub-types of LMI, per HUD
- Pocket Parks will have "service areas"

Understanding Low-to-Moderate Income Area

○ Who benefits?
- Part or all of the community?
- If part, which part?

○ How to defend this
- Draw a map
- Justify it with a narrative

Documenting Low-to-Moderate Income Area

○ Default option: ACS data
- This is the default method if the entire community is the service area
- Spreadsheet on IEDA website

○ Possible exceptions option: Community-wide survey
- If the service area is only a geographic portion of the city
- Guide on IEDA website

Application First Steps: Procuring A/E

○ Architect / Engineer (A/E) has roles pre- and post-award
- Drafting an initial design rendering
- Creating the final design, and later the bid specs
- Reviewing/approving pay applications, facilitating change orders, etc.

○ How to procure?
- RFQ – public procurement (see CDBG Management Guide website)
- Two different agreements

○ This is often a monitoring concern; now part of application

Application First Steps: Working with a GA

○ Grant Administration pre- and post-award
- Many applications are written/submitted by a Grant Administrator (GA)
- Ensuring federal compliance post-award is done by a CGA

○ Procuring and contracting?
- Local Councils of Government (COGs) are exempt from procurement
- RFP – public procurement (see CDBG Management Guide website)
- Two different agreements

○ Certified Grant Administrators are great resources

Other Programmatic Rules & Considerations

○ Historic preservation/Environmental Review
○ Federal "Cross-Cutting" Requirements

Environmental/Historic Review

- HUD rule to get "release of funds" – not following this could jeopardize all funding

- Pocket Parks program will utilize an "EA" level of review

- More detail online
  - CDBG Management Guide
  - "Third Thursdays" training

Federal Requirements

- Procurement
- Davis Bacon
- BABA

What's Next: IowaGrants Application

○ Create an IowaGrants.gov account & search for funding opportunity

○ Can start a "test" application to become familiar with it

○ City (or grant administrator on their behalf) can create and submit the application

Updates in 2026

○ New application format (in IowaGrants)

○ Set CDBG policies required at application

○ Language Access Plan also required

○ Delineation between project delivery and grant administration

○ Project team identification

○ Program Guide replaces Application Manual

Program-Specific Documents

- Project location map
- Site control documentation
- Floodplain map
- If unable to use ACS data – community survey information
- Proof of procurement
- Initial design renderings
- Line-item cost breakdown
- Documentation confirming match
- Letter of support from Main Street Director (if MSI community)

Scoring Method

- Historically, three sections: Checklist, Review, and Score
- Anticipated maximum "perfect" score of 35 (+1 for bonus)
- Traditionally evaluated by ~3 people; scores averaged

Scoring Criteria (7 Questions)

○ Percentage of LMI beneficiaries

○ Degree of need

○ Degree of impact

○ Ratio of CDBG to non-CDBG funds

○ Readiness to proceed

○ Degree to which there is a detailed, realistic long-term maintenance plan

○ Degree to which application is complete and clear

○ *Note: Bonus point for Pocket Parks to be located downtown*

Anticipated Application Failings

- Missing required attachments
- Public hearing not properly noticed/conducted
- Poor documentation of national objective
- Not enough detail in the design or the cost estimates
- Not as high of an impact/need overall as other applications
- Lack of consistency/clarity/readability/organization across the application

After Submission

○ Historically, IEDA has taken ~45 days to make awards
- Internal review and averaging of scores
- Make recommendation and await approval

○ Formal contract and award letter
- Do nothing before signing/returning contract
- Still do (almost) nothing before receiving Release of Funds
- Read the CDBG Management Guide!

○ Subrecipient & Grant Administrator Workshops
- Anticipated July 2026
- Subrecipient – virtually; Grant Administrator – in person

Any questions?

THANK YOU

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