



Board Summary Report

File #: 24-490

Agenda Date: 9/10/2024

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To: Board of County Commissioners

Through: Gini Pingnot, Director, Open Spaces

Prepared By:

Sandy Bottoms, Grants and Acquisitions Administrator, Open Spaces

Presenter: Sandy Bottoms, Grants and Acquisitions Administrator, Open Spaces

Subject:

1:15 PM *2025 Open Space Grant Cycle Funding

Purpose and Request:

Staff will present the recommended funding allocation for the 2025 Open Space Grants cycle and seek approval of the funding from the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC).

Background and Discussion: Since 2005, the Open Space grants program has awarded over \$62 million to agencies across the County for park, trail, and open space projects. Grant categories, funding caps, and application criteria have evolved over time to encourage competitive, high-quality projects and to meet the needs of our partner agencies. Open Spaces staff uses grantee outreach and recent grant cycle trends to make recommendations for upcoming grant cycles.

Open Spaces staff recommends keeping the total allocation at \$5.5 million and keeping maximum award amounts at \$600,000 (standard grants) and \$150,000 (small and planning grants) for 2025. These amounts were first introduced in 2023 in response to grantee feedback about rising costs. Keeping the total allocation at \$5.5 million will ensure we can fund an adequate number of projects while maintaining the higher maximum award amounts.

Staff would allocate the \$5.5 million in total funding for three grant categories:

- \$4,000,000 for Standard Grants: \$150,001 to \$600,000, 25% minimum cash match
- Up to \$750,000 for Small Grants: \$1,000 to \$150,000, 10% minimum cash match
- Up to \$750,000 for Planning Grants: \$1,000 to \$150,000, 10% minimum cash match

Minimum match amounts are calculated based on total project cost. Depending on the application pool, funds may be moved between categories (e.g., unawarded funds from the small and planning grant categories could support additional standard grants).

Grant awards will support Arapahoe County's funding priorities for outdoor recreation: park, trail, and open space improvements; land acquisition; planning; and environmental/cultural education.

Grant Training Workshops: We anticipate offering at least one training session for grant applicants in early 2025. Training sessions are required for new applicants and strongly encouraged for new agency staff involved in the grant submittal and administration process. Training materials will be posted on the County website for all applicants to reference.

Evaluation of Proposals: In spring 2025, an evaluation team consisting of County staff and Open Space and Trails Advisory Board (OSTAB) members will review applications, conduct site visits, and rank proposals based on the merits of each project. Considerations include scope, need, urgency, impact, leveraging funds, budget, timeline, partnerships, and the capacity of the applicant to complete and maintain the project. Proposals will be funded in order of rank until allocated funds are exhausted.

Fiscal Impact: Twelve percent of revenue from the Arapahoe County Open Space Sales and Use Tax is dedicated to the grants program. The fund balance is projected to exceed the recommendations for the 2025 cycle.

Alternatives: Recommend approval, approval with changes, or denial.

Alignment with Strategic Plan:

- Be fiscally sustainable
- Provide essential and mandated service
- Be community focused

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends that the BOCC approve \$5.5 million in funding for the 2025 Open

Space Grants Program.

Concurrence: On August 26, 2024, OSTAB recommended that the BOCC approve the proposed funding for the 2025 Open Space Grants Program.