

ITEM #: 52
DATE: 06-25-24
DEPT: P&R

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: US FOREST SERVICE URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY GRANT

BACKGROUND:

In April 2023, the US Forest Service announced a funding opportunity through the Inflation Reduction Act. The grant opportunity sought to provide multiyear, programmatic grants for tree planting and related activities, with a priority for projects that benefit underserved populations and areas. Grant funds were available to municipalities and non-profit organizations and required a dollar-for-dollar match. Applicants who qualified as "Disadvantaged", as defined by the federal Climate & Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) or other federal tools, were able to request a match waiver for their proposal.

The City submitted a grant proposal requesting \$810,500 along with a match of over \$813,000 that was to be used over the next five years (2023-2028). Additionally, the City's application included a waiver request for the dollar-for-dollar funding match requirement. Below is a summary of the measurable goals included in the City's application which are shown in Attachment A, with further detail.

1. Update the Ames Urban Tree Inventory
2. Expedite removal of all remaining ash trees in public right of ways and park-woodland interfaces (developed areas such as trails, parking, etc.).
3. Replace ash trees that were removed from public right of ways, (1 for 1) as defined by the Emerald Ash Borer Response Plan.
4. Contract with Iowa DNR to develop woodland management plans for multiple park woodlands.
5. Contract with the Conservation Corps of Iowa/Minnesota for woodland management (i.e. - tree trimming, invasive vegetation controls, etc.) in the parks.
6. Additional tree plantings in the parks and right of ways.
7. Construct a Gravel Bed Nursery (a space to develop young trees in order to be planted in the parks and right of ways)
8. Additional Park Maintenance staff training
9. Hire additional temporary staff to assist with aforementioned items

On September 14, 2023, the US Forest Service announced 385 grant recipients from the 842 applicants. The City's grant proposal was selected for funding at the \$810,500 amount requested. The City does not qualify as disadvantaged based on CEJST, but did meet disadvantaged eligibility using other federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) tools; therefore, the dollar-for-dollar match requirements have been waived.

The US Forest Service has partnered with the Arbor Day Foundation to administer the grant for the City. City staff will work directly with the Arbor Day Foundation on grant management, fund allocation, and required reporting.

Areas that are identified as "Disadvantaged" mean they have one or more Supplemental Index variables at or above the 80th percentile in either the nation or in the state, as well as being identified as having a Climate Change Risk Factor. The only exception to this is for ash removal and replacement.

The US Forest Service has mandated that the priority use of grant funds shall be used to complete work in the Disadvantaged portions of Ames, as shown on the map in Attachment B. Measurable goals 2, 3, 5 and 6, listed above, are to only be completed in the Disadvantaged areas of Ames. However, the US Forest Service has given permission to utilize a portion of the funds to complete measurable goals 1, 4, 7, 8, and 9 city-wide, since all residents (including those living in Disadvantaged areas) may benefit from these activities.

Although the City was notified of the grant award in September 2023, there has been extensive dialogue between the US Forest Service, Arbor Day Foundation, and City staff to fully understand the requirements and procedures outlined in the agreement between the City and Arbor Day Foundation, as shown in Attachment C. Staff wanted to ensure there was a clear understanding of what was expected before presenting this agreement to Council. A few highlights of the agreement are shown below:

- Section B.1 - The agreement period commences on June 25, 2024, and terminates no later than September 30, 2028.
- Section D.1 - The Arbor Day Foundation will pay \$810,500 on completion of measurable goals.
- Section D.3 - Payments to the City will be made on a reimbursement basis.
- Section D.5 - Arbor Day Foundation reserves the right to withhold 10% of grant funds until all grants reports are received and accepted.
- Section E - This section states that the match requirement has been waived.
- Section G.5 - The City shall prepare written programmatic reports on a bi-annual basis throughout the project period. They are due by May 30 and November 30 of each year.
- Section M - This agreement may be amended, in writing, if agreed upon by both parties.
- Section N - The City of Ames maintains insurance coverage as described in Section N.
- Attachment 1 - City's Approved Grant Narrative
- Attachment 2 - City's Approved Project Budget
- Appendix 1 - Includes in further detail the award provisions

City staff believes that the terms and conditions of this agreement are reasonable and can be accomplished within the specified timeframe.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve the Agreement with the Arbor Day Foundation and accept the US Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Grant in the amount of \$810,500.
2. Do not approve the Agreement with the Arbor Day Foundation for the US Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Grant.
3. Refer this item back to staff.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Over the last ten years, City staff has developed and implemented plans to improve the urban forest on City-owned property. This grant opportunity allows for that work to be continued and improved by planting additional trees, improving park woodlands, expediting removal of ash trees, and updating the tree inventory. These additional funds will allow staff to complete activities that are not planned in the current or future budgets. Staff believes this is a win-win for the City of Ames and the management of its urban forest. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternate #1.

ATTACHMENT(S):

[Attachment B - Disadvantaged Areas Map.pdf](#)

[Attachment A - Measurable Goals.pdf](#)

[Attachment C - Agreement with the Arbor Day Foundation.pdf](#)