

ITEM #: 29  
DATE: 11-12-24  
DEPT: ADMIN

**COUNCIL ACTION FORM**

**SUBJECT: EPA ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE JUSTICE COMMUNITY CHANGE GRANT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH MID-IOWA COMMUNITY ACTION**

**BACKGROUND:**

In November 2023, the Biden-Harris administration announced the availability of approximately \$2 billion in funding to support environmental efforts across the nation. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Community Change Grant opportunities are intended to invest in environmental justice initiatives that will advance community collaborative efforts towards creating a healthier and safer future particularly for disadvantaged communities that historically have been underinvested and overburdened by pollution.

With the addition of the full-time Sustainability Coordinator, staff is requesting that the City, in partnership with Mid-Iowa Community Action (MICA), apply for the Community Change Grant in the amount of \$10,000,000-\$15,000,000. **The City will be lead applicant (responsible for overall management, performance, oversight, and reporting responsibilities under the grant) and MICA will be the community-based partner.**

MICA has extensive experience assisting low-to-moderate income homeowners with weatherization efforts (examples include replacing inefficient or dangerous appliances, insulating homes, installing low-flow shower heads and faucets, insulating pipes, installing efficient lightbulbs and more) to make their homes more energy efficient, safe, and comfortable. MICA also administers LIHEAP (energy assistance) to low-income families to ensure they have access to basic needs like heat and energy in times of crisis. Furthermore, MICA understands that low-income or disadvantaged families can face a variety of challenges, and, therefore, provides additional wrap-around services such as family development support services.

The Community Change Grant applications are due on November 21, 2024. **City staff is seeking authorization to apply for the grant.** If the grant is awarded, City staff will be requesting City Council's authority to receive the grant award at a later date.

**At this time, staff is still working with MICA to complete the details of the proposed program. However, the following EPA climate action and pollution reduction strategies will be included:**

Climate Action Strategies:

- Strategy 1: Green Infrastructure and Nature-Based Solutions
- Strategy 2: Energy-Efficient, Healthy, and Resilient Housing and Buildings
- Strategy 3: Workforce Development Programs for Occupations that Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Air Pollutants

Pollution Reduction Strategies:

- Strategy 1: Indoor Air Quality and Community Health Improvements
- Strategy 2: Clean Water Infrastructure to Reduce Pollution Exposure and Increase Overall System Resilience

- Strategy 3: Safe Management and Disposal of Solid and Hazardous Waste

In 2023, MICA served 528 LIHEAP clients, where 107 were homeowners. In 2024, MICA served 493 LIHEAP clients where 98 were homeowners. In 2023, the priority list for weatherization in Ames included 336 households in Ames, where 90 were homeowners that would qualify.

As City staff and MICA continue to build out the application and proposed programs, staff will be seeking out additional partners to accomplish the strategies above. These partners may include:

- Iowa State University Center for Industrial Research and Service (CIRAS) and Office of Sustainability
- Central Iowa Local Workforce Development Board
- CyRide and other transportation partners
- Child Care Resource & Referral and other childcare partners
- Prairie Rivers of Iowa

The grant funds must be expended within three years. In addition, the grant must primarily benefit disadvantaged communities as defined by the EPA (see attachment).

#### **ALTERNATIVES:**

1. Authorize the City, in partnership with MICA, to apply for the EPA Environmental and Climate Justice Community Change Grant in the amount of \$10,000,000-\$15,000,000.
2. Do not authorize the City to apply for the grant.

#### **CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

**If the EPA Community Change Grant is awarded, the City will be positioned to make substantial progress in implementing the Climate Action Plan, specifically in the follow Climate Action Plan Big Moves: Building Retrofits and Renewable Energy Generation. Furthermore, the grant application directly reflects the Council's goals of valuing environmental sustainability and valuing a diverse, equitable and inclusive community. This grant will specifically target assisting low-to-moderate income households as well as supporting disadvantaged communities that are underinvested in and overburdened by pollution.** Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1, as described above.

#### **ATTACHMENT(S):**

[Disadvantaged Ames Block Groups.pdf](#)