

ITEM #: 14
DATE: 01-28-25
DEPT: ADMIN

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: CITY OF AMES CLIMATE ACTION GRANTS PROGRAM

BACKGROUND:

Throughout the development and implementation of the Ames Climate Action Plan (CAP), [accepted by City Council in June 2023](#), the City has emphasized the importance of robust public engagement in adopting and implementing climate action and carbon reduction strategies. The City alone cannot achieve 70% emissions reduction by 2030. It takes many community partners also engaging in this work.

To inspire and incentivize other community partners to take climate action, staff is proposing a pilot grant program where up to \$70,000 is made available through grants, since cost is frequently cited as a significant barrier to individuals and organizations implementing sustainable practices. The purpose of these grants, therefore, is to financially assist community involvement in CAP implementation.

After researching what other municipalities offer (see Attachment A), two grant pathways are being proposed as a pilot for calendar year 2025:

1. Community Climate Grants. Grants of up to \$10,000 will be made available on a competitive basis to any organization within the City of Ames, including non-profit entities and businesses, that want to implement sustainable actions that are in alignment with the City's Climate Action Plan and sustainability goals. These grants will require a minimum of a 20% cost match, permitting in-kind services.

Grant projects must align with City goals and have a broader impact to the community (see Evaluation Criteria slide in Attachment B); however, the nature of the projects will not be limited to specific types of projects.

Potential project examples could include, but are not limited to:

- Energy efficiency upgrades such as installing heat pumps and upgrading windows
- Installation of solar panels and battery storage
- Conducting outreach and educational events focused on sustainability and resiliency topics
- Implementing waste reduction strategies such as waste audits or collection containers
- Installing EV charging stations for public use or for multi-unit property use
- Nature-based resiliency installation projects such as planting a native prairie field or bioswales

Staff is proposing piloting two grant cycles, with up to five projects being awarded during each cycle, or until funding is expended. The first cycle would be in April and second cycle would be in October.

Applications will be evaluated by a committee made up of City staff (including the Sustainability Coordinator) and volunteer community members. Projects will be evaluated based on the project's readiness for implementation, focus and scope, project outcomes and impact (kWh, GHGs, number of people reached, etc.), and sustained benefits to Ames residents in the short and long term.

Grant awardees will have one year to complete their project after the notice to proceed. Grantees will be required to provide a final report highlighting the project's impact.

2. Youth Mini-Grants. Grants of up to \$500 are available to students grade 12 and below for sustainability projects aligning with the City's goals. The project must also include an outreach or public involvement aspect to encourage other students and/or residents to take climate action in the community. Projects must be completed within 6 months, and a final report is required to document the impact of the project. A supporting adult must sponsor the project. Applications will be considered on a rolling basis, beginning in April 2025 through May 2026 or until funds are expended.

Applications will be evaluated based on alignment with the City's goals, benefits to the community, achievable outcomes, and effectiveness of the education and outreach component.

Applications for both grants will be accepted through an online form. A published program guide and dedicated web page will be available for prospective applicants to familiarize themselves with the program requirements. Funds will be dispersed on a reimbursement basis after receipts are verified.

The source of funding for these grant programs is the Council Priorities Capital sustainability fund that was set aside for the implementation of the Climate Action Plan. Therefore, staff is requesting a one-time allocation of up to \$70,000 from the fund for the program. After one year (one youth mini-grant cycle and two community climate grant cycles), the program's impact and cost-effectiveness will be assessed and presented to Council to determine future steps.

The \$70,000 funding will be allocated between the two grants as follows:

Grant	Funding	Percent of Total
Community Climate Grant	\$ 66,500	95%
Youth Mini-Grant	\$ 3,500	5%
Total	\$ 70,000	100%

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve up to \$70,000 to be made available as grants through the proposed community climate grants and youth mini-grants.
2. Do not approve the up to \$70,000 to be made available as grants.
3. Refer back to staff.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Offering these grant opportunities is a strategy to incentivize the Ames community to invest in sustainable actions in ways that benefit the broader community. The Climate Action Grants Program leverages private dollars through cost sharing and engaging and educating the community through sharing project results, in addition to the greenhouse gas and resiliency benefits that will be realized by each project funded.

This program aligns with the City Council goals and the Climate Action Plan. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1 above.

ATTACHMENT(S):

[Attachment A: Municipal Sustainability Grant Programs.pdf](#)

[Attachment B: City of Ames Climate Action Grants - City Council 1-28-25.pptx](#)