

2019 Forward Fund Program Update



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- From 2015 through 2018, the Forward Fund has been a micro-grant program intended to **reinvest development revenue generated in the KSURA** into community infrastructure and innovative experimentation projects.
 - The majority of proposals submitted in recent years have been requests for funds to support major **physical improvement projects from the City's numerous non-profits.**
 - Significant portion of annual budgets for community non-profits are directed to resources *not* associated with capital infrastructure needs.
 - Lessons learned from the past four years have led to a set of **recommended improvements.**

FORWARD FUND SUMMARY

Each year, at the start of the funding cycle, staff has recommended improvements and modifications to the Forward Fund.

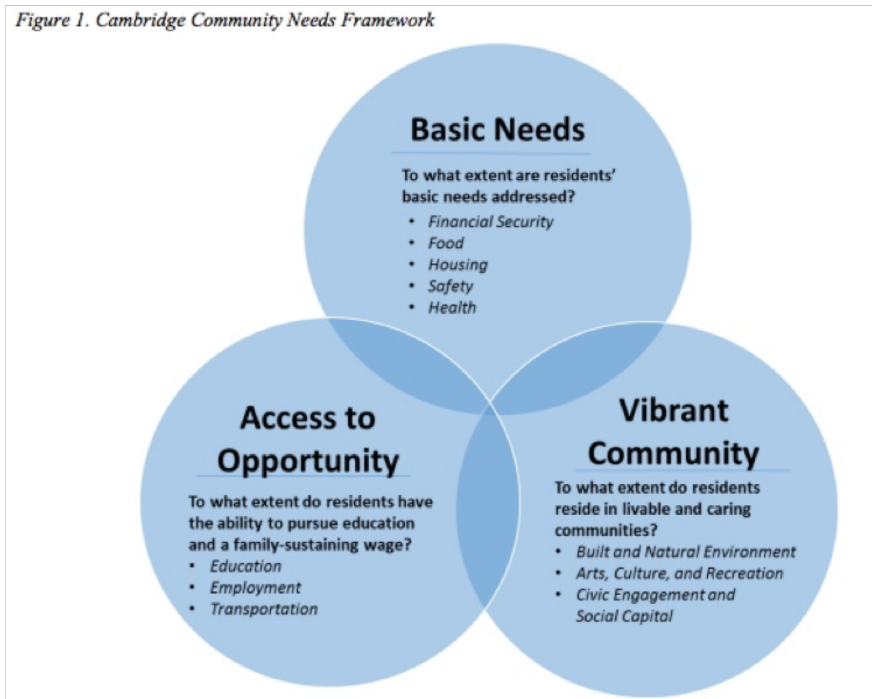
Some of the changes throughout the years were:

- Budget Changes
- Maximum Award Size
- Program Refinements
- Process Improvements



REALIGNMENT OF GOALS & TARGET AUDIENCE

Staff recommends realigning the goals of the fund with the City's goals and action plans of *Envision Cambridge* and the *Community Needs Assessment*. **Grants will be awarded to non-profits and community groups that own and/or operate community facilities servicing the needs found in the reports.** Applicants will be asked to provide a clear narrative on how the proposed project and organization's mission is aligned with improving the overarching needs.



PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS

Refining various procedures for the 2019 Forward Fund is recommended to allow for a successful transition to this new direction.

Suggested changes consist of the following:

- Rolling applications
- Revision of the eligibility and evaluation criteria
- Extended marketing and community outreach
- Modification to the Selection Committee's involvement and makeup



GRANT TYPES

Awards will be offered to applicants seeking funding in two categories.

Technical Assistance Grant:

- Architectural and engineering studies
- Business plans and market research
- Comprehensive facility maintenance planning

Community Infrastructure Grant:

- Construction
- Repairs, renovation, rehabilitation
- Open space and landscape improvements



TOTAL FUNDING AVAILABLE

- The Forward Fund has budgeted a total of \$350,000 since 2015. More than half of the awards have funded capital infrastructure improvements for community non-profits.
- To permit the Forward Fund to remain as one of the major forms of financial assistance for the City's non-profits staff recommends budgeting up to \$300,000 for the 2019 funding cycle.
- Staff is confident that this sizeable increase will allow the Forward Fund to provide a greater level of investment in key projects.



WHAT'S NEXT

- Staff has begun brainstorming sessions regarding a new pilot program with an emphasis on public art and placemaking and how the CRA can make physical improvements to a number of Citywide locations.
- Staff has also discussed the possibility of a larger initiative focused on a **Housing and Community Improvement Plan**. This framework may be used as a way for the CRA to provide multiple types of tools and resources to assist partner organizations in Cambridge and would include the Forward Fund as one of several tools in that toolbox.

Staff will report back to the Board with a more detailed plan on both of these items in 2019.





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