



DRAFT - MEMO

RE: 2018 Forward Fund Update

Date: January 17, 2018
To: Cambridge Redevelopment Authority Board
From: Carlos Peralta, CRA Program Manager

Update

The Forward Fund was created three years ago as a grant program to support specific physical improvement projects that better Cambridge's built environment for the benefit of all the city's residents, workers, and visitors. The awarded projects have helped advanced the CRA's mission as well as support innovative proposals. In recent months, the focus of the Forward Fund Grant Program (Forward Fund) has been discussed in great depth by the CRA staff and Board members.

The CRA discussed different parameters of the Forward Fund that could be changed or updated to allow the program to grow and continue to reach as many interested organizations as possible. Although the original structure of the grant has not been significantly altered since the program's 2015 launch, a number of steps have been taken to impact the program:

Proposed Changes

- The expected timeline of a completed project has always been difficult for some awardees to meet. Whether it be due to the priorities that come with operating a non-profit, delays in securing additional funding, or construction disruptions, expectations in completion timelines must be adjusted. The original projected completion date was for one year from the date of the initial 50% grant being awarded. In 2018, the awarded projects will now have a full two-year construction cycle to complete their approved project.
- As construction costs continue to rise, completing projects on budget will remain a problem for past awarded Forward Fund projects. In order to continue supporting these projects, an update for 2018 will be to allow applicants to submit proposals for additional funds to complete previously awarded projects that may need an infusion of capital to assist in finishing the project.
- CRA staff suggest an adjustment on how the funds can be used. In the past, the cost of designing the project was not allowed to be included in the Forward Fund budget of capital projects. For two years the Forward Fund included a planning grant to achieve more innovative proposals and to create direct links between planning, design and implementation. The 2018 applicants will be allowed to use as much as 10% of their grants on the design aspect of their project.

Conclusion

The CRA staff is committed to exploring various approaches that will continue the growth of the Forward Fund. While some of the parameters of the Forward Fund may continue to evolve, the program itself has become a signature component of the CRA's mission to assist numerous organizations throughout Cambridge in advancing their mission as well.



NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY

Date: 1/17/2018

2018 Cambridge Redevelopment Authority Forward Fund Micro-Grant Program

FORWARD FUND'S PURPOSE

The Forward Fund (the Fund) is a micro-grant program intended to support specific **physical improvement projects** that better Cambridge's built environment for the benefit of all the city's residents, workers, and visitors.

The Fund's objectives are to:

- **Advance the CRA's mission to implement creative initiatives that promote social equity and a balanced economic system.**
- **Support innovative proposals that craft resourceful projects to take advantage of local knowledge in order to maximize potential benefits.**

AVAILABLE FUNDING

The CRA will distribute up to **\$125,000** for 2018. Grant amounts will range from awards of \$5,000 to a maximum of \$25,000. The CRA reserves the right to allocate funding flexibility depending on the quality of the applicants received.

2018 FORWARD FUND GOALS

For 2018, the goals of the Fund grant program are to support projects that promote an **inclusive, collaborative, and resourceful** process within the City of Cambridge as defined below:

- **Inclusive:** Projects that meaningfully engage key stakeholders, and / or provide a venue for engagement. Applicants should be thoughtful identifying those needed to create the intended change and including those directly affected by the problem.
- **Collaborative:** Applicants are encouraged to undertake a joint effort with partners willing to share ownership and decision-making regarding a project and the program its project may facilitate.
- **Resourceful:** Projects should use existing resources and assets creatively to make the most of what a community already has, and build upon them.

The CRA especially seeks proposals that lead to a community innovation or new partnerships. The Fund hopes to support projects that present a breakthrough in addressing a community need or opportunity for connections in effective, equitable, and sustainable approaches.

TWO TYPES OF GRANTS

Applicants may apply for **one** of the two award types.

Both Forward Fund Capital Grants require a 1:1 organizational match – which could include another outside funding source or in-kind/volunteer matching resource. Capital grants are paid 50% at the time of the award, and 50% at the completion of the project. Up to 10% of the awarded grant may be used for the design portion of the project. Funds are not to be used for programming, but specific physical investments.

CIVIC EXPERIMENTATION CAPITAL GRANTS

Funding Level Requested (\$5,000 - \$25,000)

Awards will be offered to applicants piloting innovative specific physical improvement projects that encourage, enable, or execute a physical innovation, avant garde placemaking, or tactical urbanism in public and civic space, whether publically or privately owned.

The Civic Experimentation grant may also be used by previous Forward Fund awardees that may require an infusion of capital to assist in the completion of the applicants' project that has yet to be completed.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE CAPITAL GRANTS

Funding Level Requested (\$5,000 - \$25,000)

Awards will be offered to applicants seeking to fund a physical improvement project that serves a civic facility that provides public services and facilitates community connections or meets neighborhood needs regardless of innovativeness. This may include a building or infrastructure project for a non-profit or a Cambridge-based independent small business with a neighborhood function that touches a significant proportion of the population. Projects involving private property will need to specifically demonstrate the “publicness” and community value of the investment. If the proposal is for the grant to be part of a much larger project, it will need to demonstrate that the CRA investment is filling a critical gap in the viability of that project and demonstrate how that money will be used for a particular project element related to the Funds purpose, goal, and theme.

WHO SHOULD APPLY

The Fund is intended to use resources generated in Cambridge, combined with talent and organizational capacity with Cambridge, to ultimately benefit the city in new and imaginative ways. Eligibility is open to any Cambridge-based nonprofit organization, Cambridge-based community organization that has an agreement with a fiscal sponsor, or a Cambridge-based independent small business. Applicants from neighborhood groups, human services organizations, independent businesses, inventors, artists, educators, entrepreneurs, civic organizations, previous awardees, and more are all welcomed to apply.

Awardees from previous years are welcomed to apply for grants that will assist in projects that have yet to be completed due to financial constraints.

The Eligibility Criteria:

Projects must meet all of the following yes/no criteria in order to be eligible:

1. Project is located within Cambridge.

2. Project facilitates a physical improvement that does not require any additional ongoing funding from the CRA or the City to operate or maintain. Funds are not to be used for programming, only for physical improvements.
3. Fund request does not exceed award maximum.
4. Applicant is a Cambridge-based nonprofit organization, a Cambridge-based organization that has an agreement with a fiscal sponsor, or is a Cambridge-based independent small business.¹
5. All applicants must explain and/ or show how the project relates to the CRA mission and operating principles.
6. The applicant must have control over proposed installation site, or have a letter or support form the property owner.

APPLICATION AND AWARDING PROCEDURE

All submission will be digital using the online application process. Applications can be worked on and saved and then returned to later if necessary before submitting the final version.

The process for applying and awarding funds is summarized below:

- Submit online application form and attachments
- Forward Fund advisory group assesses proposals
- Finalists meet with CRA Staff
- Applicants and awardees are notified
- Applicants seek and obtain permits necessary for project implementation, submit finalized budget proposals
- Initial 50% of award are then granted to awardees who have successfully obtained the necessary permits and documentation of matching funds and/or services
- Final 50% of the funds are granted after completion of the project
- Outcome reporting within two months of completion date

Awardees are expected to present a successfully completed project, no later than two full calendar years, from the date of the initial 50% grant having been awarded in order to receive the award's remaining 50%.

QUESTIONS

All interested parties with questions are encouraged to visit our FAQ page located on <http://www.cambridgeredevelopment.org/forward-fund-2018>

¹ If an organization is *not* a 501c3 it must have an agreement with a fiscal sponsor that will act as the fiduciary for the purpose of disbursing CRA funds,

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