

Application Information Conference Call Transcript

Monday, January 29th, 2018

Kirstyn Horan: Hello! Welcome to the Application Information Conference Call for our Building Healthy Communities Greenspace Improvement Projects Request for Proposals (RFP). My name is Kirstyn Horan and I'm your main contact for this project. Natalie Kasiborski, the Director of Community Health Services at the Health Department of Northwest Michigan, Ashley Beaversdorf from MDHHS, and Kari Woloszyk from mParks are here with us to help answer your questions. We're excited about this project and looking forward to answering your questions about the RFP. We will post the Q&A discussed today on the RFP webpage for your reference.

Firstly, thank you all for submitting your Letters of Intent. We are happy to see a multitude of great ideas for greenspace improvement projects that promote physical activity – these projects have the potential to significantly improve the health our communities. We received **39** letters of intent, so this will be a competitive process. You are all invited to submit an application - we won't select proposals based on your letter of intent.

We'd like to start by highlighting and clarifying some key parts of the RFP and then we'll open it up for questions. If you have the RFP in front of you, I'll point out the corresponding page number as we move through these key sections.

Overview: Start on page 2. The funds for this opportunity originate at the Center for Disease Control and were granted to the Health Department of Northwest Michigan from MDHHS as part of an initiative to increase community access to safe and enjoyable sites for physical activity, especially walking and biking, and ultimately to reduce health disparities and increase positive health outcomes in Michigan. We have a total of approximately \$120,000 for this project which is enough to fund at least 8 greenspace sites at up to \$15,000 each.

Infrastructure: The primary focus of this grant is to promote physical activity through enhancements to the infrastructure of public greenspaces, so the bulk of your work plan should involve infrastructure and environmental changes. Some examples include: installation of lighting sources to improve safe walking and biking conditions, renovating walking paths/trails or way-finding signage, installing bike racks, etc.

We cannot fund playground structures or fitness equipment, but can fund the enhancement of playground landscaping, such as the installation of rubber flooring for injury prevention purposes.

We know that interventions that combine multiple types of changes can create a larger impact on the health of communities. Because of this, we're looking for these projects to combine environmental enhancements with physical activity programming and possibly health-related policy changes as well.

Physical Activity Programming: Now we're on page 3. We're expecting that all applicants are willing and able to host physical activity programming at their greenspace site following infrastructure enhancements. We've sub-contracted with mParks whose role will be, not to directly implement programming, but to assist grantees with securing and training appropriate staff, interns, volunteers, or

partnering organizations to implement Come Out and Play or Walk Michigan (or both) if appropriate for your site. In some cases, these programs may not be appropriate for your greenspace or your agency, or you may have a different idea for educational programming. In these cases, we're accepting proposals for alternative educational programs, such as a biking group, as well.

If your agency does not have the staffing capacity to implement educational programming independently, and you don't have volunteers or interns who mParks could train, we'd like to see in your application that you've contacted (if not secured) outside organizations who may be willing to implement the programming at your site (for example, YMCA, or MSU-Ext). If you receive funds, we will work with you to determine how we could move forward with educational programming at your greenspace.

Funds can be used for staffing, but we want to reiterate that the majority of your budget should go toward infrastructure changes.

Policy: We are not requiring health-related policy changes, but we are encouraging them. This could mean you include the adoption or enforcement of health-related policy in your proposals. Some examples of health-related policy would be tobacco-free environment or complete streets policies

Grant timeline: Moving to page 4, we're expecting that all changes to greenspaces will be completed within the grant period, **March 1st – September 30th**. However, physical activity programming should occur at the greenspace following infrastructure enhancements, which means environmental changes should be completed with enough time to implement programming prior to September 30th. We understand that this might not be possible for everyone, so we'll work with awarded sites to think through an appropriate timeline for infrastructure changes and educational programming.

Submission: Applications are due **Friday, February 9th** by 5pm to my email or via snail-mail, provided it's received by Friday the 9th. More details are provided on page 4-5 of the RFP.

Application components: On page 5, you'll see a list of items that should be including in your application.

- 1) Cover letter (giving an overview of your project, how it would increase physical activity, and your reasoning for the proposal)
- 2) Completed application form signed by greenspace manager (this is a representative from the agency or organization who owns the land)
- 3) Work plan for infrastructure changes
- 4) Budget and budget justification
- 5) Optional letters of support (especially from any partners that will be working with you on the project)

Our goal is to fund as many projects as we can with \$120,000. Because of this, your budget should reflect only the most necessary items to complete the project. We will prioritize applicants who secure or plan to secure additional or matching funds to expand their greenspace improvement project.

At this time, we'd like to open it up for questions

Q&A

Q1: Is this a reimbursed project that should be completed prior to receiving funds from the Health Department of Northwest Michigan (HDNWM)?

A1: Correct. The HDNWM traditionally completes a contract process and then submit a FSR to our finance department that will reimburse for expenses. However, if that would be a barrier for you, we can certainly discuss and explore other options.

Q2: Will there be a fillable PDF of the RFP application? Is there a word count limit?

A2: Yes. The PDF is fillable in both Internet Explorer and Chrome. Unfortunately, if you use Firefox as a browser, the PDF will not be fillable as it does not support fillable PDF forms anymore. We do not have a word limit; however, we are looking for thoughtful and well-constructed responses.

Q3: What is the award date?

A3: We are planning to announce the awarded recipients on February 27, 2018.

Q4: Can you please explain what is required in the cover letter?

A4: In looking at your cover letter, we are expecting an overview of your project, how it will increase physical activity, and your reasoning for the proposal. We are really looking for what you want us to know right off the bat, and why you feel that there is a demonstrated need for it in your community. The cover letter itself is not scored, but we are requiring it as part of the application.

Q5: Will applicants with a financial match receive a higher score than those without a match?

A5: That is not a specific part of the scoring process. We look to see that the budget is reasonable, justifiable, and demonstrates fiscal responsibility. Match itself is not an item that is being scored.

Q6: Upon completion of the project, will a staff person from your organization come out to verify that the project is complete?

A6: I will be visiting the site several times to complete evaluation of increased usage of the greenspace.

Q7: As it pertains to staffing for the physical activity programming, can funds be used for staffing?

A7: Funds can be used for staffing, but we want to reiterate that the majority of your budget should go toward infrastructure changes.

Q8: Can you please explain the options for physical activity programming?

A8: Kari (from mParks) I wonder if you could speak to this?

Kari: Yes, There are two different educational programs that mParks will be contracting with the Health Department for on this grant. One program is **Come out and Play** and that's an evidence-based program designed to engage youth ages 4 – 14 yrs. old to be physically active in greenspaces. So, it's a

set curriculum that we train your staff or volunteers that engages kids to use the greenspace. It's a series of activities that kids do. There are 50 different types of activities and they do 3 different activities minimum which translates to 60 minutes a day. So that's a set-program, with a set-curriculum. mParks provides all of the training and materials you need to do it. It works well to include in summer camps, if you have an hour you can fit in or possibly an hour and a half. Or you can possibly build a summer camp around it, using Come out and Play as the program that gets kids up and active in the great outdoors.

The other program is a walking program – **Walk Michigan**. And this is more for the adults and seniors. It can also be used with families and is not just exclusively for adults. This is a set walking program that engages adults to get up and go walk outside. You can use it in many different ways where there's a set walking group at one greenspace. Or maybe there's a community walking group that visits different parks. You can use the greenspace that you are improving in this grant exclusively or you can use other parks throughout your community as well, kind of like a traveling walking program. It's similar to Come out and Play as it's going to be a program where you do 30-45 minutes long (or it can be longer), but its set with different walking rates so with that you will be doing a warm up and then a walk and then a cool down, and you would be tracking steps the entire time. There's also a series of exercises that we'll be teaching the walk leader that will provide different assessments. So it will improve strength, flexibility, etc. so you can measure progress throughout the program. The program can be anywhere from an 8 wk. long program to a 10 wk. long program. It can be multiple walking groups at one time. So these programs are geared to different audiences, one for older adults and seniors with Walk Michigan and then younger kids with Come out and Play.

Kirstyn: Thank you, Kari. Another thing to keep in mind is that we are expecting both the infrastructure enhancements as well as the physical activity programming to be complete by that September 30th, 2018 deadline. So, keeping that in mind when planning your timeline is important.

Q9: Can you utilize the grant funds to enhance existing features such as expansions to or upgrades to increase usage of restrooms on site or water fountains?

A9: In looking at the RFP, I would make sure to highlight how those demonstrate increasing health equity and increasing access as well as how that project would relate to increasing physical activity at the greenspace.

Questions and Answers from the 2016-2017 Greenspace Applicant Information Conference Call

Q1: Could you clarify the timeline of educational programming?

A1: Educational programming should be implemented at the greenspace, following infrastructure enhancements, prior to September 30th. If you receive funds, the Health Department will work with you on a timeline for educational programming that works best given your particular circumstances.

Q2: Are the educational programs intended to be perpetual? Do you expect that we implement the programming after September 30th?

A2: Ideally, yes. If you choose to implement Come Out and Play and/or Walk Michigan, mParks can help train your staff/volunteers/interns to facilitate the program(s). This way, you'd likely still have the human capacity to implement programming after the grant period ends. However, you won't have to provide any evaluation or reporting on your programming after September 30th.

Q3: Do you want educational programs to be year-round?

A3: No, educational programs do not have to be implemented year-round. If a particular season works better for you and your community, that would be OK.

Q4: What do you count as “matched” towards this project?

A4: We were thinking “cash-matched” to complete the project. Not necessarily “in-kind.” But if you want to demonstrate the investment on behalf of your agency or organization, I think that is certainly appropriate to add into your narrative and application to show that you have some kind of in-kind match. But what we are looking for is more “cash-match.” For example, if you request \$7,000, you're going to match that with \$2,000 or \$5,000 or \$7,000 or \$10,000, etc. However, providing matching or additional funds is not a requirement.

Q5: Are you looking at match that has been committed or additional funds that we would be applying for?

A5: We ask for both. If you know for sure that the additional funds have been secured, then definitely put that in your application. If you're currently working on other applications for funds, please include that as well. So include if you have anything pending or if something is secured.

Q6: On page 2, paragraph 2, there's a reference to promoting healthy eating along with physical activity. Could you elaborate on that a little bit please?

A6: The Building Health Communities (BHC) grant that the Health Department received this year has 2 components. In addition to this project which promotes physical activity, BHC has another component – projects that promote healthy eating (called Healthy Food Service Guidelines). But the Healthy Food Service Guidelines is not part of our Greenspace Improvement Projects. This RFP relates to the BHC initiative to increase access to safe and enjoyable sites for physical activity. So the Health Department implements a different project related to healthy food service, which is part of BHC, but that's not what this project is focusing on.

Q7: Is that second project (Healthy Food Service Guidelines) open now?

A7: Yes, it is going on right now. We have sites such as food pantries, schools, and convenience stores where we're helping staff create policies, educational programming, infrastructure changes at their food service sites to increase access to healthy foods. But that is a separate project. If you'd like more information about the Healthy Food Service Guidelines program, please feel free to email me.

Q8: Can you review what you are looking for in the cover letter again?

A:8 Yes, so the cover letter is just be an overview of your proposed project. It can really be whatever you want. We're not scoring the cover letter, per se. We're just requiring that it's included in your application. It's really what you would like us to know right off the bat. I would say it would be great to have an overview of the project and directly relate it to physical activity.

Q9: You mentioned biking and walking specifically. But could we also include kayaking, for instance?

A9: Yes, so that gets a little hazy. We do want to say it's mainly for walking and biking. But, at the same time, sometimes people with physical limitations might want to choose a different type of physical activity. So we wouldn't want to exclude that by any means. Kayaking is an awesome form of physical activity for anyone. So if some of your changes involved signage for trails leading up to the river, improvements to or developments of trails, improvements to the greenspace used by the kayakers, making the kayaking more accessible, making walking to the water more accessible, those would definitely be eligible.

Q10: How does it relate to younger children? We are building a facility that's going to house children up to 12 yrs. old, so I know that the focus is on the walking and biking. How does that pertain to kids 0-5?

A10: Kari, I wonder if you could talk about Come Out and Play to answer this question. **Kari (mParks):** There are two different educational programs that mParks will be contracting with the Health Department for on this grant. One program is Come out and Play and that's an evidence-based program designed to engage youth ages 4 – 14 yrs. olds to be physically active in greenspaces. So, it's a set curriculum that we train your staff or volunteers that engages kids to use the greenspace. It's a series of activities that kids do. There are 50 different types of activities and they do 3 different activities minimum which translates to 60 minutes a day. So that's a set-program, with a set-curriculum. mParks provides all of the training and materials you need to do it. It works well to include in summer camps, if you have an hour you can fit in or possibly an hour and a half. Or you can possibly build a summer camp around it, using Come out and Play as the program that gets kids up and active in the great outdoors.

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parks throughout your community as well, kind of like a traveling walking program. It's similar to Come out and Play as it's going to be a program where you do 30-45 minutes long (or it can be longer), but it's set with different walking rates so with that you will be doing a warm up and then a walk and then a cool down, and you would be tracking steps the entire time. There's also a series of exercises that we'll be teaching the walk leader that will provide different assessments. So it will improve strength, flexibility, etc. so you can measure progress throughout the program. The program can be anywhere from an 8 wk. long program to a 10 wk. long program. It can be multiple walking groups at one time. So these programs are geared to different audiences, one for older adults and seniors with Walk Michigan and then younger kids with Come out and Play.

Q11: What specifically do you mean by “public”?

A11: By “public greenspace,” we're really just asking that it's open to the public and that anyone who wants to use it can use it, and that you're not charging for the use of the greenspace.

Q11 continued: We have a license and we'll have children in care from 6 pm – midnight, so I'm just wondering how having people on our site at that time or on our greenspace would work?

A11 continued: We know that some of these proposals are going to fall into a grey area, and we hate to restrict applications and be too black or white about this. So, I think if you can justify that the greenspace would be used by a high population or would be used by families, or would potentially be opened to other people, you could think through that process and talk through that process with Madison. This is not the last day that you can ask questions. We are going to accept questions and accept phone calls throughout this process. But I would encourage you to call Madison and talk through that a little bit, because it would be better to either know if it's going to be OK or not for an application up front. But we do want to make sure the space can be open for general use for the most part, but like I said we know that there'll be some grey areas in there.

Q12: If you choose an alternate program, what types of documentation are you asking for, for that program?

A12: That would be something we would work with you individually on if you were to receive funds. We're going to work with all recipients to figure out what reporting and evaluation will look like. However, we do need a head-count of the number of people who have participated in any educational program. That's really going to be the primary data piece that we're going to need to collect. Another eval piece is that we're going to want to assess the greenspace usage before and after the infrastructure changes—so that might be a little bit more of a case-by-case basis to determine how we're going to record those things. For the most part, it's going to be a head-count of educational programming participants.

Q13: Does the economic circumstance of a community have any weight on awarding the grant or scoring the grant?

A13: In terms of on our scoring sheet, there is not anything that directly relates to the location or economic circumstance of the community. However, this program focuses heavily on increasing health equity, so we would definitely be looking at those factors when considering proposals. Strong

applications from economically disadvantaged communities may be weighed higher than applications from communities who have ample resources and greenspaces. We want to increase access to appealing greenspaces for marginalized communities including low income families. So communities with limited resources might be great sites for more access to physical activity.

Q14: If the community has participated with Building Healthy Communities last year, is it OK to still submit an application?

A14: It is OK to submit an application. In all transparency, we aren't sure how our reviewers might receive that, but you're definitely eligible. In some cases, maybe it's seen favorably that you've done it in the past and you're going to continue it. But it's a really competitive process so there might be circumstances where reviewers might like to give funds to new parks or new greenspaces instead. I think it would be really important for you to point out why you feel the need to expand the work that was done last year and why that's important for your community and really distinguishing what was done last year and how this year is different.

Q15: Under the eligibility criteria, there's a statement about if there's a new public greenspace. Can you describe what kind of things you would be looking for if it's a new greenspace?

A15: If it's a new green space, we would like to see that it's going to be completed in 2017. So part of the educational programming requirement is that the educational programming occurs at the greenspace following infrastructure changes. So if it were a new greenspace, then we would like at least some of the infrastructure changes to have occurred prior to educational programming, which would be prior to September 30th.

Q15 continued: To clarify, it does state with existing funds – what kind of proof, I mean obviously funds need to be secured. Is that what you're thinking? What kind of funds?

A15 continued: I think one of the things we had in mind was maybe a municipality, whether that's a township, city, county, may already have plans to make changes to a greenspace that they own. So, if there was a plan already in place to make changes to a greenspace and this money would be used to further enhance that greenspace, the project would be eligible. Or we've heard of certain cities that have a greenspace set aside, they own it, they want to develop it, and this money would just kind of give them the extra boost and then their city's pitching in the rest of the money to do that. So those are the types of things we had in mind.

Q16: When do the applicants get notified if they're approved or not?

A16: We're expecting to be able to announce the recipients by March 1st.

Q17: I have a question about the budget and the budget justification form. We have a project that we are doing with our park and it's a pretty intensive project. On the budget, do you want me to list everything we're doing in our park and where the funds are coming from, including what we're going to use this money for if we get it from this grant?

A17: You can just include the items that you'd be using our funds for in your budget. I think there's a section in the budget justification form where you can put down if you've received additional or matching funds. You could put down the total amount you're going to be using for the project. But then when it says "estimated expenses for total project," you can just put the items down you will be using with our grant funds. There's going to be a lot of opportunity in the narrative for you to describe what the whole project is. Another way you could do the budget form is to list all of the sources and then down below in the expenses you could just give an overview of what those other major projects are, but not list them all out individually in detail.

Q18: Is this pool of money available each year?

A18: This is our first year receiving these funds. We hope to be able to continue this process in the future, but as of now, our funds are just through September 30th.

Q19: I have a question about the formatting of the application. When I've gone in to type in the various areas, it doesn't allow you to create a paragraph. It just wants you to write all together.

A19: I'm sorry to hear that! Knowing that, it would be OK with us if you didn't have separate paragraphs and if it was all just one prose. If you aren't comfortable with that, we would be fine if you wrote your responses on a separate word doc and attached the pages to your application – as long as it was clear what question you were responding to.

Q20: The two templates in the application form—the work plan and budget justification form—won't allow you to type directly into the document, so I just copied your example into word and filled it out there. Is that what you meant for us to do?

A20: Great question. Yes, that's exactly right. We just wanted those forms to be templates so that people could create their own form using the same format. You can then attach everything in the email or snail-mail package you send to me.

Q21: We can attach photos and letters of support and whatever we have that we think you might want to know or need, correct?

A21: Yep – definitely. In the application form, there's a spot where you can upload pictures right into that section. So you could do it that way or if you wanted something else you, could just attach a separate documents. That would be fine too.

Q22: With the picture uploads that we have, is it OK if the space is covered with snow in the pictures?

A22: Yes, absolutely. If you have pictures from the summertime, that would be great too. But if all you have are pictures in the winter, that's totally understandable and acceptable.

Q23: Is there a maximum length to the application?

A23: No, not technically. We would love to see it be succinct and concise, but we're not saying it has to be within a certain page range.

Please contact Madison McCullough at 231-347-5362 or at m.mccullough@nwhealth.org with any other questions.

Thank you!