

## **Memo: 2016 Forward Fund**

**Date: 12/16/2015**

After the inaugural Forward Fund Advisory Group selected the finalists for the first round of grants, performed an After Action Review (AAR) which reviewed each step of the inaugural Forward Fund process to understand what went right, and what could be improved or changed for next year. Using the group's cumulative expertise the Advisory Group developed a list of lessons learned and brainstormed ideas on how to continuously improve the Forward Fund. The changes proposed below are the results of that cooperative effort and discussions to date with the CRA Board.

### **PURPOSE AND GOALS**

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*This has not changed.*

The Cambridge Redevelopment Authority's Forward Fund (the Fund) is a micro-grant program intended to **reinvest** development funds generated in the Kendall Square Urban Renewal Area to fund pilot projects by non-profit organizations, community groups, and small businesses across the City of Cambridge. The Fund supports 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 goals 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.
- Offer awards to a diverse set of entities whose proposals are both feasible and supportive of economic vitality, livability, and sustainability in Cambridge.

### **TOTAL FUNDING**

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**\$60,000**

This represents a \$20,000 increase over last year. The Advisory Group would receive clear instructions that they do not have to commit to award all of the \$60k. The intent is to only award the highest quality, most qualified and most promising projects that most closely fit the intent of the program. The Advisory Group would determine based on the applications, how to apportion the split between the three grant types described below.

### **TIME PERIOD**

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The kickoff of the Forward Fund advertising and application process will take place earlier this year in order to accommodate a new completion date requirement. The application period estimated to begin January 22 and ending March 11. The tentative advisory group meeting date is proposed as March 25<sup>th</sup> and awards will happen by April 1. This is a full month and a half earlier than last year. Each grant contract with the CRA will now have a strict completion date by December 31 of the award year, which was not specified last year.

## GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

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*This has not changed.*

A CRA staff member responsible for receiving applications and responding to questions regarding the application process will manage the Forward Fund on a day-to-day basis. An advisory group consisting of CRA and City of Cambridge staff from various departments will be appointed to evaluate proposals and determine winners. *We plan to re-invite the original members of the advisory group from last year, and if they cannot commit to a second year, we will request that those city departments name someone else with similar expertise:*

- Chris Basler, Economic Development (Community Development Department)
- Gary Chan, Community Planning (Community Development Department)
- Jason Zogg, Cambridge Redevelopment Authority
- Kathy Watkins, Department of Public Works
- Lillian Hsu, Cambridge Arts Council
- Martha Flynn, Inspectional Services Department
- Martha Tai, Cambridge Housing Authority
- Nancy Tauber, Kids Council (Human Services Department)
- Paul Ryder, Recreation (Human Services Department)

## ELIGIBILITY

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Previous awardees of a planning & design grant last year will be encouraged to apply for a capital grant the following year. Eligibility would generally remain the same as last year, with one small update to clarify the “publicness” of the project in the criteria one, as this became a common sticking point last year for a number of applicants.

*The Eligibility Criteria as published last year:*

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

1. Located within Cambridge and is either fully publically accessible on public or private property, or is part of an institution with a civic/social/neighborhood mission that is open to and serves the community in the broadest possible sense.
2. Achieves 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 physical improvements.
3. Request does not exceed award maximums.
4. Applicant is a Cambridge-based nonprofit organization (501c3), a Cambridge-based organization that has an agreement with a (501c3) fiscal sponsor, or is a Cambridge-based independent small business.<sup>1</sup> No public sector applicants are allowed.
5. All applicants must explain or show how the CRA will be directly and creatively acknowledged as a funding source in their application and 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 of support from the property owner.

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

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

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*This has not changed.*

*The Evaluation Criteria as published last year:*

Project proposals will be evaluated and scored based on the following criteria by an advisory group to consist of a combination of CRA staff and City of Cambridge staff from various departments:

### Project Related Scoring Criteria:

1. Alignment with the purpose and goals of the Fund and the CRA mission and operating principles
2. Increase the quality of the built environment / public realm, tackle a public need, or provide an amenity
3. Demonstrates a tangible public benefit in an under-resourced area of Cambridge designated by the City of Cambridge [Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Areas](#)
4. Alignment with and support of current Cambridge planning and development efforts.<sup>2</sup>
5. Level of public access and visibility of the project

### Applicant Related Scoring Criteria:

1. Demonstrated capacity of applicant to successfully implement the project
2. Realistic financial feasibility of the project
3. Financial need of applicant

The CRA would reserve the right to apply additional evaluation criteria before accepting projects.

## THREE TYPES OF GRANTS

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### PLANNING & DESIGN GRANTS

Maximum Value: \$5,000

Awards offered to applicants aiming to assess/study the feasibility of a specific proposed physical intervention project. Planning & Design grants are paid at the time of award. Funds are not to be used for programming, only for the development of ideas for a specific physical improvement project. Funds in this category are not required to be matched by a third party.

### INNOVATION/EXPERIMENTATION CAPITAL GRANTS

Maximum Value: \$10,000

Awards offered to applicants piloting innovative specific physical improvement projects. These grant target projects that encourages, enables, or executes a physical innovation, “avant garde” placemaking, or tactical urbanism in public and civic space, whether publically or privately owned.

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<sup>2</sup> Cambridge planning and redevelopment efforts can be found on the Community Development Department website under “Planning & Urban Design,” “Transportation,” “Climate & Energy,” and “Parks & Playgrounds” <http://www.cambridgema.gov/CDD.aspx>

Innovation Capital Grants require a 1:1 organizational match - which could include another outside funding source or in-kind/volunteer matching resource.<sup>3</sup> Innovation Capital Grants are to be paid 50% at the time of award, and 50% at the completion of the project. Funds are to be primarily for specific physical improvements, but up to 5% may be used for associated programming.

## INFRASTRUCTURE CAPITAL GRANTS

Maximum Value: \$10,000

Awards offered to applicants seeking to fund a physical improvement project that serves a civic or neighborhood need regardless of innovativeness. This may include a neighborhood project in the public right of way, or it may be an infrastructure project for a non-profit or a Cambridge-based independent small business with a civic mission that touches a significant amount of the population. Projects involving private property will need to specifically demonstrate the “publicness” or civic 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 substantial and critically necessary gap in the viability of that project and show specifically how that money will be used.

Infrastructure Capital Grants require a 1:1 organizational match - which could include another outside funding source or in-kind/volunteer matching resource.<sup>4</sup> Infrastructure Capital Grants are to be paid 50% at the time of award, and 50% at the completion of the project. Funds are not to be used for programming, only specific physical improvements.

## WHO SHOULD APPLY

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*This has not changed.*

The Fund is intended to use resources generated in Cambridge, combined with talent and organizational capacity within Cambridge, to ultimately benefit the city in new and imaginative ways. In this pilot phase eligibility is intentionally left open to any Cambridge-based nonprofit (501c3) organization, Cambridge-based nonprofit organization that has an agreement with a (501c3) fiscal sponsor, or a Cambridge-based independent small business. It is anticipated the applicants may include neighborhood groups, human services organizations, independent restaurants, retailers, inventors, artists, entrepreneurs, civic organizations, and more.

## OUTCOMES

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*This has not changed, except the timeframe.*

As the CRA seeks to continuously improve and expand our program offerings, we hope to understand and document our impact in the Cambridge community.

- Awardees need to document the impact of the final project with any combination of photos, a 1-2 page written narrative, a video, or other creative mediums.
- Within two months of project completion but no later than January 15<sup>th</sup> of the following year, awardees are asked to submit these materials regarding their project’s impact for the community.
- Quantitative data is encouraged if relevant and available (i.e.: number of people visiting the site, number of people attending an event, associated matching or fundraising, economic impact, etc).

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<sup>3</sup> For example, due to the required 1:1 match if the ask is \$10k, the total project *value* is expected to be \$20,000 and above, if the ask is \$7k, the total project *value* is expected to be \$14k and above, etc. In-kind matches such as pro-bono work by an architecture firm for example must have a letter that specifies a statement of value of those in-kind matching services.

<sup>4</sup> IBID or see above.

## FORWARD FUND 2016 MARKETING STRATEGY

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In the first year we had listed a selection of “who should apply” including neighborhood groups, human services organizations, independent restaurants, retailers, inventors, artists, entrepreneurs, civic organizations, and this will remain the same. However, in an effort to gain a greater diversity of applicants amongst these groups we will broaden and be more strategic about our marketing efforts. Meetings will be setup in January with a variety of innovation minded groups in order to build up the base of applicants for the Innovation/Experimentation Capital grant, which was the most underrepresented type of applicant in the first year. We will develop a new postcard and microsite within the CRA website to match our new CRA logo and branding.