

§61.136. Small Community Grant Program.

(a) Program purpose. The purpose of this section is to provide a mechanism for determining the suitability of project proposals for funding the acquisition of land and the development of public outdoor recreation facilities by small communities.

(b) Scoring Criteria.

(1) Goals and Objectives (Total Range: 0-10 points). The project proposal identifies specific, well-defined goals and objectives that both clearly explain the local priorities to be addressed by the proposed project and illustrate how the proposed project, if funded, will support the department's Land and Water Resources Conservation and Recreation Plan, Texas Outdoor Recreation Plan, and Local Park Grant program objectives, as applicable.

(2) Community Need (Total Range: 0-10 points). Applicant:

(A) describes the needs-assessment process used for this project;

(B) explains the influence of community needs on the site design;

(C) provides a detailed description of the public input process (including the timing of public comment opportunity, methods for obtaining and analyzing public comment, and the results/impacts of public comment) (0-5 points); and/or

(D) identifies other methods of needs assessment such as staff recommendations or threat of a lost opportunity. (0-5 points)

(3) Timeline and Cost (Total Range: 0-5 points). The project proposal includes a detailed timeline and budget that identify, on a step-by-step basis, the waypoints along the continuum of the project's progress from start to finish and all expected project costs associated with the proposed project, correlated chronologically to the timeline and site plan. The department will evaluate proposed projects with respect to this criterion based on the feasibility of the project in the context of the department's empirical understanding of similar projects and the consistency of the submitted budget with that understanding, particularly with respect to acquisition and/or construction costs.

(4) Site Design (Total Range: 0-10 points). An application must include a site plan/boundary map that is clear, easy-to-read, and contains all information required by and

identified in the funding application. Acquisition-only projects must include plans depicting anticipated future development.

(A) Site design takes into consideration the character and special features (including features of natural, cultural, or historical importance) of the site and clearly identifies street names, total acreage, true north arrow, utilities, easements, special features, boundaries of existing parkland, and boundaries of acquisition tracts. (0-5 points)

(B) Project maximizes the use of funds for acquisition, recreation and conservation opportunities, determined by dividing the direct acquisition, recreational, and conservation costs by the total construction costs and multiplying the result by 5. (0-5 points)

(5) Organizational capacity (Total Range: 0-5 points).

(A) The applicant demonstrates to the department's satisfaction that qualified staff and resources are in place to manage the grant from inception to completion, or, alternatively, evidence that the applicant is partnered with an entity to provide staff and/or resources necessary to manage the grant from inception to completion.

(B) The applicant demonstrates to the department's satisfaction that resources are in place to properly operate and maintain facilities supported by the grant following completion, or, alternatively, a feasible plan and timeline for obtaining resources to properly operate and maintain the facilities supported by the grant following completion.

(6) Geographic Distribution (Total Range: 0-5 points). The project will improve the geographic distribution of park and recreation lands and facilities in the project's service area or within the applicant's jurisdiction.

(A) Project provides the first public park in the applicant's jurisdiction or intended service area (5 points); or

(B) Project fills a critical parks and recreation gap as identified through research, public input, or other means. (0-3 points).

(C) Project is safely accessible to the public via multiple modes of transportation (e.g., walking, biking, public transportation system). (0-2 points).

(7) Under-served Populations (Total Range: 0-10 points). The proposed project increases opportunity and improves access to parks and recreation facilities for under-served populations.

(A) Project improves opportunities for low-income citizens, defined as the percent of households making less than \$35,000 per year, based on economic and demographic data for the service area from the most recent federal census data; or

(B) Project improves opportunities for ethnic minority citizens, defined as the percent of a population that does not select "white alone" on the US Census, based on economic and demographic data for the service area from the most recent census data; determined by multiplying the sum of percentage of population qualifying as low-income and percentage of population qualifying as minority by 5.

(8) Accessibility (Total Range: 0-5 points). The proposed project provides park and recreation opportunities for physically/mentally challenged citizens that exceed federal and state required accessibility standards.

(9) Conservation (Total Range: 0-10 points). The proposed project actively protects or restores sensitive ecosystems and incorporates elements that cultivate support for and awareness of natural and cultural resources.

(10) Sustainable Park Design (Total Range: 0-10 points). The applicant demonstrates that the proposed project incorporates sustainable design features and practices.

(11) Coordination with Subject Matter Experts. (Total Range: 0-5 points).

(A) The applicant demonstrates meaningful input to the proposed project by subject matter experts in natural and cultural resource protection, acquisition, planning, design, and construction.

(B) The proposed project reflects consideration and inclusion of best practices in all phases of project development.

(12) Outside Partnerships (Total Range: 0-5 points). The extent to which the proposed project involves the contribution of resources from sources other than the applicant to serve as all or part of the applicant's matching share of funds.

(A) Current, signed letters of commitment providing detailed descriptions of the nature and value of contributions, including methodologies employed to determine those values. Points shall be awarded on a percentage basis, determined by dividing the total outside contribution value by the total match and multiplying the result by 3. (0-3 points); and/or

(B) Applicant demonstrates and documents external support greater than the required match, including overmatch and/or community mobilization. (0-2 points).

(13) Past Performance (Total Range: 0-10 points).

(A) Applicant is a first-time applicant. (10 points); or

(B) Applicant is in full compliance with the conditions of previously-funded and active recreation grants awarded by the department under this subchapter. (10 points); or

(C) Applicant is not in compliance with the conditions of previously-funded and active recreation grants awarded by the department under this subchapter but provides credible and feasible action plan and timeline for achieving compliance. (0-10 points).