

Meeting to Design Expansion of Small Grants Program

May 1, 2009

Attendees: K-Lynn Cameron, Sue Burke, Sue Sparling, Trudy Haines, Nancy Wallace

The group continued discussion and brainstorming the expansion of the Small Grants Program. The program name will be changed to “Small Grants for Community Partnering.” Its goals are: to connect people to the land; to reach and partner with new sectors of our communities with which we have not historically interacted; to put open space sales tax dollars back into the community; and, to increase the support base and provide visibility to the program. Language and philosophy will be included in the new guiding document.

Options for dedicating a portion of the \$20,000 expansion were discussed. Dedicated funds, separated out from funds applied for competitively, could be used to fund transportation for schools to take kids out to our open spaces, or to help other agencies match grants or meet causes we support but which would not fit into the regular Small Grant Program application. For example, transportation funds could be given to Rob annually and he could use those as needed when working with the schools, or other funds could be given directly to community programs without application.

The committee recognizes Rob has a justifiable need, but small grants may not be the appropriate place for funding. It should be included in his budget. This is much the same as Front Range Exotic Species Elimination having been funded by small grants for five years: an ongoing service which would be more appropriately funded by the Department rather than small grants. It would be awkward for staff to compete for the same money as citizens, so, in the expansion Rob wouldn't be competing for small grant funds. Agencies and schools would apply for “transportation to open spaces.” We would expect to see proposals from the community. If that funding is regularly requested, changes to departmental budget/funding would be recommended.

It is important that we not dilute the Small Grants Program as it currently exists. It has community recognition and fills a need that must not be lost in the expansion. One of the strengths of the program is that interaction for Small Grants comes *from* the community *to* the Open Lands Program. It starts at the community level rather than at the departmental level: citizens request dollars from the open spaces sales tax, rather than the department initiating where dollars are dispersed.

It was agreed the entire \$20,000 would be used for competitive grants, with no dedicated funds. The Small Grants Committee will review all applications, balancing grant categories, types, and geographic locations. We will keep to a specific, annual grant cycle to maintain efficient administration of the program.

The Open Lands Advisory Board has approved the concept of the small grant expansion. It does not need to approve exact wording for criteria, etc. This committee will determine the wording to the expansion and bring it to the Board for approval. While developing criteria, it is important we be able to show and determine that a proposed project serves the Open Lands Program and the open spaces sales tax. For example, community gardens leave the land open and connect people to the land. People who are connected to the land see value in its preservation and care, and in leaving land undeveloped.

Agreed:

- Small grants will not fund salaries, the same as GO CO criteria (same as past criteria)

- Small grants will fund transportation to open spaces (change from past criteria) (only Larimer County-managed open spaces, or to any outdoor experience?)
- Preference will be given for projects on “protected lands.” We need to give examples of what “protected lands” means, i.e., conservation easements, residual lands, what else? non-developable lands through HOA’s? others? While “protected lands” will be preferred and may be the safest way to start the SGP expansion, the committee may choose to fund a project on non-protected land if that project’s goals fit within the program’s goals.
- Research in Open Spaces: After discussion, it was decided we need to flush this out more, getting Meegan and Jeffrey involved. There could be outreach and community partnership benefits to funding behavioral studies or small portions of research on our open spaces. For example, funding a local high school’s class research on an open space would connect people with the land and reach a new community. We won’t know the demand until this funding option is available to researchers.
- Agriculture: Agriculture projects may be either for-profit or non-profit projects. We need to determine maintenance requirements. Community gardens may not be here in five years, and yet may fit overall program goals. Criteria may need to be different for community agriculture. Some criteria:
 - Community minded, connecting a community and its people to an area
 - Preference to protected lands
 - Conservation mindset to the project
- The revised grant application could include a checklist of all the categories and types under which a project falls to help in committee maintaining a balance to the funding.
- The Small Grants guiding document will be an evolving document and it will state so. We will need to make changes as we address issues.

See structure of new grant categories and types.

SMALL GRANTS for COMMUNITY PARTNERING

Goals

- connect people to the land
- reach and partner with new sectors of our communities with which we have not historically interacted
- put open space sales tax dollars back into the community
- increase the support base and provide visibility to the program

Categories and Types

1. Protection or enhancement of open space, trails, natural areas, wildlife habitat, river areas, and wetlands on private or public land

- a. Provision or enhancement of natural areas, including wildlife habitat, river areas, and wetlands
- b. Linkages with existing open lands (linkages may be either trails or wildlife habitat)
- c. Opportunities for environmental education, outdoor recreation, or nature interpretation

2. Agriculture

- a. Community gardens
- b. Local food production
- c. Infrastructure & tools

3. Increased Access to Open Lands

- a. Education
- b. Nature-based health and wellness programs
- c. Transportation
- d. Children

4. Research in Open Spaces

- a. Which people – which lands – how – who will be served/benefit (outcome oriented)