

Community Opportunity Fund Taskforce

Recommended program guidelines 11/30/09

PROGRAM GOALS

- **Improve San Francisco's Parks.** Create well-designed and efficiently-constructed park features to enable the City to continue providing a diverse set of safe, clean, sustainable, and high-quality park experiences.
- **Leverage Resources.** Leverage contributions – volunteer hours, monetary, and in-kind donations - to expand park funding beyond the \$5 million provided by the 2008 Clean and Safe Neighborhood Parks Bond.
- **Build Community and Foster Stewardship.** By listening to the parks needs of San Francisco residents and enhancing park experiences based on those needs, the program will increase the number of park users of all ages committed to civic investment and a sense of community.
- **Improve RPD/Community Partnership.** The program will improve partnerships between RPD and community organizations by streamlining the park capital improvement process and clearly outlining the roles and responsibilities for City staff and community partners.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Stable, committed community and neighborhood groups dedicated to parks
- Significant expansion of volunteer hours committed to improve RPD projects
- Balanced distribution of funds across parks and the city
- Significant infusion of community resources (i.e. sweat equity, in kind, and financial) into parks
- Well designed, thoughtful capital improvements to parks across the city
- Streamlined, improved collaborative process for community/department partnerships

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Every year, RPD will produce a COF annual report that details:

- Administrative expenditures for that year (broken out by menu and off menu projects)
- Number of projects awarded in each category, to whom, for what, for how much
- Map of awards that illustrates geographic distribution, and amount of awards
- Number of volunteer hours committed and performed in parks
- Number of new parks interest groups established
- Amount of financial support pledged and ultimately committed to park projects
- Customer satisfaction with process, as determined by surveys
- Description of outreach plan to all park stakeholders, neighborhood associations, and media
- Staff and customer satisfaction/assessment of quality and durability of capital improvements
- Number of projects finished on time and on budget

NEXT STEPS

- **Conduct an informal survey to gauge park stakeholders' preferences.** Distribute an online survey to park partners requesting feedback on most desired park improvements; tally and present to taskforce to inform deliberations.(COMPLETED)
- **Develop Partnership Toolkit.** Create clear guidelines for assessing and fostering a community group's "readiness" to begin a capital project; create a clear, consistent path for review of projects within the department.(IN PROCESS)
- **Identify a COF Director.** Identify a central point of contact for technical assistance and support for community groups that want to partner with department on capital projects.
- **Partner with NPC, Parks Trust, and other park stakeholders to conduct outreach.** Develop an outreach plan that reaches existing park stakeholders, and specifically attempts to broaden participation beyond the existing parks community.
- **Develop events and materials to promote successful COF community/department partnerships and projects.** Host a community project faire to publicize good projects, and teach other community members how to succeed; develop a COF Annual Report; establish a web presence for the program.
- **Formation of strategic partnerships to leverage additional resources.** Identify and seek out other organizations and agencies to support COF projects with in kind resources and/or complementary services. Potential partners include the Arts Commission, San Francisco Unified School District, the Department of Public Works, the Public Utilities Commission, and Foundations.
- **Create a network of park improvement "mentors".** Organize a network of volunteers who share their experience and advice with interested COF applicants.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE/PROJECT TYPES

Two “balancing acts” that the task force has addressed:

- **Be efficient AND be unique.** The task force has repeatedly stressed the importance of keeping administrative (i.e. project management) costs as low as possible; the task force has also consistently asserted that the COF should fund many small projects that mirror the unique preferences and tastes of the community. These two goals are hard to achieve simultaneously within one capital project. The proposed COF structure attempts to create a portfolio of projects, where efficiencies can be gained on larger projects, or more standardized projects, to balance against the resource intensive nature of smaller, complicated projects that might be awarded.
- **Leverage significant resources vs. focus on high need communities.** The task force has unanimously agreed that the primary goal of the COF, besides improving parks, is to foster a sense of stewardship for parks. This implies encouraging – and rewarding – groups who actively fundraise or volunteer to help take care of parks. At the same time, the task force also recognizes that many individuals and communities lack the resources or capacity to contribute in those ways, but still deserve access to the improvements COF can fund.

In an effort to develop a basic program structure that supports all of these values, staff proposed that the COF fund two types of projects: Menu and Custom.

MENU projects are park basics – improvements that require less design expertise, require standardization or at least benefit from standardization, have standard per unit costs, and are relatively inexpensive. Examples include drinking fountains, picnic tables, fencing, and pathways. See Table 1 for list of Menu projects that community groups can apply for. This branch of the COF program has lower leveraging requirements for participation, and is designed to benefit those park users who have limited financial and time resources to contribute to their park. Menu projects should not exceed \$100,000. Menu projects must be completed within one year.

TABLE 1. SAMPLE COF MENU (WITH ESTIMATED COST/UNIT INSTALLED)

Menu Item	Cost/Unit	Menu Item	Cost/Unit
Garbage/Recycling Receptacles	\$1200 EA	Paving Renovation & Pathways	\$8/SF
Benches	\$2,000 EA	Kiosks	\$3,000 EA
Drinking Fountains	\$4,000 EA	Fencing (6’ chain link)	\$100/LF
Lighting	Wtg for info	Stairs/Steps/Handrails (4’ wide)	\$1,200 CY
Signage/Wayfinding/Interpretive Signs	Wtg for info	Gates (4’)	\$1,200 EA
Picnic Tables (Wood)	\$1,200 EA	Sports Court Resurfacing	\$30/SF
Seating (Seatwall – 16”)	\$1,000 CY	Playground Safety Surfacing	\$30/SF

CUSTOM projects more closely resemble our typical capital partnerships with community groups, and require a more complex design process. Custom projects offer neighborhood groups more opportunities to enhance the unique identity of their park/neighborhood, and provide a vehicle for the creativity of residents and neighbors. Given the high level of participation required by staff and community members to make these projects successful, leveraging requirements are higher than for Menu projects. Examples include community gardens, art installations, play equipment, and landscape improvements. Custom projects will not exceed \$250,000. Custom projects must be completed within two years.

TABLE 2. EXAMPLES OF POTENTIAL CUSTOM PROJECTS

Popular “Custom” projects	
Landscaping Improvements	Irrigation
Play Equipment	Playfield Renovations
Art Installations	Retaining Walls
Community Gardens	

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

Projects will be evaluated against the other projects in their category (menu and custom). Most of the application criteria are the same for both categories, but the requirements relating to project coordination, leverage, and long-term stewardship are simplified for menu projects. All projects will be rated in these areas: Project Planning and Readiness, Leverages Resources, Park Experience and Identity, Fosters Stewardship and Community Building. Please see the Community Opportunity Fund Application Evaluation Criteria (COF Criteria 11.30.09.pdf) for more detailed information about criteria.

APPLICATION PROCESS

1. RPD hosts Applicant Trainings. See attached Community Opportunity Fund Applicant Materials Outline (COF ApplicantOutline_DRAFT.pdf) for more information.
2. Applicant shares idea with NSA Manager; if a Large project, must also attend Project Manager office hours to obtain feedback on cost estimates, etc.
3. Applicant submits application to Selection Committee.
4. Community Challenge Grant program staff will review applications to determine if they meet eligibility requirements.
5. Eligible applications will be forwarded to the internal RPD review team; the review team will provide feedback and comments on all applications.
6. Selection Committee reviews all applications, with RPD staff comments. (See attached Draft Reviewer Materials Outline (COF_ReviewerOutline_DRAFT.pdf) for more information.
7. Selection Committee applies criteria and selects a balanced, diverse group for final awards. See the Community Opportunity Fund Application Evaluation Criteria (COF Criteria 11.10.09.pdf).
8. Selection Committee recommendations go to RPD Commission for approval.

The Partnership Toolkit Subcommittee was established to develop a new gifting process which will address concerns and challenges about the way that private organizations partner with the Department to improve parks. The goal of the Partnership Toolkit is to create a system in which high quality community-driven park improvement projects are created and supported by both the community and the Recreation and Park Department. The Partnership Toolkit aims to improve the experience of partnering with the Recreation and Park Department. The Community Opportunity Fund application will use process established by the Partnership Toolkit, but make the Selection Committee the “front door” instead of the GM.

ROUNDS & CALENDAR

The taskforce has suggested 3 rounds of COF awards, beginning with a small pilot round to provide an opportunity to “debug” the COF guidelines and program structure, if necessary. Multiple rounds also allow the Selection Committee, Department, and Applicants to improve the quality of COF projects by benefiting from lessons learned from early rounds.

One key Project Manager (PM) to:

- Ensure a consistent standard of technical assistance to project applicants
- Best to take advantage of economies of scale in managing groups of like projects
- Easier to monitor and manage administrative expenditures of program

RPD Staff proposes three rounds of awards for the \$4 million unreserved and available for the COF:

Round I (Pilot – 6 months)	\$500,000
Round II (12 months)	\$1,250,000
Round III (12 months)	\$1,250,000
Total Awarded	\$3,000,000
Project Management @ 25%	\$1,000,000
Total COF	\$4,000,000

For the first pilot round, 30% of funds will be set aside for Menu projects, and 70% for Custom projects.

After the first pilot round, the Selection Committee will make recommendations to the RPD Commission on:

- The appropriate “split” of funds in future rounds for Menu and Custom projects
- Suggested improvements to the application process and guidelines

If the \$1.0 million in reserved COF funds is released upon completion of the other bond projects, RPD will expand the third round.

RPD will align the awards cycle calendar to complement, rather than mirror, the Community Challenge Grant (CCG) program. This will allow prospective applicants to utilize any CCG funds awarded as match for a COF application. See COF_Grant Rounds Calendar.pdf for a Grant Round Calendar.

STAFFING

Without knowing the number of projects likely to result from each round, it is difficult to estimate the project management, or soft costs, associated with this program.

RPD staff propose that administrative costs paid for by the COF for these first three rounds of awards would be capped at \$1,000,000. This amount represents 25% of the \$4m in COF funds; the average soft cost percentage for a typical capital project is 30%. This administrative budget would fund one full time capital Project Manager for 2.7 years.

All other materials and supplies costs will be addressed with existing funds, or through partnerships with other organizations.

After the first pilot round, RPD capital staff should develop a more refined workload estimate, and make recommendations for achieving further administrative savings, if possible, to the RPD Commission.

Administrative support for the Selection Committee will be provided by the CCG program staff; Project Management will be provided by the RPD Capital Division. NSA Managers and Planning staff will provide support to the COF Project Manager on an as needed basis.

SELECTION COMMITTEE

A review panel comprised of the General Manager's Office, PROSAC, and RPD Commission appoints the Selection Committee. The General Manager's Office will pre-screen and prepare application packet for review.

- (1) PROSAC member
- (1) RPD Commissioner
- (1) Community Organizer/Representative from a High Needs, Underserved area
- (1) Member of a parks support/stewardship group
- (1) Youth Member (Youth Commission)
- (1) Programming/Service Provider
- (1) Landscape Architect

CCG staff will provide support for the Selection Committee. This support includes collecting and organizing applications, scheduling selection committee meetings, and staffing the selection committee's deliberations.

The Selection Committee will serve a 3-year term with the option to recuse themselves from reviewing any application that may pose a conflict of interest issue.

OUTREACH PLAN

NPC, Parks Trust, and Lisa Seitz will jointly draft an outreach strategy to promote the COF. This plan should include contacting parks interest groups, neighborhood associations, elected officials, policy makers, and a specific strategy for reaching out to low income communities. The plan should leverage existing partnerships, and take advantage of existing forums, as much as possible.

OTHER COOL IDEAS

These suggestions are for the Department and its partners to consider – and hopefully adopt – as part of the implementation and management of the COF program.

- Partner with the Art Commission to develop pool or artists community groups can work with
- Approach other foundations to help partner on projects
- Have public review site furnishings on the "Menu" with staff
- The PM should decide whether it is better/more cost effective to use JOCs or bid out for "Menu" projects
- Create a COF website that enables direct donations to projects, and hosts a "craigslist" for park improvement supplies