



Major Projects Challenge Fund

\$1,600,000 per year

Program category: Building for the Future

Anticipated Key Outcome: Renovated, expanded, or upgraded parks and park facilities, funded through a combination of City and community-generated funds

Racial Equity Outcome(s): Develop a fair and equitable criteria resulting in the implementation of an inclusive process that ensures historically underserved and underrepresented communities will have opportunities to access this fund

Current Situation: The City is often asked to provide financial support to capital development or improvement projects that focus on parks and recreation, for which there is little or no City funding available, and interested communities don't have enough funding to cover the total cost of the project.

Solution: This Challenge Fund will provide City funding to leverage community-generated funding for renovation of parks and park facilities where other City funding is unavailable.

An annual competitive application process will prioritize projects with a parks and recreation mission, public access, leveraged non-City funds, and other pertinent criteria. A portion of funding will be allocated to assist diverse communities and organizations that lack resources for a match.

The purpose of the Major Project Challenge Fund is to provide a funding match, to fund a “major project” that is not otherwise covered by an identified Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) fund source. While not specifically defined, it is envisioned that a “major project” is a significant improvement or renovation to an existing SPR owned site or facility. It is not a collection of small project or a simple building repair such as a new roof. Merely being expensive doesn't necessarily make it a major project – it should significantly expand the life and usability of the subject facility such that it provides more opportunities for people to make use of the facility. The initial idea was that the money would go to one project every year or one project every other year, with some amount of money available for planning and design to get a project ready for construction that might be funded in part by a subsequent funding round. As noted in the language above, “[a] portion of funding will be allocated to assist diverse communities and organizations that lack resources for a match.” However, it may be that the best use of the fund will be to support one or two significant improvement projects. Until SPR receives the first round of requests for planning/design funding, it is hard to know. To that end, SPR would like to target

\$300K in 2016 for planning and design funding and \$100K for staff support to help applicant(s) get projects ready to submit for construction funding and help to identify matching dollars.

Included in the process will be some key strategies to mitigate historic and current barriers preventing access and opportunities by underserved and underrepresented communities. One of the most critical components of this process will be the outreach to underserved and underrepresented communities. The second critical component will be staff support to enable these communities to effectively navigate the application process. Third will be identification of the match; some communities may have easier access to dollars with which to provide a match. Other projects may not have any match or the match could be limited to volunteer hours or other in-kind services. Being creative on the type and timing of the match will be important to ensure equity across all project proposals. Finally, providing planning and design money in advance of funding a construction project will also be an important component of this process.

The following is an outline of how the application process could work in 2016. After several months of public outreach, consistent with the City's Inclusive Outreach and Public Engagement guide, a two page letter of intent/project proposal letter would be due to SPR. The idea is to initially require just a simple description of the proposal to make it easy for community members to apply for the funds. SPR staff would then have the opportunity to work with the applicant to refine the project, identify potential match source(s) and determine at least a rough order of magnitude cost for the project. It is unlikely that there is any project out there that will be ready to go to construction in 2016 so the focus of next year will likely be on planning and outreach, design and permitting.

Major Project Challenge Fund – Proposed Timeline

- **July – September 2015** – Development of Draft Process and Criteria
- **August/September 2015** – Presentation to Division Directors and Parks RSJI Change Team
- **September 8, 2015** – Presentation to District Oversight Committee
 - Draft Screening Criteria
 - Strategy for 2016
- **October 13, 2015** – Presentation to District Oversight Committee
 - Finalize screening criteria and strategy for 2016
- **September – December 2015** - Staff Development of outreach strategy and On-line materials
- **January – March 2016** – Public Outreach, including use of the IOPE. (may include workshops or information sessions for potential proposals)
- **March 2016 – Proposal Letters Due**
- **April – May 2016** – Staff review of applications
- **June 2016** – District Oversight Committee review and recommendation to Superintendent
- **July 2016** – Funds awarded to project. Projects will be managed by SPR.

For the actual construction funding requests, there would be a longer two-step process that could begin with a letter of intent and then follow up with a formal application for those projects that were recommended to move forward based on their letter of intent. There would be a three to four month gap between the Letter of Intent and the actual funding application submittal to afford the applicant(s), potentially working with SPR staff to refine the proposal and prepare the full application. Then SPR staff would review the applications and make a recommendation to the District Oversight Committee as to which project(s) should be funded.

Based on all of the above, the following are the draft criteria by which SPR staff would screen the initial requests for planning and outreach, design and permitting funds.

CRITERIA

- a. Is it on SPR owned property and/or a SPR owned facility?

Rationale: Since the funds come through the Park District, they should be spent directly on SPR property and/or an SPR owned facility. Also, SPR will manage the project.

- b. Is it an identified capital need at a park or park facility that is lacking in funding; is it a large scale project that may be funded from a variety of public and private funding sources with a total construction cost estimated to be in the \$2 -7 million range? It should be a single project such as building renovation or expansion, or a facility improvement. It should be one discrete project, not a collection of smaller projects combined into one project.

Rationale: There are other City funding sources such as the Neighborhood Matching funds available for smaller projects. The idea is that this funding should go to a significant project that improves or expands an existing facility. What is important is that the project be significant enough to provide long term value to the greater community.

- c. What is the match? How does the project leverage or have the potential to leverage other resources through the actions of other public agencies, funding from public, private or philanthropic partners, and/or in-kind contributions of time and energy from citizen volunteers?

Rationale: For the actual construction phase of the project, the Major Project Challenge Fund should be matched with a 50% match but the match amount could be less and/or provided by other than a monetary match. Ideally, the applicant would be able to raise 50% (or more) of the project cost and the fund would fill the gap to bring the project up to 100% funding. There may be situations where there is significant community support for a project but the applicant doesn't have the resources and/or connections to provide the full 50/50 match. In those situations, this criterion is intended to be flexible in setting a target goal for a match, but not an absolute requirement. There may also be situations where the applicant is unable to identify any match. In those situations, it may be up to SPR staff to step in and help the community with the funding process. If no other funding sources are identified during the initial submittal, it will be incumbent on staff to work with the applicant on funding in advance of submitting the formal application.

For the initial phase of planning and design where SPR would make smaller amounts available in the range of \$20,000 – \$50,000 for planning and/or design work, there still should be some sort of match. The percentage and form of the match could be more flexible at this initial phase to get a project ready to apply for the larger construction amount.

- d. Does the project demonstrate a high degree of community support or involvement as demonstrated through a public review process and/or is the project consistent with approved plans, such as a neighborhood, community council or other recent planning documents?

Rationale: We are looking to fill an established/identified need at a particular facility. Ideally the project would have been previously identified in some prior planning work done by Parks or another government agency, or the community through a community process. A newly identified need/project could be considered, but the proposal will likely have more support if the project fills a long standing gap/need.

e. Does the project serve an underserved community?

Rationale: Parks has a commitment to racial equity and social justice. This funding is an opportunity to target improvement(s) to SPR facilities in underserved communities where there is an identified need but no or limited funding sources. These areas deserve special consideration if our goal is to provide equal access to all. SPR staff will be working to ensure that all communities are aware of this funding program and are provided the resources necessary to identify projects and prepare a competitive application. SPR staff will work with underserved communities during the initial application stage to establish a recommended match that will be vetted by the oversight committee. The match could be other funding source(s) or something else such as donated services.

f. Does the proposal restore or significantly extend the life of a current park or facility?

Rationale: In keeping with the “fix it first” mantra of the Park District, we are looking for projects that make improvements to existing facilities. The purpose of this challenge funding is not to undertake new capital projects but to make improvements to or expansion of existing parks or facilities.

g. What potential effects does the project have on the City’s maintenance and operating costs?

Rationale: We will want to see how the proposed improvement/expansion impacts our maintenance and operating costs at the subject facility. Part of the review of any proposal will be SPR staff determination of potential added facility costs. SPR staff is better suited than any awardee to undertake this detailed analysis and it should be part of the proposal/application review. That said, the initial funding request should include a rough order of magnitude of the additional maintenance and operating costs of an improved/expanded facility; i.e, what are existing costs and what are costs anticipated to be with the expanded or renovated facility. These costs could shift as a design evolves and thus just serve as a baseline in reviewing any proposed application.

h. What is the overall benefit of the project to the community?

Rationale: We will want to see the project and hence the expenditure benefit as many people as possible.

Post-award and assessment of process: Parks staff will assess the first year of the process and evaluate whether or not the key outcomes have been achieved, propose changes and modifications to the criteria and process as appropriate and present a summary report to the Parks District Oversight Committee.