DED Announces Changes to 2021 Civic and Community Center Financing Fund Award Eligibility as Result of COVID-19

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As a result of the ongoing public health crisis and associated economic impacts, the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED) is announcing changes to the Civic and Community Center Financing Fund (CCCFF) program for the upcoming 2021 grant award cycle.

Due to the projected impact on the fund's future receipts, activities eligible for award under the CCCFF application cycle beginning January 2021 will be limited to preliminary planning studies for future construction and rehabilitation projects.

Potential grantees, i.e., municipalities, are advised to consult the accompanying Fact Sheet and FAQ, which contains information and technical assistance pertaining to these changes and their effect on eligibility and other program elements; the document can also be viewed by clicking here. Note that DED's published CCCFF Application and Program Guidelines have also been modified to reflect this new information.

Visit https://opportunity.nebraska.gov/cccff for more about the CCCFF program.

Fact Sheet & FAQ – CCCFF 2021 Application Cycle

A competitive program, DED administers Civic and Community Center Financing Fund (CCCFF) grants to municipalities on an annual basis, with the goal of fostering quality of life in Nebraska communities. CCCFF allows for the distribution of State aid to support the development of community facilities such as libraries, recreation and wellness centers, gathering spaces, convention centers, town squares and cultural centers.

Due to the projected impact on the fund's future receipts due to COVID-19, awards for the application cycle starting January 2021 will be limited to planning studies for the development of future construction and rehabilitation projects. DED appreciates how important this program has been for communities, and does not expect this limitation to carry into future application cycles.

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As of the September reporting period, several communities awarded in prior years have expressed project delays related to COVID-19, e.g., the inability to secure matching funds due to the decreased availability of general funds, lack of contractors to complete the work within the original timeframe, increased costs in supplies and/or construction, etc. Therefore, included below are instructions for requesting a contract extension for the CCCFF grant.

Please refer to the following Frequently Asked Questions for additional information:

What impact does this announcement have on existing awards made during or before 2020?

There will be no impact on existing awards. The decision to make adjustments to the 2021 application cycle was informed by forecasted revenues, which were reduced due to the economic impact of COVID-19. A commitment was made to ensure existing awards would not be reduced due to a lack of available funds.

Will these changes to the program extend beyond the 2021 application cycle?

It is the Department's intention for these changes to be limited to the 2021 cycle. DED continues to monitor the situation.

Why are these changes necessary?

Multiple factors led to the announced changes to the 2021 cycle. Namely, the CCCFF program is funded through "turnback taxes" associated with the large arena and convention centers in Omaha, Lincoln and Ralston. A large number of events scheduled in 2020 were cancelled or postponed due to COVID-19, resulting in a significant reduction to the revenues in the fund. This setback has impacted revenue forecasts for the next two fiscal years.

Has a lack of revenue to the fund occurred before? What is the State doing to keep the program solvent moving forward?

No CCCFF awards were made in 2006-2007 and 2011-2012, attributable to a fund balance that could not support new awards and a sufficient balance to cover the obligated, unspent awarded amount. Additional interruption occurred in 2014, when the program authorizing statutes were significantly altered with subsequent increases to the legislative allocation. Since that time, DED has awarded every dollar of available aid via the annual application cycle.

The decision to only fund planning activities in 2021 is meant to ensure that existing obligations (i.e., awards) do not exceed available funds. If and when forecasted revenues change, it is possible that DED will announce a second CCCFF cycle for 2021. However, all signs indicate that forecasts are unlikely to change. Planning activities, meanwhile, have proven time and again to be an important precursor to successful CCCFF project execution, and municipalities are encouraged to cease this opportunity for further project development.

My community applied for and received a planning grant in 2020; when can we apply for another grant?

Under CCCFF, a municipality may receive only one grant of each type (planning or construction) during any two-year period; this is statutory. For example, if Anytown was awarded a planning grant in 2020, it would not be eligible for another planning grant until 2022.

If my community applies for a planning grant in 2021, what is the maximum grant amount? Can we use a planning grant for construction activities?

Planning grants are available for a minimum request of $3,000 and a maximum of $15,000. Planning grants are intended for planning activities only. Refer to the Application and Program

Guidelines at https://opportunity.nebraska.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/CCCFF-Application-and-Program-Guidelines.pdf.

What types of facilities are eligible?

A wide variety of facilities are eligible for planning grants, including community centers, parks, libraries, recreation centers, public gathering spaces, etc. For additional program details and definitions, see the CCCFF Application and Program Guidelines at https://opportunity.nebraska.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/CCCFF-Application-and-Program-Guidelines.pdf.

What are some example uses of a planning grant?

Example uses for planning grants include engineering and technical studies directly related to eligible projects; this could include feasibility studies, facility studies, programming and schematic designs, construction documents, etc.

In 2019, our community received a grant and, due to unforeseen project delays, we do not expect we will be able to complete the project by our contract end date in March 2021. How can my community request a contract extension for the CCCFF contract?

Several communities are experiencing project delays. To request a contract extension, be sure you are current for semi-annual reporting, and submit a written request that identifies all of the following:

1. The request as either for a 6- or 12-month extension;
2. Reason for the request;
3. Revised estimated completion date; and
4. Any other pertinent information related to the request.

Only the local contact or chief elected official should submit the request. Such written request can be put in an email or sent as an email attachment; you do not need to submit via postal mail. However, you should wait to submit the request until you have a revised project completion date and/or as we near your contract end date in the months to come.

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