

LAND & PARC Grant Programs
Information Sessions Questions & Answers
(May 4 and 12, 2022)

Our town meeting is May 14th and the Town Meeting Warrant has already closed. If we send to you today, could we receive approval by early next week, to Amend Town Meeting Warrant?

Yes, please send that to Melissa Cryan today. We ask that folks generally try and provide us a few days to respond, but we always strive to provide a timely response.

Is charging a private business for field or park use different than the double charge guidelines under the PARC grant?

DCS would want an opportunity to review and approve the municipal fee schedule, but as long as the private business charge is not based on the business or user's place of residency, and reflects reasonable rates, these charges should be acceptable.

Are small town grant applicants eligible to apply for a two-year grant for design and construction?

Yes, the small town grant applicants are eligible for the program just like any applicant. They are only distinguished to better ensure that small town grant applicants are only competing with other small towns grant applicants.

Can construction funding be requested in year one of the PARC grant if no design funding is needed?

No. Construction funding is always in year two of the PARC grant. If you don't require any design funding, ask for \$0 in year one and for all of the grant funding in year two. This is due to the budget we have for the program, as well as the uncertainty of the length of the construction season due to grant announcement timelines and winter weather.

So, the period for design work would need to be between November 2022 and June 1, 2023?

Costs for design work could be incurred starting from whenever your community executes the contract through June 1, 2023. The BID document states that awards will be announced approximately 120 days after the grant closes. We strive to provide contracts as soon as possible after that date. However, the exact contract timeline depends upon how quickly the municipality gets contract documents back to DCS for execution.

What percentage of LAND grant and PARC grant projects were funded last year?

Last year, we funded all four of the LAND grant applications we received. 24 out of 27 PARC applications were funded. However, the number of applications as well as available funding changes from year to year, so we can never guarantee funding.

How recent must the required appraisal be?

Appraisals may be no older than one year at the time of the grant deadline (12 months).

Will the LAND or PARC grant program consider two grants from a single municipality?

The PARC grant program limits grant award to one per municipality, however, a community may submit as many grant applications as they would like, the LAND grant program does not.

Can a LAND Grant application include non-contiguous parcels under the same ownership, to promote a watershed protection approach?

Per the BID document, landholdings that are contiguous, under the same ownership, or proposed for acquisition for a single purpose may be packaged in the same application. For example, if two parcels are held by the same landowner and adjacent to the same conservation area, and both are proposed to be incorporated as part of that area, then both parcels may be packaged in one application. However, if there are two parcels with unrelated resources under different land ownership, those should be treated as individual projects and submitted in separate applications to be reviewed and ranked individually.

What type of Environmental Justice outreach does DCS like to see? Are there particular methods you advocate that achieve the goals of enhanced outreach?

We like to see outreach that reduces the barriers to public input or resident participation. This might require identifying languages spoken in that specific EJ neighborhood, and pursuing translational services to reduce language barriers, or physically hosting meetings in EJ neighborhoods to facilitate participation. Consider visiting the park that you would like to renovate to ask what amenities the users would like to have there. Effective outreach is going beyond the simple act of posting a flyer or posting a public notice. Public notices are particularly ineffective – many communities lack a local newspaper, and few people read public notices.

The regional land trust anticipates becoming the interim owner of land currently in Chapter 61. Our municipality anticipates applying for a LAND grant to purchase the land from the land trust, and then would like to convey a CR to the land trust. How should we structure this?

If you have questions specific to your project, and specifically the sequence of transactions required to satisfy grant requirements and other criteria, please reach out to us to schedule a time to discuss in detail.

Our municipality would like to pursue a PARC grant to fund construction of a playground next to our town airport. Do we need the airport to gift the recreation department the land?

The PARC grant requires that the land subject to the grant be municipally-held parkland. The airport would need to gift the land to the town in advance of the town receiving a grant award.

For the LAND grant, can land interests be held jointly between the Conservation Commission and Agricultural Commission?

The BID identifies that land or CRs purchased with grant funding should be held by the municipality's conservation commission or agriculture commission. Since both commissions are eligible, joint ownership would be acceptable. However, the application should identify the reason for joint ownership and specific responsibilities of each commission. If the property interest to be held jointly is a CR, the primary CR grantee must be identified in the application.

Are updates to a bathroom at a park that is for residents only eligible to apply for a PARC grant?

The park where the updates or renovations are proposed must be open to all, regardless of residence.

Our community's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) is undergoing an update. What are the OSRP requirements if we have Environmental Justice neighborhoods within our town?

The OSRP Workbook addresses best practices for EJ population and other related outreach. For example, public hearing notices are not recommended, as very few people read those anymore provided there are fewer and fewer local newspapers.

What do you consider "equipment or goods" under ineligible costs?

A lawnmower or other equipment for maintaining a park is an example of a cost that we would not pay for. Please be in touch if you have a specific item you'd like clarity on. You are also welcome to submit a draft budget for confirmation that costs identified are eligible.

How close does a park need to be to public transportation to be considered "accessible"?

If a site is less than a half mile from public transportation, it is considered 'accessible by public transportation'. Public transportation of course includes transit such as the MBTA or regional bus service.

Can we use American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding?

Yes. These federal dollars allocated to municipalities are a good source of funding.

Can a municipality apply for a LAND grant and PARC grant in the same year?

Yes! The LAND and PARC grants are two distinct grant programs and municipalities are welcome to apply to both in the same year.

Regarding a LAND grant proposal, would a community garden count as "working land" if that's not the current use?

For purposes of the LAND grant, only current agricultural properties or lands in active, sustainable forestry are considered 'working lands'. If community gardens are not currently in place, then the installation of such gardens could potentially risk a conversion of land under the LAND grant as that is active recreation and LAND grants are for passive recreation. Therefore, a property to be acquired for community gardens may be more consistent with the PARC grant program, which allows for it.