



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 120201., **Version:** 3

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### **Community Grant Program Requirements (B)**

The City Commission developed the Community Grant Program (CGP) and implemented it for the first time in Fiscal Year 2010-2011. The purpose of the CGP is to provide small amounts of funding to non-profit organizations performing community services that advance City goals to support activities that serve a public purpose and improve the quality of life for Gainesville residents. The maximum grant award is \$2,500 per eligible non-profit organization. The City Commission has developed and adopted guidelines describing eligible organizations, reimbursable activities, and program requirements and procedures. The Commission desired to keep the Community Grant Program application process simple for both the applicants and staff. The Commission also indicated a desire to fund as many eligible programs as possible within the approved program budget.

On July 17, 2012, the City Commission held a Special Budget Meeting to discuss several aspects of the FY 2012-13 Budget including the CGP. At that meeting the City Commission approved specific funding recommendations for specific organizations, through the CGP. The City Commission approved the funding requests for 43 of 44 organizations. There was much discussion related to the organization that was not funded. As a result, the City Commission asked the Audit, Finance and Legislation Committee (AFLC) to review and comment regarding the CGP's guidelines and procedures, particularly related to how organizations are, or are not, evaluated in terms of legitimacy, transparency and veracity.

At their November 26, 2012 and January 29, 2013 Meetings, the AFLC discussed proposed changes to the CGP guidelines. The AFLC agreed that keeping the current CGP application process simple for applicants and staff was important. Further, the AFLC felt that some minor adjustments were needed to more clearly define some of the CGP guidelines. The AFLC felt that this could be accomplished while also maintaining the goal of keeping the program process simple. The AFLC agreed that adjustments to the guidelines should deal with the applicant's organizational structure, financial situation, and affiliations and partners.

Additionally, the AFLC noted that specific written criteria and priorities should be included to guide applicants and decision-makers in determining eligible organizations. They asked for language that prioritized the use of facts and science in the provision of services; and that the prohibition on certain activities (such as discrimination or the promotion of a religion) be emphasized. The AFLC also agreed that beginning in FY2014, the maximum annual reimbursement for utilities should be increased from \$100/family to \$200/family, and that the maximum annual grant award should be increased from \$2,500/organization to \$3,000/organization.

Other changes have been proposed by some of the non-profit organizations that have applied for CGP Funds. One of those changes includes allowing reimbursement to organizations for providing First Aid, GED, and/or Adult Financial Literacy classes. Another one is to allow reimbursement for Veterinary Care for pets of Homeless and/or indigent persons, not just the pets of homeless persons, as originally written. The AFLC has agreed with those changes.

The AFLC also asked for additional comment from the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC), which is the advisory board that sits as the grant review committee for the CGP. The AHAC met on December 4, 2012 and on January 8, 2013. At both meetings, AHAC strongly recommended keeping the process as simple as possible for applicants, staff and reviewing committees. The AHAC emphasized two factors in particular. First, they felt that the relatively small budget of the program makes it inefficient for all involved to spend much time and effort on paperwork and administration. The second factor was related to the applicants' status as Florida registered non-profit organizations and as 501(c)3 tax-exempt organizations. AHAC noted that annual financial and organizational reports to the State and Federal Governments are required to maintain those designations. The AHAC felt that it would be redundant and inefficient to require applicants to provide information to the City that was already on file and accessible from State and Federal entities.

The revised CGP guidelines and application form, as approved by the AFLC, are provided as backup.

The City Commission accept the changes to the Community Grant Program Guidelines and Application Form.