



Legislation Text

File #: 180068., Version: 2

ConnectFree Program Update (B)

This item requests the General Policy Committee to receive a status report about the ConnectFree Program, and consider minor revisions to simplify program administration and clarify which projects are eligible.

In late 2016, the City Commission reinstated the ConnectFree Program (Program) and directed staff to provide a status update in approximately 18 months.

The Program subsidizes water and wastewater extensions and connections to eligible residential structures, and structures that serve persons with special needs. The subsidies include line extension costs (which are capped at \$25,000 for wastewater and \$10,000 for water) and connection charges. In addition, the Program pays onsite plumbing costs for income qualified applicants. The Program may provide assistance to qualified applicants throughout the GRU service area. The Program is funded by surcharges collected on water and wastewater connections in the unincorporated part of the GRU service area.

The ConnectFree Program resolution allocates Program funds on an annual basis as follows:

1. **60% - Single Units/Neighborhood Extensions** - Owner-occupied/rental and non-profit/government individual properties.
2. **15% - Affordable Housing (minimum \$37,500)** - Local government contribution to affordable housing development projects leveraged with federal/state low-income housing tax credits.
3. **10% - Public Health, Safety, Environmental (minimum \$25,000)** - Projects to address public health, safety or environmental welfare.
4. **15% - Program Delivery (minimum \$37,500)** - Costs for administering the Program.

Based on the types of projects funded through the Program, the greatest need for assistance was requested from the “Public Health, Safety, Environmental” category. As such, to provide flexibility to the Program funding criteria and better assist applicants, staff recommends combining the “Single Units/Neighborhood Extensions” and the “Public Health, Safety, Environmental” categories. This combined category will allow the flexibility and funding needed to address various types of projects without the need to reallocate funding between categories.

Additionally, staff requests that the General Policy Committee request that the City Commission clarify that the “Affordable Housing” funding category is intended only for affordable housing developers of residential structures that meet the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of affordable for low-income households.

Since the reinstatement of the Program in July 2016, the total revenue collected is \$1,183,929.74 (FY16-FY18) to fund the Program.

The General Policy Committee: 1) hear a presentation from staff; 2) consider minor revisions to clarify project eligibility criteria for the ConnectFree Program; and 3) refer those revisions to the City Commission.