



COUNTY OF NEVADA COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Eric Rood Administrative Center
950 Maidu Avenue, Suite 220
Nevada City, CA 95959
(530) 265-7040
Fax 265-9839
E-MAIL: ceo@co.nevada.ca.us

NEVADA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Board Agenda Memo

MEETING DATE: January 25, 2022

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Alison Lehman, County Executive Officer

SUBJECT: Resolution approving the Grant Award Agreement with The Curious Forge, LLC for \$92,120 for the “Community Resiliency Grant” funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and authorizing the Chair of the Board of Supervisors to execute grant agreement with awardee

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the Resolution.

FUNDING:

This “Community Resiliency Grant” award to The Curious Forge, LLC in the amount of \$92,120 will be funded with Federal American Rescue Plan (ARPA) dollars. Resolution 21-480 approved thirty-two awards totaling \$1,991,884 in “Community Resiliency Grants” funded by Federal American Rescue Plan (ARPA) dollars, including the award referenced herein. Resolution 21-450 established a budget for the remainder of the first tranche of the ARPA allocation, including \$2,000,000 for Community Resiliency Grants, in accordance with the ARPA Expenditure Plan presented to the Board of Supervisors on April 27, 2021. There are no General Fund dollars used for this agreement and no budget amendment is needed.

BACKGROUND:

This agreement will fund The Curious Forge, LLC for the following general purposes:

- ☒ Support for programmatic services that assist in addressing the economic hardship experienced by the Grant Recipient and/or the negative economic impacts experienced by its customers; and

To expand programming and public access for workforce development programs, including certificate programs tailored to county employers/industries such as metal fabrication, textiles, cabinetry, CNC processes; internships/apprenticeships for youth career exploration through working with accomplished professionals in several field; Inter-generational knowledge exchange experiences; Home/charter schooler resources/programs, including computer programming, various arts, and exposure to the industrials/tech equipment with a weekly cohort. Funds support safety equipment for children; facilitators for public programming; transportation; equipment; community room upgrades.

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (“ARPA”) (H.R. 1319) is a \$1.9 trillion economic stimulus package passed by Congress and signed by President Joseph Biden on March 11, 2021 in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and associated economic challenges. ARPA included \$350 billion in State and Local Aid, which included \$65.1 billion in direct funding to counties. Based on US Treasury allocations, Nevada County has been allocated \$19,376,239 in funding.

On April 27, 2021, staff brought a preliminary ARPA Expenditure Plan to the Board for direction. The plan included a recommendation to allocate 30% of ARPA funds (\$5.8M) to “Community & Economic Resiliency” projects. This includes four grant programs and one loan program as listed in the table below.

This staff report addresses the “Community Resiliency Grants” program.

| “Community & Economic Resiliency” Programs | Amount: | Status: |
|---|--|--|
| Nevada County Relief Fund | \$250,000 | BOS approved 7/13/21; microgrants to small businesses managed by Sierra Business Council |
| Community Resiliency Grants Program | Up to \$2 million allotted - \$1,991,884 actual approved | BOS approved Awards 11/9/21 |
| Resilience Loan Fund | \$250,000 | Pending. For revolving loan fund to be managed by Sierra Business Council |
| Economic Recovery Funds (infrastructure) | Up to \$2,500,000 | Pending. For eligible infrastructure projects (water, sewer, broadband) |
| Outdoor Recreation and Visitor Safety Funds | \$800,000 to \$1M | Pending. For improvements to major river crossings and trailheads impacted by increased visitation |
| Total: | \$5,800,000* | <i>*Allocations to remain flexible to best support Board objectives</i> |

Program Summary:

On July 27, 2021, the Nevada County Board of Supervisors passed and adopted Resolution 21-339 approving the Request for Applications (RFA) and award selection procedures for the Community Resiliency Grant Program and authorizing the Purchasing Division to advertise for qualified applications.

The County solicited Requests for Applications (RFA) from eligible entities with programs and projects that respond to the negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and are designed to increase resiliency, support recovery, and provide relief. The County encouraged applications for services, programs, and projects from our community-serving organizations and institutions that increase resiliency, build capacity, and leverage other resources.

The “Community Resiliency Grants” Program provides one-time grants to eligible entities including nonprofit organizations, for-profit businesses, and special purpose districts.

The “Community Resiliency Grants” were capped at \$100,000. Applicants were instructed to make their grant request in an amount that reflects their overall organization size, capacity, and alignment with ARPA intent. The County reserved the right to recommend an amount less than the total requested.

The County formed a 9-person evaluation panel, comprised of 6 community leaders and 3 staff members, who reviewed and scored the responses to select the top ranked entities based on the evaluation criteria published in the RFA and compliance of proposed use of awarded funds with Federal guidance regarding eligible uses of ARPA funds. The evaluation panel presented its recommendations to the County Executive Officer, Alison Lehman, who developed the final recommendation.

Criteria and Scoring: The evaluation panel relied on the criteria listed in the RFA, which requested applicants to describe:

1. the economic harm the organization experienced because of the pandemic;
2. how their proposal directly responds to the negative economic impacts of the pandemic;
3. how their proposal will provide ongoing community benefits with impactful, measurable outcomes;
4. how they will leverage additional partnerships, funding, and other resources as part of their proposal; and
5. demonstrate their capacity to manage, implement, measure and report on the grant.
6. Evaluation Panel reviewed and scored responses to select the top ranked entities based on the weighted evaluation criteria in the RFA (see below).

Notification: The RFA was advertised in The Union/Sierra Sun, and published on the County Purchasing webpage, Friday Memo, County social media accounts, Nevada County Covid-19 Business Task Force, and other email mailing lists.

Awards Process and Timeline: The application process opened July 27th; a pre-application conference was held August 11th; and applications were due on September 10th.

Applications received: The Purchasing Department received 73 eligible applications totaling \$4,967,963 in requests.

Recommendations for funding: The CEO recommended awards to 32 eligible entities.

Approval of Funding Recommendations: On November 9th, 2021, the Nevada County Board of Supervisors passed and adopted resolution 21-480, approving the award of \$1,991,884 in 32 “Community Resiliency Grants” funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), directing staff to develop individual agreements, and further directing the auditor-controller to amend the fiscal year 2021/22 fund 1111 budgets.

Award agreement and reporting requirements: This individual Grant Award Recipient Agreement was developed with the Grant Award Recipient and reviewed with the Auditor-Controller to ensure Grant Award Recipient is in good standing with the County.

Grant Award Recipient will enter in the attached “Grant Award Recipient Agreement” with the County. Grant Award Recipient will use the ARPA monies to cover only those eligible costs identified in the RFA and necessary for the COVID-19 public health emergency in accordance with federal guidance. Grant Award Recipient shall be responsible for reimbursement to County of any grant funding provided under this agreement that are determined by federal or state officials to be unauthorized expenditures. Grant recipients will provide quarterly reports beginning in March 2022.

Funds may cover costs from March 3, 2021 through December 31, 2024. However, funds may be used to assist businesses and nonprofits for economic harms experienced prior to March 3, 2021, and in this program the County is requiring that funds must be spent by 12/31/24. Awardees will be required to submit quarterly “Project and Expenditure Reports” until the funded project is complete.

To promote transparency, quarterly reports will be posted on the County of Nevada’s American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) web page.

Recommended action:

Therefore, staff recommends the Board adopt the attached Resolution approving the Grant Award Agreement with The Curious Forge, LLC and authorizing the Chair of the Board of Supervisors to execute grant agreement with the Grant Award Recipient.

Item Initiated by: Ariel Lovett, Interim Projects Administrator

Approved by: Alison Lehman, County Executive Officer