

Chaffee Common Ground – Citizens Advisory Committee (CCG-CAC)

Minutes from Meeting on Wednesday February 9, 2022

Meeting Called to order at 9:04 a.m.

CCG-CAC Members present: (all attending virtually due to COVID-19 pandemic) Cindy Williams, Michael Hannigan, Kit Kuester, Dan Omasta and Sydney Schnurr. Also present Ben Doon, Administrative Support.

CCG-CAC Members absent: Brink Messick and Ben Lenth.

Agenda review

Cindy reviewed the agenda. The main topic is grant program overviews for the two new Board members.

Approval of minutes from previous meeting and approval of agenda

February 9, 2022 agenda and January 10, 2022 minutes were approved as presented. Motion Michael. Second Kit. Vote unanimous.

Board Member Introductions

This is the first meeting for two new Board members, Dan Omasta and Sydney Schnurr.

Dan and Sydney introduced themselves. Dan's background includes experience with GOCO and Trout Unlimited. Sydney's background includes extensive experience with non-profits including current involvement with the Chaffee County Community Foundation.

Kit, Michael, Ben D and Cindy introduced themselves and spoke about their background and experience relative to their involvement with Common Ground.

Grant Programs Overview

Ben D shared his screen and reviewed the grant program summary information that is posted in the grants portal for potential applicants to review before applying. This information is attached at the end of the minutes.

Cindy shared her screen and reviewed slides with program headlines and funds granted to date. Through the first three grant cycles, Common Ground has invested \$5.2 million in local projects in the three program categories, Forest Health and Fire Resilience, Sustainable Agriculture/Rural Conservation and Recreation Impacts Management. This investment has leveraged \$24 million in outside funds. In 2021 1.4% of available funds were used for administrative expenses. Forest Health grants are 60% of

the total funds spent. Sustainable Ag is at 33% and Recreation Impacts Management is at 7% of total funds awarded.

Cindy reviewed highlights from the spring 2021 grant cycle which included \$1.64 million to the Upper Arkansas Forest Fund through 2025. This program will treat up to 30,000-aces of public and private forested lands throughout the county. This project was identified as a high priority in the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). The Common Ground Committee puts a lot of weight into how a proposal fits into the CWPP. Other investments include \$93k over three years to the Chaffee Chips program; \$215k to the Colorado State Forest Service Focused Fuels Fire Breaks project; \$50k to the Monarch Pass fire mitigation project and \$15k for the Chaffee Front Fire Patrol program. The Methodist Front Fire Mitigation Project is a multi-year project funded in 2020 that is treating 8,000-acres between Salida and Poncha Springs. Common Ground has about \$750k invested in the Methodist Front project.

Sustainable Agriculture grants in 2021 included \$100k to the Sunnyside Ditch for repairs and efficiency improvements; \$100k for a Conservation Easement on the Lewis Ranch and \$42k for repairs and efficiency improvements on the Bowen Ditch. Three ag related mini-grants were also awarded in 2021. Previous Sustainable Agriculture grants include three conservation easements that will protect 3,300-acres of working ag land on the Centerville, Arrowpoint and Tri-Lazy W Ranches.

The Chaffee Outdoor Recreation Management Plan received funding from Common Ground in 2020 and the plan was finalized in June 2021. Like the CWPP, Recreation Impacts Management proposals should fit within the priorities and goals of the plan. The Rec Adopters program, which received funding from Common Ground, uses an app for volunteers and agency staff to document problematic campsites and related trash issues. 2021 grants for Recreation Impacts Management included awards to the Southwest Conservation Corps, the Quiet Use Coalition and the US Forest Service for their Rec Rangers program, which helps to patrol the backcountry for problem areas and negative impacts to the environment.

Application and Rubric Review

Ben D shared his screen and reviewed PDF versions of the Forest Health Projects grant application and rubric evaluation form.

Sydney asked about the budget review process for proposals and how much detail goes into that. Cindy said that budgets are usually reviewed at a high level. For the organization budget, she wants to see if the group is competent to do what they say they will do. The program/project budgets are generally reviewed to see if all the expenditures and revenues make sense and to see if the matching funds included are credible.

Michael said he reviews the budgets to look for any red flags that should be shared with the group. If he doesn't see any obvious issues, he usually doesn't go too far in the weeds. If the group is well-known and well managed, he doesn't spend too much time on the organization budget.

Conflict of Interest Policy

Ben D shared his screen with a cover letter and conflict of interest policy from the Board of County Commissioners to the members of all county boards regarding real and perceived conflicts of interest. Ben will send this policy to the new board members to review and sign. If a board member believes he or she may have a conflict of interest with an applicant or proposal, that board member should bring the conflict to Ben D's attention. Ben D will not assign that proposal to the board member for review and that board member will be recused from any conversations about the proposal when they are being discussed for potential funding.

Review schedule for 4th grant cycle

Ben D reviewed the schedule for the new grant cycle.

Monday February 7th – Applications posted

Wednesday February 9th – Orientation and introduction meeting for new board members.

Monday February 14th (9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.) – Community meeting about new grant cycle

Friday February 25th – Pre-application deadline

Monday February 28th (9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.) – Pre-application discussion meeting

Friday March 25th – Full application deadline

Friday April 8th (9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.) - Preliminary application scoring meeting

Monday April 18th (9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.) - Final scores and recommendations meeting

Tuesday May 3rd – BOCC meeting to approve grants

Wednesday May 11th – Agreements to grantees

Wednesday May 25th – Checks to grantees

Other Business

None.

Next Steps

Cindy said that not all the Committee members need to be present for the Community Q&A session scheduled for Monday February 14th. Ben D said these meeting involve a quick overview of all the grant programs and a review of the grants portal and how to access and edit applications.

Public Comment

None.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 10:22 a.m.

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CHAFFEE COMMON GROUND GRANT INFORMATION

Chaffee Common Ground offers competitive grant programs for:

- Strengthening forest health and reducing wildfire danger
- Conserving and supporting agricultural lands and rural landscapes
- Managing the impacts of growth in outdoor recreation

Funding opportunities encompass projects and planning work.

PROGRAM GOALS

1. Strengthen forest health to protect the community from a large wildfire, protect water quality, and enhance wildlife habitat through planning and execution of forest treatment activities.
2. Conserve and support working ranches, farms and rural landscapes through conservation easements and tools that enhance economic viability and longevity of working lands.
3. Protect landscapes and watershed health from negative impacts of outdoor recreation use through management, hardening, restoration, education, and acquisition, to disperse use and support conservation values.
4. Encourage action at scale across the landscape, including across land ownership/management boundaries.
5. Encourage collaborative thought and action across funding categories.
6. Fund successful programs.
7. Maximize overall impact by working to leverage overall Common Ground funds by at least 2-1 through cash and in-kind matches on all combined programs (exceptions are permitted for individual programs).

GRANT SCHEDULE

Community Q&A session - Monday February 14th @ 9:00 a.m.

Pre-Application due date Friday February 25th @ 5:00 p.m.

Full Application due date Friday March 25th @ 5:00 p.m.

Grants awarded May 2022

OUR GRANT PROGRAMS

Forest Health

- **Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience Planning Grants** are for planning of treatment activities that enhance forest health and community wildfire resilience. Applicants must be a qualified organization; individual landowners are encouraged to work with the Colorado State Forest Service, Colorado FireCamp or a similar organization.

- **Forest Health and Fire Resilience Project Grants** are for the execution of treatment activities that enhance forest health and community fire resilience.

Agricultural Sustainability

- **Agricultural Program Grants** are to support planning and partnerships that provide services to enhance economic viability and longevity of working agricultural lands. Applicants must be a qualified organization. *Individual landowners, please see Enhancement Grants, below.*
- **Land Conservation Grants** are for conservation easements and land acquisition. Applicants must be a qualified organization, such as an accredited land trust or government agency.
- **Agricultural Enhancement Grants** are for projects that enhance conservation values on qualified properties with conservation agreements in place.

Recreation Management

- **Recreation Impact Project Grants** are for the execution of projects that protect landscapes and watershed health from negative impacts resulting from outdoor recreation use. Applications must be from a qualified organization or from private land owners with a nexus to public land access and in collaboration with a qualified land management agency, such as the USFS, CPW or BLM.
- **Recreation Impact Planning and Monitoring Grants** are for planning and project development to protect landscapes and watershed health from the impacts of outdoor recreation use.

Mini Grants are for one- to two-year projects requesting \$5,000 or less that advance the goals of Chaffee Common Ground through the grant programs outlined above. The intent is to support small projects and allow more participation through a simplified application process. Applicants may only apply for one mini grant in a grant cycle.

Essential Requirements for all Grants:

- All required permits (NEPA etc.) and landowner permissions (from private landowners or agencies) are in place and can be documented, with the exception of planning grants
- The requesting organization has a track record of success with a program of generally similar scope and scale for requests over \$50,000.
- The proposal budget, plan and timeline is complete at an acceptable level of detail and quality.
- The proposal demonstrates clear and measurable results.
- If the proposal is funded, agreement that it can be recognized or promoted by Common Ground, including public news stories and signage.

Who can apply?

- Forest Health and Fire Resilience planning grants: Applications must be from a qualified organizations only, individual landowners must work through CSFS, Fire Camp or similar to apply.
- Conservation Easement Grants: Applications must be from a qualified organization, such as accredited land trusts or government agencies.
- Agricultural Program and Education Grants: applications must be through qualified organizations. Future rounds will include Enhancement Grants and Ag programs for individual landowners and qualified organizations, where cash and in-kind match remains a factor for competitive rating.

- Recreation Impact Project Grants: Applications must be from a qualified organization or from private land owners with a nexus to public land access and in collaboration with a qualified organization such as the USFS, CPW or BLM.

Additional Grant Guidelines:

- **Capital equipment** should be limited to project supplies that are used in the project or program (such as fencing, fire rings or Dumpsters). Durable capital items such as trail counters that may not be protected from disappearing will not be considered.

Fire and agricultural equipment will only be considered under the following conditions:

- The equipment to be purchased is a fundamental part of a program being supported by Common Ground Funds e.g., Chaffee Chips, Agricultural Enhancement, etc.
- The purchase would not be substituting for use of existing tax funds that could be used to purchase the equipment.
- The organization acquiring the equipment has existing facilities and budget to maintain and store the equipment.
- **Multi-year funding requests** are considered for multi-year projects. All grants are subject to annual appropriations by the Chaffee Board of County Commissioners. Progress reports are required to access ongoing funding.
- **Site visits** may be requested by the Chaffee Common Ground Citizens Advisory Committee for any project to assess need, progress or completion of work. These requests will focus on complex projects applying for or funded at \$100,000 or more.

Staff Capacity Guidelines:

Common Ground will fund staff time to develop and implement specific projects and programs with time transparently tracked.

Common Ground will fund government contract positions that support a specific program or project.

Common Ground will consider any staff role, but new government positions must:

- Be innovative, creative, and offer a new solution that supports community goals.
- Be dedicated to accomplishing specific, measurable goals associated with a project or program.
- Provide a clear, current data-supported need.
- Provide a clear path to sustainable funding within 3 years that is not from Common Ground.
- Provide a cash match of at least 50%.
- Establish validity as part of a collaborative community planning process with broad stakeholder engagement and support.

[Click here](#) for Communications Guidelines

Maps for applicant reference:

- Chaffee County Community Wildfire Protection Plan –**Treatment Priority Area Map** showing modeled areas where treatment expenditures can result in maximum benefit toward community fire resilience and forest health.
- Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) Map: **County Biodiversity Map**.

- Chaffee County Community Wildfire Protection Plan – [**Composite- Important Habitat Areas Map.**](#)