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**Press Release**

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**METRO EAST PARK AND RECREATION DISTRICT ANNOUNCES FY21 GRANT PROGRAMS,  
NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR FY21 PLANNING GRANT AND EVENT SPONSORSHIP GRANT**

MADISON AND ST. CLAIR COUNTIES, IL – Metro East Park and Recreation District (MEPRD) on Wednesday announced that its Board of Directors has approved three (3) grant programs for the 2021 Fiscal Year, including the FY21 Community Planning Grant Program, FY21 Event Sponsorship Grant Program, and the upcoming FY21 Park and Trail Grant Program. MEPRD will begin accepting applications for the Event Sponsorship Grant and Community Planning Grant Programs at 7:30 a.m., today.

Historically, grant programs have served as an effective instrument for MEPRD in furthering its mission and fulfilling its statutory mandate, i.e. to develop, operate, and maintain a public system of parks and interconnecting trails throughout the counties comprising the district. Such programs allow MEPRD to partner with local governments, park and transportation districts, and other regional entities comprised within Madison and St. Clair Counties already engaged in those very efforts—promoting and making proper use of the synergy that exists between MEPRD and its partners.

During the previous 2020 Fiscal Year, MEPRD awarded grant funding to twelve (12) park and trail projects, three (3) community planning projects, and nine (9) outdoor events. Since its formation in 2000, 184 park and trail projects have been funded at least in-part by MEPRD; a total commitment by MEPRD of \$28.4M. The FY21 Grant Round presents a new opportunity for MEPRD to build on that success and broaden the impact of its grant funding, both by allowing for new partnerships with agencies within its jurisdiction and by continuing to support new projects and events that further boost Metro East residents' quality of life outdoors, for all ages and abilities.

The **MEPRD FY21 Community Planning Grant Program** was approved with a total program budget of \$300,000.00. MEPRD's inaugural Community Planning Grant Program launched in January 2020, to promote the practice of master planning and provide support to local municipalities and other regional entities in Madison and St. Clair Counties, Illinois with developing or updating a community-wide Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan or Bicycle-Pedestrian Master Plan. Under the FY21 Program, eligible applicants can receive up to \$40,000.00 in funding for an eligible planning project or 40% of total eligible project costs (whichever is less). MEPRD will accept applications for the FY21 Program on an ongoing basis starting today, Wednesday, July 15, 2020, and until May 31, 2021 (or until 100% of funding is pledged, whichever comes first).

The **MEPRD FY21 Event Sponsorship Program** was renewed with a total program budget of \$20,000.00. The program is designed to support outdoor events – such as walking, biking, or running events – that take place in or promote the use of public parks, trails, and/or outdoor recreation facilities in Madison and St. Clair Counties, Illinois. Public organizations can receive up to \$2,500.00 in funding whereas 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations can receive up to \$1,000.00; neither may exceed 25% of the event’s total budget. MEPRD will begin accepting applications for the FY21 Event Sponsorship Program on an ongoing basis starting Wednesday, July 15, 2020, and until May 31, 2021 (or until 100% of funding is pledged, whichever comes first).

The **MEPRD FY21 Park and Trail Grant Program** was approved with a total program budget of \$2,000,000.00. Similar to previous iterations of the program, an eligible applicant can apply for a reimbursement grant (of up to 40% of project costs; \$300k maximum) for an eligible development, acquisition or improvement project related to parks, trails, and/or recreational facilities.

New for the FY21 Park and Trail Program is the introduction of grant rounds. The Park and Trail Grant Program will now operate within two consecutive grant rounds, each with varying application eligibility requirements. Eligibility for the initial grant round will be limited to regional trail segment projects within Madison or St. Clair Counties; and/or park projects located in areas that have received less than the district-wide average of MERPD park project funding per capita. This year’s program was created in a manner to fulfill two primary objectives: (1) encourage the development of regional trail segments throughout MEPRD’s jurisdiction; and (2) increase MEPRD’s grant funding for park projects located in currently underserved locations.

MEPRD will begin accepting applications for Grant Round #1 of the FY21 Park and Trail Grant Program on August 12, 2020, at 7:30 a.m. If any funding remains unpledged as of October 13, 2020, at 3:00 PM, the remainder will be allocated to Grant Round #2 and will be available to any eligible applicant with any eligible project type. All applications will be processed and awarded on a first-come, first-served basis.

For more information on any of MEPRD’s current or upcoming FY21 grant program, please refer to the Program Applications, all of which are available for download at: [www.meprd.org/funding](http://www.meprd.org/funding).

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*The Metro East Park and Recreation District (MEPRD) was formed by voters of Madison and St. Clair Counties, Illinois in November 2000. MEPRD partners with local governments, special districts, and other jurisdictions for the purposes of developing and improving parks, recreational facilities, and trails throughout the two-county area. MEPRD also increases awareness and use of these amenities by providing related maps, data, statistics, and marketing materials. For more information, visit [www.meprd.org](http://www.meprd.org)*