Informational Memorandum

TO: NRPA MEMBERS

FROM: NRPA PUBLIC POLICY AND ADVOCACY TEAM

DATE: MARCH 18, 2021

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY PROJECT FUNDING (EARMARKS) IN THE 117TH CONGRESS

Earmarks Return as Community Project Funding

Representative Rosa DeLauro, the new Chair of the House Appropriations Committee, recently stated that "member-directed funding for community projects" would be coming back — in other words, the earmark process, has returned to Congress as "Community Project Funding."

An "earmark" directs federal funding to a specific project in a congressional member's district. Earmarks allow Congress to allocate funding for specific projects or programs without having to go through the standard appropriations process. The allocation per earmark is typically determined by the chair and ranking member of the appropriations committee.

The House Appropriations Committee released its regulations for Community Project Funding, which outlines the process for how requests are submitted and what type of projects will be accepted.

Background

Historically, earmarks have been used to advance priority spending projects requested by members of Congress – a tool to encourage compromise and negotiation.

In 2011, the House of Representatives ended the practice of earmarks. Earmarks had long been criticized for their lack of transparency, and opponents stated earmarks promoted unnecessary spending aka "pork." Earmark supporters say they strengthen congressional control over how federal dollars are spent and allow members to better deliver on the needs of their district.

FY22 Guidelines for Community Based Projects (Earmarks)

Community Project Funding may only be applied to non-profits, state and/or local institutions. Each member of Congress can submit up to a maximum of 10 requests (requests are not guaranteed to be funded). Members must provide evidence of community support for the project, which the Appropriations Committee considers "crucial" for determining which earmarks will be funded. The total available funding will be capped at 1 percent of discretionary spending or $15 billion, whichever figure is lower.

In the interest of transparency and accountability, the Appropriations Committee is requiring all funding requests be submitted online and will release the full list of projects funded. All projects must prove that they have no financial ties to the member of Congress submitting the request or

their family members. The new rules also require the Government Accountability Office to audit a sample of enacted funding requests and submit their findings to Congress.

Flow and Timing of Requests

The House Appropriations Committee has circulated a letter with early guidance on how Community Funding Project requests will be processed. Members of Congress can begin submitting projects on March 29, 2021 and the process will remain open until mid-April.

How to Submit Projects

Now is the time to speak with your city council, mayor, city manager and Member of Congress about potential projects. It is important to share the projects that have considerable community support. Projects that are of areawide importance are also more likely to be selected. Your Member of Congress will be selecting projects in the coming days, so it is important to act quickly.

Appropriations Subcommittee Due Dates and Eligibility Chart

Subcommittee	Deadline	Eligible Accounts
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies	April 16, 6:00 p.m. ET	- Federal land acquisitions through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (Note: The Subcommittee will accept requests for these community projects after the release of the full President's budget.). - Environmental Protection Agency State and Tribal Assistance Grants for certain water infrastructure projects. - Certain State and Private Forestry

		projects within the U.S. Forest Service. Attached here is more complete guidance.
Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies	April 15, 6:00 p.m. ET	• Byrne Justice Assistance Grants • COPS Technology and Equipment • National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration-- Operations, Research, and Facilities • National Aeronautics and Space Administration--Safety, Security and Mission Services Full guidance with specific information about these accounts is attached here.
Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies	Late May	**Corps of Engineers:** • Investigations • Construction • Mississippi River and Tributaries • Operation and Maintenance **Bureau of Reclamation:**

		• Water and Related Resources A full guidance document is available here. Please click here for a list of authorized projects.
Financial Services and General Government	April 16, 6:00 p.m. ET	For **Small Business Administration and Small Business Initiatives.** Under this option, Members may submit funding requests for Community Projects in support of small businesses, such as entrepreneur training, workforce development, counseling, research, and construction or acquisition of facilities. Further guidance can be found **here.**
Homeland Security	April 16, 6:00 p.m. ET	• Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grants • Nonprofit Security Grants • Emergency Operations Center Grants A guidance document is attached here.
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies	April 14, 6:00 p.m. ET	• Department of Labor—Employment and Training Administration—Training and Employment Services • Department of Health and Human Services—

		Health Resources and Services Administration— Program Management • Department of Health and Human Services— Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration—Health Surveillance and Program Support • Department of Education—Innovation and Improvement • Department of Education—Higher Education For full details, review the enclosed guidance here.
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies	**April 15, 6:00 p.m. ET**	• Agricultural Research Service, Buildings and Facilities • Rural Development, Rural Community Facility Grants • Rural Utilities Service, ReConnect Grants A full guidance document is available here.