

# Rural Community Grant Program applications now available

By Amy Whitehead

The Rural Community Grant Program, administered by the Division of Rural Services at the Arkansas Economic Development Commission (AEDC), has grant funds available that can be an economic development catalyst for rural communities in Arkansas. The next deadline for applications is August 9, and about \$650,000 is available each year through two open application periods. August 9 is the first application deadline for the fiscal year, with the second round of applications being accepted in March 2019. Last year, 108 rural communities received a grant from this program.

Here are some things to remember if your community is interested in applying for the Rural Community Grant Program:

- Cities under 3,000 in population are eligible to apply. Community development and fire protection are the categories that are funded, and this may include turnout gear for firefighters, fire trucks, public museums, civic centers, senior/youth centers, walking trails, community centers, libraries, and ballparks. Counties are also eligible to apply, and there is no population limit for counties.
- The maximum award amount is \$15,000 and a 50/50 match is required.
- Alex Johnston, Director of the Division of Rural Services, recommends that cities submit their applications early so that her office can provide feedback if needed. She also says it is important to stress the city's need and make a compelling case for why the grant is needed. Applications can be submitted between now and August, so don't wait.
- Planning and development districts can be a resource for this grant, but the application is streamlined so as to not be too cumbersome for cities to submit.
- Don't forget: A resolution of support from your city council is needed in order to authorize the project.

Marshall Mayor Kevin Elliott worked with the Northwest Arkansas Economic Development District to secure a \$15,000 grant through AEDC's Rural Community Grant Program. The grant was used to assist with the purchase of a Mini-X backhoe, which cost \$35,000.



Marshall was able to put a \$15,000 grant toward the purchase of this backhoe.

“The backhoe allows us to dig out water lines and complete jobs that we can't do with a larger backhoe,” Elliot said. “This grant program has really benefited the city. For a small community like Marshall, grants are the only way to make needed improvements that cannot be absorbed by the city budget.”

Want to find out if your city or project qualifies for funding through the Rural Community Grant Program? Contact the Division of Rural Services at AEDC to learn more, or contact your local planning and development district. If they are unable to fund your project they can provide guidance on other funding agencies or sources that might be more appropriate.



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