

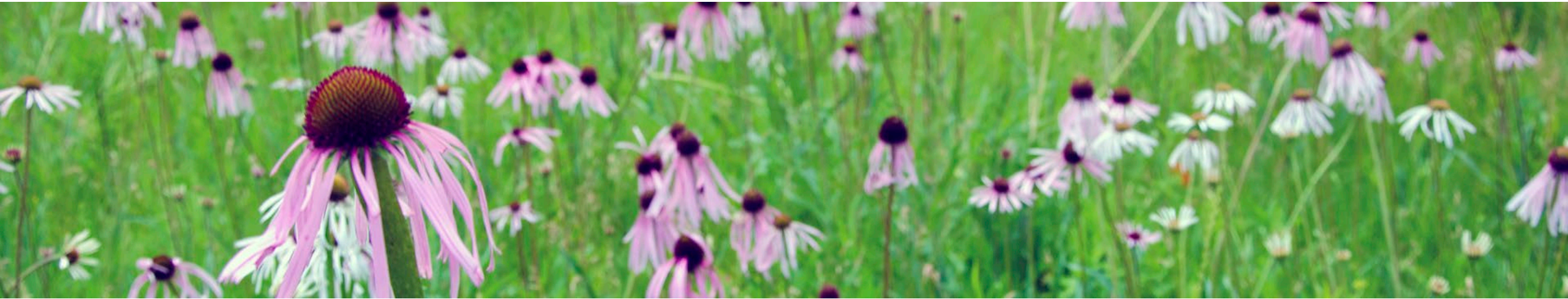
Call to order

ENRTF Community Grant Advisory Council Inaugural Meeting

July 22, 2026

Agenda

1:00–1:30 p.m.	Arrival, technology setup and informal welcome	DNR Staff
1:30–1:40 p.m.	Call to order, introductions and meeting overview	Interim Chair
1:40–1:50 p.m.	Welcome from DNR leadership	Assistant Commissioner Katie Smith
1:50–2:15 p.m.	Community Grant Program overview and current program design status	Katherine Sherman-Hoehn and Gwendolyn Tweed
2:15–2:40 p.m.	Roles, responsibilities and public meeting expectations	Gwendolyn Tweed
2:40–2:55 p.m.	Optional break and informal networking	
2:55–3:25 p.m.	Technical design overview and advisory council co-creation process	Gwendolyn Tweed
3:25–3:45 p.m.	Initial discussion and member questions	Interim Chair
3:45–3:55 p.m.	Next steps, advisory council co-creation survey and upcoming work	Gwendolyn Tweed
3:55–4:00 p.m.	Closing remarks and adjournment	Interim Chair

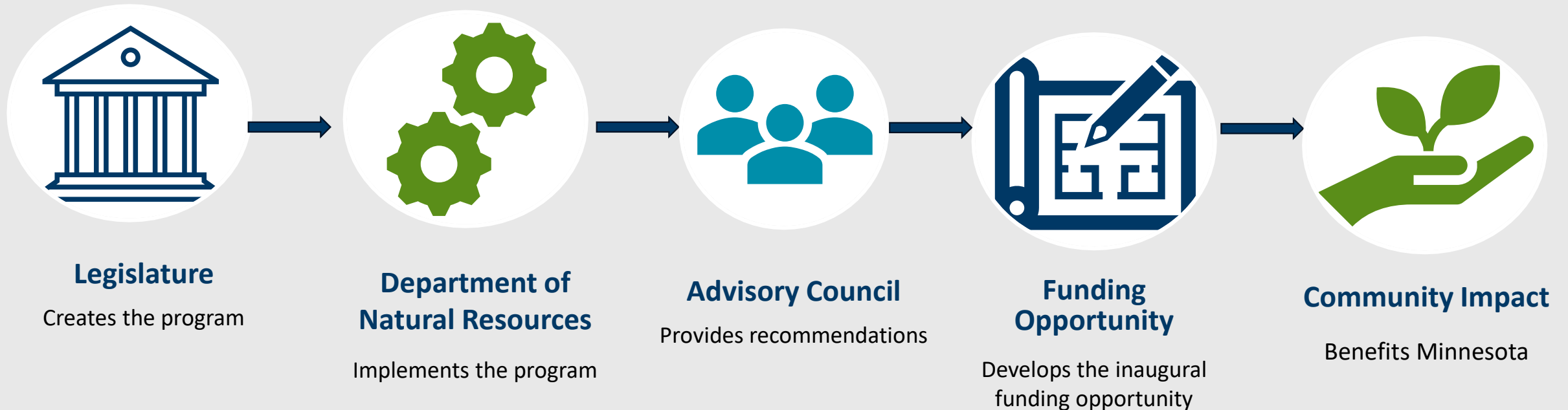


ENRTF Community Grant Program Overview

Gwendolyn Tweed, Community Grant Supervisor

Shaping the program

Collaborating to develop the inaugural funding opportunity



Today's meeting begins the advisory council's role in helping share the inaugural funding opportunity.

Who is the grant for?

Eligible applicants

- Nonprofit organization
- Tribal Nations
- Cities, counties and other local governments
- Conservation districts
- Public schools and school districts
- Other eligible public entities

Not Eligible

- State agencies
- University of Minnesota Board of Regents
- For-profit businesses
- Scientific research projects

What kinds of projects can be funded?



Environmental
degradation and
related health
concerns



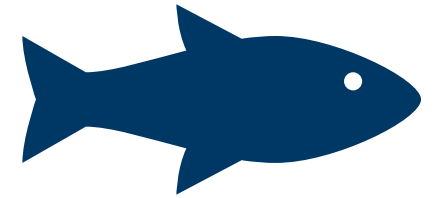
Education and
awareness related to
stewardship



Natural resource
preservation or
enhancement



Existing trail
maintenance and
improvement (no
new trails or trail
segments)



Aquatic invasive
species management

How much can applicants receive?

Small Grants (1st funding round)

- **Up to \$50,000**
- First funding round planned by the end of FY2027 Q1
- DNR will work with the advisory council on final naming and framing

Most eligible Community Grant projects

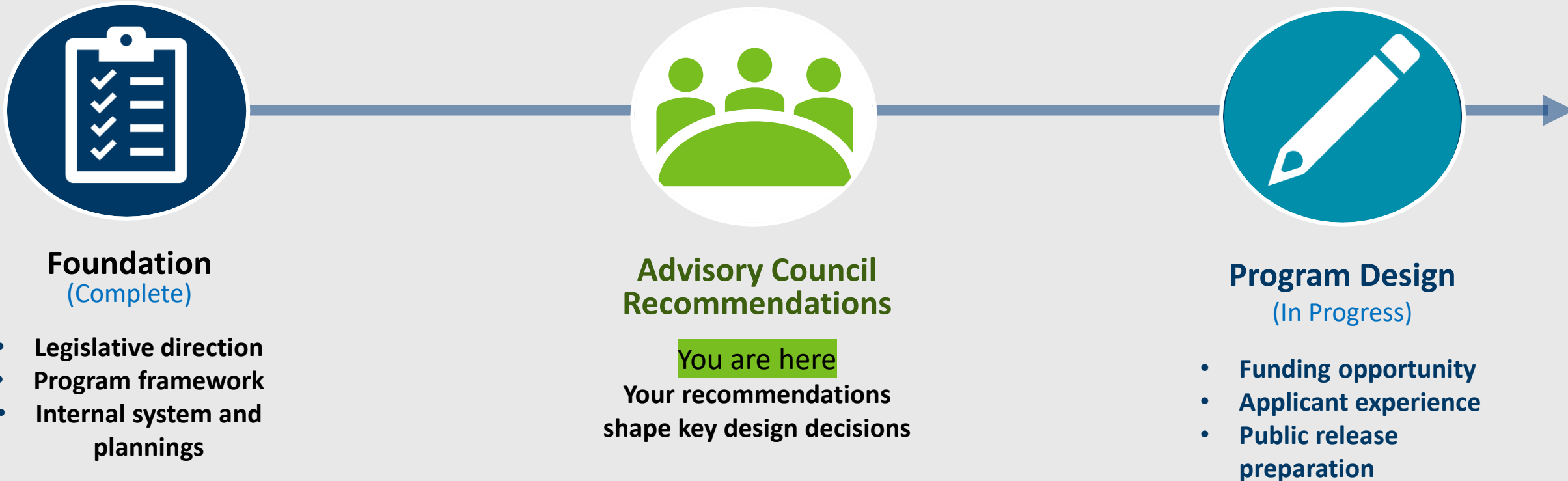
- **Up to \$750,000**
- Notes: Standard project pathway for larger or more complex eligible projects. Final structure will be defined in the RFP.
- 2nd funding round 2027

Trail maintenance projects

- **Up to \$2,000,000**
- The \$2 million cap applies to work on the same trail, not each applicant, application or trail segment
- A part of 2nd funding round 2027

Joining during design

The program foundation is in place. The advisory council will now help shape what comes next.



Today's meeting begins the collaborative design of Minnesota's inaugural Community Grant Program

Fixed and open

Some elements are fixed. Others are intentionally open for recommendations.

ALREADY ESTABLISHED

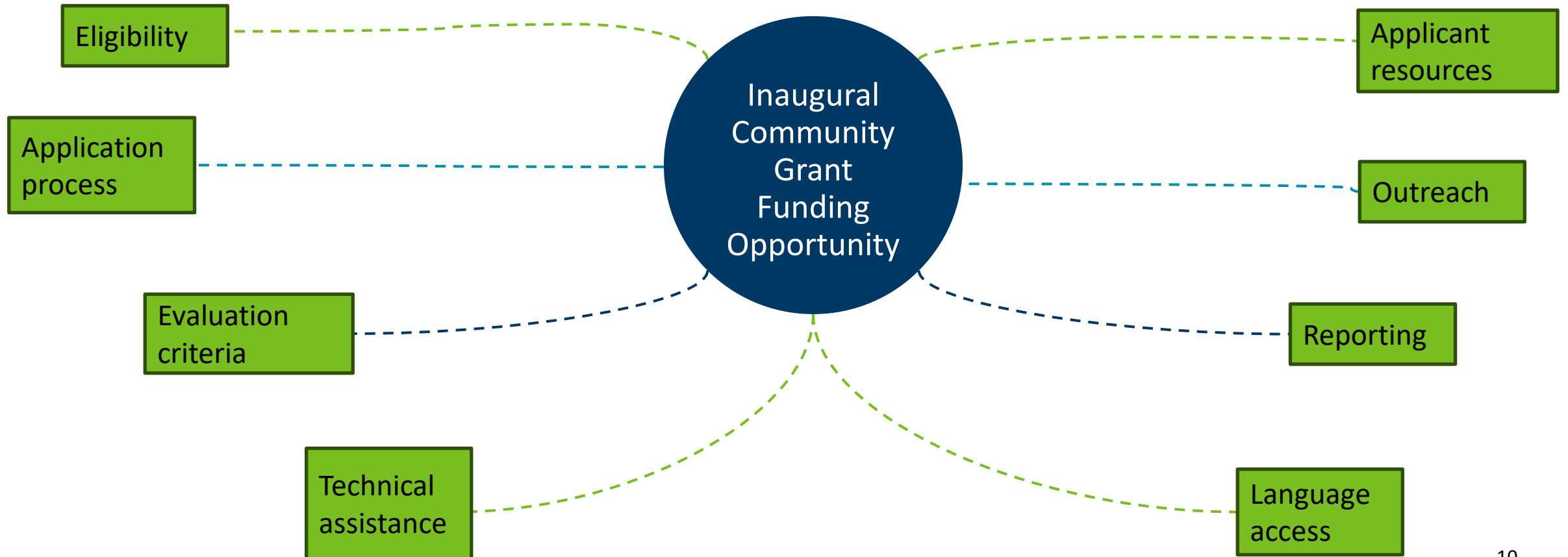
- Legislative direction (statute & appropriation)
- Program governance (DNR administers program)
- Administrative framework and core requirements
- Grant management system (GMS)
- Eligible activity areas (5 statutory areas)

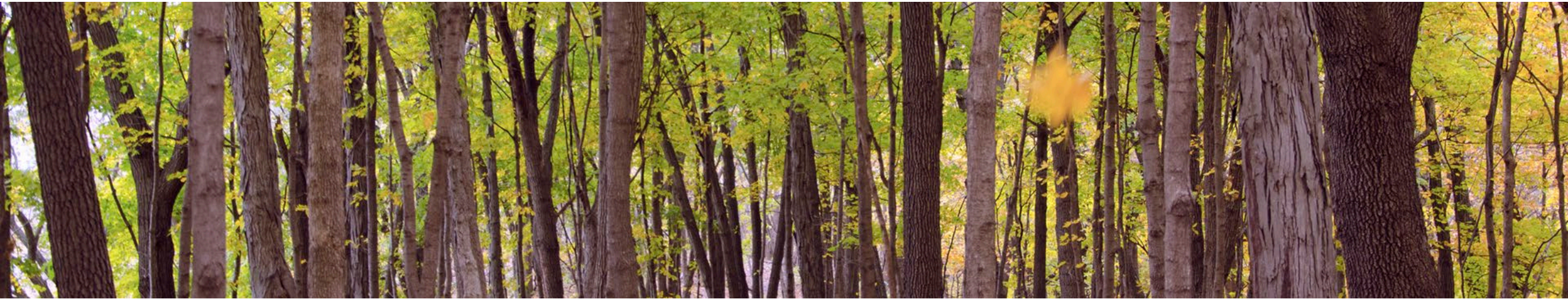
ADVISORY COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Funding opportunity design
- Applicant experience
- Technical assistance
- Outreach and engagement
- Evaluation considerations and criteria

Designing the opportunity

Many interconnected decisions create the applicant experience





Advisory Council Expectations

Gwendolyn Tweed | Community Grant Supervisor

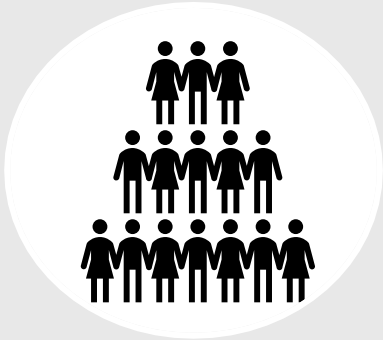
Recommendations in action

Your recommendations move through an ongoing, iterative process



Working together publicly

Different perspectives strengthen program development when we work toward shared purpose.



Diverse Perspectives

Members bring different experiences, knowledge, and viewpoints.



Respectful Discussion

We listen carefully, ask questions and discuss differences constructively



Public Deliberation

Council discussions and recommendations occur through public meetings.



Collaborative Recommendations

The goal is to identify recommendations that strengthen the program.

Shared purpose: build a clear, practical and accessible funding opportunity

Building public trust

These principles ensure accountability and confidence in the council's recommendations.



Open Meetings

Council business is conducted through public meetings.



Public Records

Recommendations and meeting materials are appropriately documented



Respectful Discussion

Members participate professionally and consider different viewpoints.



Ethical Conduct

Members disclose conflicts and follow applicable ethic requirements.

Transparency and accountability support public trust in the Community Grant Program

Optional break and informal networking

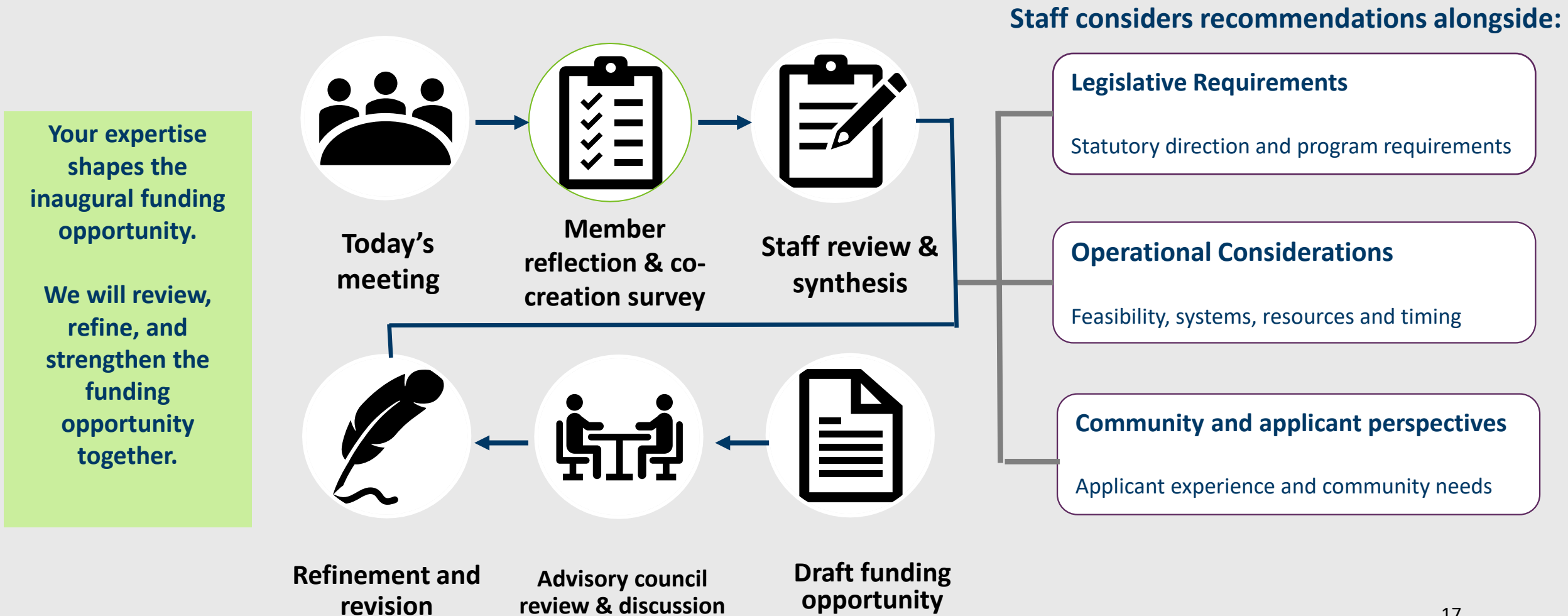


Technical Design Overview, Co-Creation Process

Gwendolyn Tweed | Community Grant Supervisor

How co-creation works

Our iterative co-creation process turns your experience into program design



From input to insight

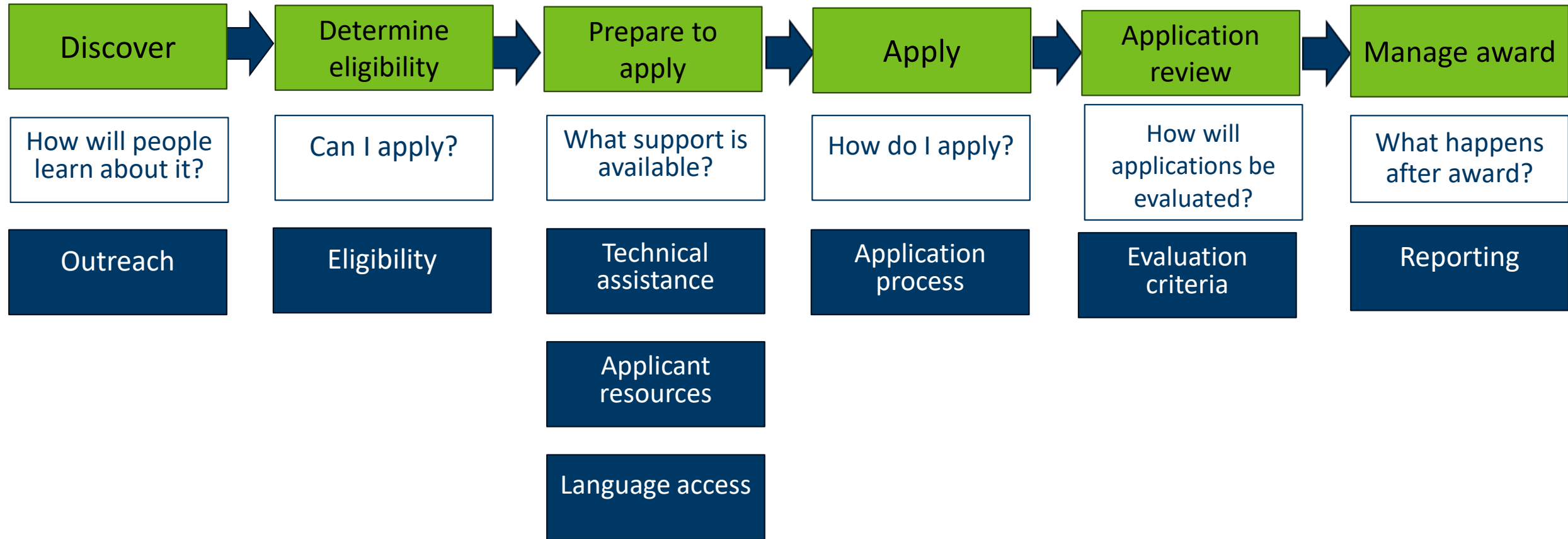
Each member has an opportunity to contribute after reflecting on today's discussion

- 1 Reflect independently on today's discussion and your experience.
- 2 Complete the co-creation survey to share your perspectives and recommendations.
- 3 Staff reviews and synthesizes responses to identify key themes and differing perspectives
- 4 Survey input informs the first draft and future Council discussion.

Estimated survey completion time: approximately 60 minutes

The applicant journey

A clear, supportive process helps more communities succeed.



Communication at every step

Informing program design

Applicant Experience

Decisions that affect how people learn about, understand, apply for and receive support

- **Clear information**
Outreach and communications that help people find and understand the opportunity
- **Eligibility and application**
Clear guidance on who can apply and a simple, user-friendly application process
- **Technical assistance and access**
Support, resources, and language access that help all communities participate

Staff Considerations

Factors staff must consider when developing and evaluating the funding opportunity

- **Statutory requirements**
Legislative direction, appropriation and required program elements
- **Operational feasibility**
Systems, processes, staffing and resources needed to implement the program
- **Evaluation and accountability**
Criteria, data, and reporting needed to ensure transparent, accountable use of public funds.



Initial discussion and member questions

Eartha Borer-Bell | Interim Chair

How we'll work together

Draft practices for discussion

WORKING AGREEMENTS

- One at a time
- Step up, step back
- Speak for yourself
- Good intent, real impact
- Listen to understand
- Right to pass

DECISION SUPPORT

Fist to Five is one option for understanding where the group is before making decision.

Fist = cannot support

1 finger = Serious concerns

2 fingers = Uncomfortable

3 fingers = Can support

4 fingers = Support

5 fingers = Strong support

Today is a discussion. No decisions will be made.

Future advisory council leadership

Introducing a co-chair role for future meetings



Purpose

- Partner with staff and the chair to support advisory council meetings.
- Help facilitate discussion and encourage member participation.
- Provide leadership continuity and support between meetings.



Role expectations

- Approximately 1 to 2 hours before each meeting for preparation.
- Participate in a brief planning discussion with staff.
- Serve during Advisory Council meetings.



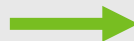
Next Steps

- Consider whether you are interested in serving.
- Email **Gwendolyn Tweed** **before** the next meeting if you would like to be considered.
- The advisory council will discuss and vote on the co-chair/chair position at the **September meeting**.



TODAY

Introduce the proposed co-chair role



BEFORE THE NEXT MEETING

Email interest to Gwendolyn Tweed



SEPTEMBER MEETING

Advisory council discussion and vote on co-chair/chair

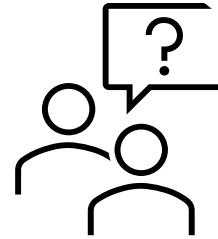
Your thoughts and ideas



What stands out
from our discussion
so far?



What ideas or
suggestions would
you like us to
consider?



What questions
should we explore
further?



What should staff
bring back for the
next meeting?

Today is a discussion and input. No decisions will be made. Staff capture themes and bring back options.



Next Steps, Advisory Council Co-Creation Survey and Upcoming Work

Gwendolyn Tweed | Community Grant Supervisor

The co-creation roadmap

From design to implementation and beyond – learning today strengthens future rounds.

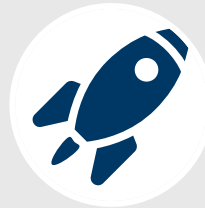
A continuous cycle of learning, adapting and improving.

Together we build a stronger Community Grant Program for Minnesota.



Co-Creation

- Meeting
- Survey
- Staff synthesis & evaluation
- Draft
- Council review
- Refinement



Launch

The funding opportunity is finalized and released to the public.



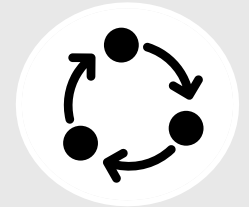
Implementation

Grants are awarded and projects begin, the DNR provides ongoing support.



Learn & Improve

We monitor results, gather feedback, and learn what works best.



Future Funding Rounds

What we learn informs the next co-creation cycle and future funding rounds.

Building it together



Thank you and looking ahead

Thank you

for your time, perspectives,
and commitment to
Minnesota's people and
natural resources.



We welcome your continued ideas and input

Contact Gwendolyn Tweed if you have questions or are
interested in a co-chair role



Preparing for Our Next Meeting

After Labor Day – details coming soon

- ☐ Watch for the follow-up email with the technical design survey
- ☐ Share any scheduling constraints or participation needs with DNR staff
- ☐ Think about topics you'd like us to continue exploring together

ENRTF Community Grant Program

Email: enrtf.communitygrants@dnr.state.mn.us

Website: [ENRTF Community Grant Program](#)