

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: 2026 AARP COMMUNITY CHALLENGE GRANT PROGRAM

BACKGROUND:

The [AARP Community Challenge](#) is a grant program offered by the American Association of Retired Persons to make communities more livable for people of all ages with tangible improvements that jump-start long-term change. Eligible projects benefit residents, especially those age 50 and older, in areas of transportation, mobility, housing, and overall quality of life.

Staff has engaged with multiple senior living communities to develop a grant proposal that would initiate single-stream recycling at partner facilities. While the City plans to implement community residential curbside recycling in July 2026, facilities such as senior living communities will be excluded from the residential program. As such, the AARP grant is an opportunity to support these types of facilities with recycling.

Grant funds would be used to pay for up to six months of recycling hauler costs, supplies such as collection containers, and educational materials. Staff is actively working with partners to finalize the grant application and budget, which will not exceed the program maximum of \$15,000. Grant applications are due on March 3. Applicants will be notified in May, and projects must be completed by December 2026.

If the grant is successful, the City would serve as a pass-through entity, distributing 100% of grant funds to interested partners to complete recycling activities. Staff will be available to support, but each partner receiving funding will be responsible for the implementation of recycling at their facility. Following the six-month grant period, partners are not obligated to continue recycling but will likely continue if residents support the initiative or savings are realized through reduced trash hauling. Partners will share information about diversion rates and participation with the City, and the lessons learned will help staff better support future multifamily and commercial recycling efforts in the community.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Authorize staff to apply for and participate in the AARP's Community Challenge grant program for up to \$15,000.
2. Do not authorize staff to apply for or participate in the AARP's Community Challenge grant program.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The AARP grant would support access to recycling for Ames residents who would not receive the service through the residential curbside recycling program. The grant proposal aligns with the City's waste diversion and Climate Action Plan goals. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1, as described above.