



## Application Guidelines Neighborhood Micro Grants Program

The Neighborhood Micro Grants Program (MGP) is designed to strengthen neighborhoods in the City of Knoxville by supporting start-up, immediate-need initiatives, and one-time projects through grants and technical assistance.

Please read this entire document before you start filling out your Application. If you have a question or need help understanding these Guidelines or the Application, call Debbie Sharp in the Office of Neighborhood Empowerment (ONE) at 215-4382. We are here to help.

### Terms & Conditions of the Neighborhood Micro Grants Program

#### **1) Available Funding and Competitive Grants**

The City of Knoxville has money available under the MGP. This is a competitive grant-making process limited to start-up neighborhoods or groups needing help with a one-time project. Awards will be made up to \$500. To receive funding, applications must be complete and must follow judging criteria (see Item #13, Page 4).

Some applications may not be funded or will be funded at less than the amount requested.

#### **2) Deadline for Applications**

Applications are due as soon as you see a need. You can submit via mail, email, or in person. No applications by fax, please.

#### **3) Who can apply?**

- a) Start-up groups that have been in contact with ONE, established groups that would like to start a new project/event, **OR** neighborhood organizations that have an active participant attend our “Building Strong Neighborhood Organizations” workshop series.
- b) Have registered with the ONE or have plans to register with this application.
- c) A group cannot discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, or disability when carrying out any aspect of the funded project.
- d) **Checking Account:** To receive funding directly from the City or through the city-provided Fiscal Sponsor (the East Tennessee Community Design Center), a neighborhood group must have a checking account prior to receiving your check.

However, if you use your own Fiscal Sponsor, you may not need a checking account depending on how your Fiscal Sponsor handles your receipts and invoices. It is not necessary to possess a checking account at the time you submit a MGP application, but you will need one upon receipt of the check.

e) **Start-up Groups:** Consideration will be given to applications from start-up groups. A start-up group is defined as a group of individuals from three or more unrelated households who wish to launch a resident-led, resident-controlled, democratically run neighborhood organization within an area that currently has no active organization.

- *The names and contact information for at least three individuals (three separate households) must accompany the application.*
- *Such application must detail how the group plans to operate democratically as a resident-led, resident-controlled organization.*

#### 4) **Ineligible Organizations**

Groups that are *not* eligible to apply include schools, city-wide organizations, healthcare facilities, religious institutions and organizations, political groups, governmental agencies and all other nonprofit organizations that are not democratically run, resident-led, and resident controlled.

#### 5) **Timeline**

It is anticipated that checks will be distributed to tax-exempt organizations or to fiscal sponsors within several months after apply. These grant requests go to City Council for approval. There needs to be at least 3 weeks prior to City Council to get the paperwork in, and several weeks after to get through the process to get a group paid.

#### 6) **Fiscal Sponsorship**

MGP grants can be made only to tax-exempt organizations with 501(c)(3) status.

- If a neighborhood group has a 501(c)(3) determination letter from and is in good standing with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), that group can receive funding directly from the City. A W-9 form will be requested if the City does not already have one from your organization.
- Neighborhood organizations without such tax-exempt status — and that includes most neighborhood groups — can receive MGP support by partnering with a tax-exempt organization willing to serve as the organization's fiscal sponsor. Funds are dispersed to that sponsor, which then provides the funds to the neighborhood group.

*Please Note: By law, churches and other religious organizations may not serve as fiscal sponsors for taxpayer-funded grants.*

The City of Knoxville has a contract with East Tennessee Community Design Center to provide that service for groups that do not have a 501(c)(3). ONE will make the arrangements for the use of East Tennessee Community Design Center and that

service is free. If you wish to choose a different fiscal sponsor, you will be responsible for setting this up on your own.

## **7) Matching Contributions**

Matching contributions are not required for MGP awards.

However, many grant programs — including the Neighborhood Small Grants Program (NSGP) — do require a dollar-for-dollar match. Such requirements encourage applicants to utilize the grant to involve more people and raise more funds from other sources. Under the NSGP, for example, matching dollars can come from any non-city funding source, from in-kind contributions, and especially from volunteer labor calculated at \$15 per hour.

We encourage you to use this opportunity to consider how you would match your grant dollars and involve more neighbors in your project — as practice for applying for larger grants in the future.

## **8) How Funds Can Be Used**

Here are examples of items for which MGP funds can be used:

- Supplies, materials
- Printing and copying
- Postage (for first issue of a start-up or for one revived newsletter)
- Food and non-alcoholic drinks (in cases where potlucks and neighbor donations are not at all feasible)
- Setting up an inclusive event that your group would like to sponsor

## **9) How Funds Cannot Be Used**

Here are examples of items for which MGP funds cannot be used:

- Costs incurred in preparing the Application
- Direct grants, scholarships, and loans for the sole benefit of specific individuals
- Loans, debt repayment
- Direct social services provided by social service agencies
- HOA and condo expenses including but not limited to roofs, storm water control, landscaping, private streets, and amenities not available to the general public.

Groups should not view the MGP as a means for funding the same activity repeatedly.

## **10) Fund Distribution, Receipts, and Project Reports**

Funds will be distributed in one payment. These are taxpayer funds, which must be accounted for. The ONE will monitor funded projects carefully. When your project is complete, your organization will be required to submit:

- A written summary of your project (one page or less).
- Copies of all receipts.

We provide the forms. Failure to account for all expenditures and provide copies of all receipts in a timely manner can result in the organization's suspension from future consideration for funding from the ONE.

Unused MGP funds must be returned to the City unless project modifications or additions have been approved in writing by the ONE — as the need arises.

### **11) Share the Knowledge**

Funded groups are encouraged to document your project with photos.

Project leaders may be invited to participate in conferences or workshops to share what you learned.

Groups should notify the ONE whenever a funded activity or event is taking place, so that ONE staff can attend, document the event with photos, and cover the event in *The Neighborly Notice* newsletter.

### **12) Other Notes for Applicants**

Only one application per neighborhood organization will be accepted in a fiscal year. A group may apply multiple years if it will be for different projects.

### **13) Judging Criteria**

When evaluating proposals, the City will be looking to fund proposals that possess these characteristics:

- The proposed project emerges from and addresses the unique needs and opportunities of the neighborhood and/or the neighborhood organization.
- The project benefits the neighborhood as a whole.
- The activities attempt to bring in more neighborhood participation.
- The event is equitable and inclusive.

In addition, a strong application will propose a project that:

- Is realistic and doable within the organization's capacity.
- Draws heavily on the skills, knowledge, and labor of neighborhood residents.

Preference may be given to an otherwise qualified proposal from a low- or moderate-income neighborhood over an otherwise qualified proposal from a high-income neighborhood. This is determined by census tract data.

### **14) Contact Us**

Questions may be directed to

Debbie Sharp  
865-215-4382  
[dsharp@knoxvilletn.gov](mailto:dsharp@knoxvilletn.gov)

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