



Application Guidelines  
**Neighborhood Small Grants Program**  
2025 Grant Cycle

The Neighborhood Small Grants Program (NSGP) is designed to strengthen neighborhoods in the City of Knoxville by supporting a wide range of community-based initiatives through grants and technical assistance.

The NSGP's Primary goals are to:

- A. Encourage neighborhood organizations to connect neighborhood residents with one another — and to engage the skills and knowledge of the residents.
- B. Build neighborhood capacity to plan and implement neighborhood improvement strategies.

The NSGP's Secondary goals are to:

- C. Increase the number of residents and resident leaders (including youth) involved in responding constructively to neighborhood issues, problems, and opportunities.
- D. Strengthen each neighborhood's connection to other neighborhoods, existing community assets, and partnership opportunities.

**Your neighborhood's project must meet both Primary goals and at least one Secondary Goal.**

**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 Hayley Howard in the Office of Neighborhood Empowerment at 865-215-2113. We are here to help you.

Terms & Conditions of the 2025 Neighborhood Small Grants Program

**1) Available Funding and Competitive Grants**

The City of Knoxville has possibly \$20,000 available under the NSGP in the round of grants to be awarded in early 2025 for projects carried out in calendar year 2025. Awards to support one-year projects can range from \$500 to \$5,000 or \$6,500 if partnering with another neighborhood, public school, umbrella neighborhood group, or non-profit. The organized neighborhood must be the primary applicant, and the grant funds must be used to benefit the neighborhood as a whole. This is a competitive

process. Some applications may not be funded, and some may be only partially funded. If the city receives more applications than it is able to fund, low-income applicants or projects benefitting low-income neighborhoods will be prioritized. This would be based on census data. So far, this has not happened.

Funds received from NSGP must be matched on a dollar-for-dollar basis or equivalent with the value of donated goods and services, the value of volunteer labor, and money pledged from non-City-of-Knoxville sources. At least one third of the match must be in the form of volunteer labor provided by residents of the neighborhood. However, **all** of the match can come from volunteer labor provided by the residents. See Page 5 for details.

## **2) Pre-Application Workshop**

Neighborhood groups wishing to apply **must** send a representative to ONE of three pre-application workshops on **Saturday, March 16, Monday, March 18, or Tuesday, March 26.**

**The person that attends the workshop must be the primary contact for the project.**

If a neighborhood representative absolutely cannot attend any of these three workshops, please call Hayley Howard at 865-215-2113.

Even if your group is doubtful you will apply, send someone to one of the workshops anyway. It could help you learn how to apply in the future or it could ensure that you have met this requirement to preserve your right to apply in this 2025 round.

## **3) Deadline for Applications**

Applications submitted via mail, email, or in person must be received no later than 4:30 p.m. Monday, July 22, 2024. **No applications will be accepted beyond this deadline. If you wish to have someone in the Office of Neighborhood Empowerment review your application for completeness, please do so by having your application to the office no later than 4:30 p.m. on Monday, July 8.** Applications received between Tuesday, July 9, and Friday, July 19, are NOT guaranteed a review. Any applications that come in on July 22, that do not have all of the correct paperwork, will not move on to the Grant Committee unless documented on Page 1 of the application. Even then, depending on what documentation is missing, your neighborhood's application might not proceed to the Grant Committee. Late applications will not be accepted. No applications by fax. No applications written in pencil will be accepted.

## **4) Who can apply?**

1. Neighborhood groups that received funding under the previous rounds are eligible to apply for 2025 funds if their projects will be **more than half way completed** by September of 2024 unless an extension has been approved.

2. Applicants must be resident-led, resident-controlled, democratically run neighborhood groups serving neighborhoods in the City of Knoxville.
  - *Neighborhood groups can include neighborhood associations, homeowners associations, tenant associations and neighborhood watch groups.*
  - *In the case of neighborhoods that are only partly in the city, more than 50% of the housing units must be located inside city limits.*
  - *Umbrella organizations that are made up of and controlled by member City neighborhood groups, and are democratically run are also eligible to apply.*
3. A group must conduct a regular election process to select leaders, and this process must be included in the group's bylaws, with meeting minutes, or otherwise available in written form. (Groups without written rules can submit a statement explaining how they are working toward this goal.)
4. A group must have a defined geographic boundary, hold regular meetings as defined in the organization's bylaws, maintain meeting minutes, and be registered with the Office of Neighborhood Empowerment.
5. 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.
6. To receive funding, a neighborhood group must be a nonprofit organization with tax-exempt 501(c)(3) status **OR** have made arrangements for a Fiscal Sponsor. (See Fiscal Sponsor section on next page.)
7. **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 when they receive the first 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 NSGP application.**

## 5) 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 nonprofit organizations that are not resident-based. Non-profit community organizations have access to funding that neighborhoods might not.

However, neighborhood groups may partner with other organizations that would otherwise be ineligible, such as youth service organizations to receive up to \$6,500.

Startup groups should ask about ONE's Micro Grants Program.

## 6) Timeline

Pre-Application Workshop A	10 a.m. Saturday, March 16, 2024 (Zoom)
Pre-Application Workshop B	6 p.m. Monday, March 18, 2024 (In person)
Pre-Application Workshop C	5 p.m. Tuesday, March 26, 2024 (Zoom)
Deadline for Review	4:30 p.m. Monday, July 8, 2024
Application Deadline	4:30 p.m. Monday, July 22, 2024
Site Visits	Aug/Sept 2024
Recommendations Announced	Early October 2024
City Council Approval	October/Early November 2024
Contracts Prepared & Signed	November 2024
Funds Distributed	January 2025
First Project Report Due	Mid-way through grant cycle
End Date for Projects	December 31, 2025
Close Out Report due no later than	January 31, 2026

**Extensions must be requested in writing (email is fine).**

## 7) Fiscal Sponsorship

NSGP 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.** Please email ONE for instructions on how to obtain the W-9 form.
- Neighborhood organizations without such tax-exempt status — and that includes most neighborhood groups — can receive NSGP 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.**

You may partner with a fiscal sponsor of your choosing. If you have no fiscal sponsor, the East Tennessee Community Design Center, partnering with the City of Knoxville, will provide that service to you. If you choose East Tennessee Community Design Center, we will set this up for you. ONE will cover the \$100 fee to use ETCDC. Any other fiscal sponsorship fees need to be listed in the budget and expenditures. If you wish to choose a different fiscal sponsor, you will be responsible for setting this up on your own.

## 8) Project Examples

Here are some project ideas. These are only examples. We encourage creativity in developing a project that addresses a need or opportunity in your neighborhood.

**Neighborhood Improvement & Placemaking** — Physical improvements to public areas, such as landscaping, design, and development of neighborhood parks; neighborhood clean-up and beautification projects; establishment of community gardens; design and installation of neighborhood signs; and development of projects which address issues of neighborhood blight are all possibilities. For more information about placemaking and project ideas, please check out [ONE's Placemaking Guide](#).

**Crime and Public Safety** — Projects which reduce crime and increase public safety, such as establishment of a neighborhood watch program; creative alley lighting; National Night Out activities; and crime prevention, fire safety, Neighborhood Traffic Safety Program Education Component, and emergency preparedness programs (including First Aid, CPR and Ham Radio training).

**Organizational Development** — Projects which increase the effectiveness and improve operations of existing neighborhood organizations, such as establishment or continuation of a neighborhood newsletter or fliers; publication of neighborhood directories or brochures; leadership or board training; membership recruitment campaigns; meeting notice signs; and inventory of neighborhood skills and talents.

**Recreational, Educational, and Cultural Activities** — Projects which bring neighborhood residents together for enjoyment and self-improvement, such as neighborhood festivals or other neighborhood-wide events; after-school or summer enrichment programs for youth; programs for senior citizens; and projects for gathering/recording neighborhood histories.

**Health and Wellness** — Activities that promote health and wellness in the neighborhood such as pickle ball, bike rides, hikes, etc. Learn more about our Healthy Knoxville program by reaching out to ONE.

## 9) Matching Contributions

Funds awarded under the Neighborhood Small Grants Program must be matched on a dollar-for-dollar basis by the total value of volunteer labor, donated goods and services, and any non-city cash income dedicated to the funded project. The total of your matching contributions **must equal or exceed** the amount requested from NSGP.

Volunteer labor can be calculated at \$15 per hour. Neighborhood groups are **required** to maintain a log of volunteer hours, **using our form**, in order to keep track of your time investment, and this log must be submitted along with Mid-Project and Close-Out reports.

The NSGP encourages **a high level of neighbor participation**, and therefore at least one third of the match must be in the form of volunteer labor provided by ***at least three***

**residents (the more, the better)** in support of the proposed project at the \$15/hour rate. **All of the match can be in the form of volunteer labor.** If you had all your match as volunteer labor, that would be at least 334 hours of volunteer labor for a \$5,000 grant.

Funds from other City of Knoxville sources, such as City Council 202 funds, can be used in an NSGP-funded project, but they **cannot be used** for the match. This is to encourage groups to gain independence by developing their own fund-raising projects and non-city sources of funding.

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

Here are examples of items that funds **can** be used for:

- Supplies and materials to benefit the group as a whole
- Equipment that will be used again or that can be shared with other groups
- Printing and copying
- Postage - can include postage for first issue of a start-up or revived newsletter (maximum of one mailing per grant cycle)
- Disaster preparedness items deployed for the benefit of the entire neighborhood
- Consultant fees
- Permit fees
- Equipment rental
- Food and non-alcoholic drinks (Having potlucks can add to the group's matching contributions either by a dollar amount or time.)
- Project expenses incurred after City Council approves the grant contracts and before the first grant check is issued
- NTSP educational supplies
- Activities for Healthy Knoxville programming
- Activities for Community Wildlife Habitats programming

*When you create a project budget, determine the **actual cost** of items you need to purchase and then think resourcefully how to obtain those items through borrowing or donations. This will free up funds for other needs or allow you to reduce your grant request.*

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

Here are examples of items that **cannot** be paid for by the NSGP grant:

- Costs incurred in preparing the Application
- Direct grants, scholarships, and loans for the sole benefit of specific individuals
- Loans, debt repayment **prior to City Council approval**, emergency funding
- 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.

In addition, groups should not view the NSGP as a means for funding the same project or activity year after year. **Funding can be granted for the same project or activity**

**no more than three years in a row, and only if the grant amount is reduced in the second and third years, replaced by other sources.**

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

Funds generally will be distributed in one payment for if the group has successfully completed a grant cycle in the past. This means that only a Close-Out Report, one Volunteer Log, and one Expenditures Chart needs to be submitted once the project is complete. If the group has not completed a grant cycle in the past, the funds will be dispersed in two checks, and a Mid-Project Report will also be required. Funds will be authorized for distribution only when a project is ready to proceed.

**The Office of Neighborhood Empowerment (ONE) will release money from East Tennessee Community Design Center. If your neighborhood chooses to use them as a fiscal sponsor, you need to email ONE to have your money released. Needed in the email will be how much you want (half or all), if all, explain why, and where the check will be mailed.**

The ONE will monitor funded projects carefully and will require an **exact** accounting of how **all** funds are spent. A Close-Out Report will be due within 30 days of the project completion but no later than January 31, 2026, unless an extension has been requested in writing (email is fine) and approved.

**All reports must be accompanied by receipts for all expenditures and volunteer logs. Failure to provide these reports and receipts in a timely manner could result in the organization's suspension from future consideration for funding.**

**Neither applicant organizations nor associated individuals may profit financially from a project funded by the NSGP. Unused NSGP funds must be returned to the City unless project modifications or additions have been approved in writing by the ONE.**

Again, if the group only receives one check, only the Close-Out Report is needed.

## **13) Share the Knowledge**

- Funded groups will be encouraged to document your project with photos, videos, and narrative so that it can be posted on the City's website for the benefit of other neighborhoods.
- Project leaders may be invited to participate in future neighborhood events or standalone workshops to share your project story with others.
- Neighborhood groups should notify the City whenever a funded activity or event is taking place, so that this event can be covered in the weekly newsletter published by the ONE. This is also so that we may attend to support your neighborhood and document your event with photos as well.

## **14) Other Notes for Applicants**

- a) The maximum NSGP grant for any one organization, application or project is \$5,000, except as specified in item F below.
- b) Only one application per neighborhood organization will be accepted, unless the group partners with another neighborhood or community organization on a separate project.
- c) Two or more neighborhood organizations may partner in a project led by residents of those neighborhoods for a total of \$6,500.
- d) The City will consider providing up to \$6,500 for a single project if the participating neighborhood organization has a proven track record (successfully completed at least one NSGP cycle turning in all documentation on time) and if the organization partners with another neighborhood or nonprofit.
- e) If a neighborhood organization partners with a community-based nonprofit, a support letter from that non-profit **must** be included with the application.
- f) The Applicant is responsible for any needed permit fees and approvals that may be required, and these costs should be included in the budget.
- g) The Applicant is responsible for any needed documentation. A letter of agreement for any work being done on property that is not the property of the organization applying is **required**. (For example: a sign on private property needs a letter of agreement from the owner that they are allowing this to be done and who will maintain it.) Similarly, a letter from the city is **required** on property owned by the city where modifications to city property are being requested.
- h) The Grant Committee (composed of neighborhood leaders and others familiar with the grant-making process) may recommend and the City may require that a grantee agree to certain conditions in order to receive the grant. Examples include revising the budget or timeline, following up on a suggestion to meet with a city department on some aspect of the funded project, and agreeing to take sealed bids for a major purchase.

## 15) Judging Criteria

When evaluating proposals, the Grant Committee and 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 project meets both Primary goals and at least one Secondary goal of the NSGP program. (See Page 1)

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

- Is realistic and doable within the organization's capacity (ability).



- Has a well-defined scope and measurable goals.
- Is highly creative.
- Presents a well-thought-out and realistic budget.
- Includes a detailed Project Work Plan and Timeline (who is going to do what when).
- Draws heavily on the skills, knowledge, and labor of neighborhood residents.

All neighborhoods are encouraged to apply for NSGP funding. However, if the total amount of funds requested exceeds available funds, the awards committee may consider giving preference to an otherwise qualified proposal from a low- or moderate-income neighborhood over an otherwise qualified proposal from a high-income neighborhood. This is based on census data.

The City will rely heavily on the insight and advice of an independent citizens committee to evaluate proposals, but the City retains sole discretion to determine the eligibility of applications and whether proposed projects meet the program's guidelines and criteria.

## **16) Contact Us**

Questions may be directed to:

Hayley Howard

865-215-2113

[hhoward@knoxvilletn.gov](mailto:hhoward@knoxvilletn.gov)

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