



## Neighborhood Small Grants Program Application Guidelines

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 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.
- 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.
- E. Support efforts to form neighborhood groups in unorganized areas.

Please read this entire document before you start filling out your Application. Call the Office of Neighborhoods at 215-4382 or 215-3232 if you have a question or need help understanding these guidelines or the application. We are here to help you.

### Terms & Conditions of the 2016 Neighborhood Small Grants Program

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

The City of Knoxville has approximately \$43,000 available under the NSGP in the round of grants to be awarded in the first half of 2016. Awards to support one-year projects can range from \$500 to \$3,000. This is a competitive process. Some applications may not be funded, and some may be only partially funded.

Funds received from NSGP must be matched on a dollar-for-dollar basis with the value of donated goods and services, the value of volunteer labor, and money pledged from other sources. At least one third of the match must be in the form of volunteer labor provided by residents of the neighborhood. See Pages 4-5 for details.

## 2) Pre-Application Workshop

Neighborhood groups wishing to apply **must** send a representative to a pre-application workshop on Thursday, January 14, 2016, **or** Saturday, January 30, 2016. Attendance is required at only one of the workshops. ***The Jan. 30 workshop will be held at United Way, 1301 Hannah Avenue, Knoxville TN 37921.*** If a neighborhood representative absolutely cannot attend either workshop, please call Debbie Sharp at 215-4382.

Even if your group is doubtful you will apply, send someone to one of the workshops anyway. This will ensure that you have met this requirement.

## 3) Deadline for Applications

Applications sent by mail must be postmarked no later than March 14, 2016. Applications submitted via email or in person must be received no later than 4:30 p.m. Monday, March 14, 2016. No applications will be accepted beyond these deadlines. No applications by fax, please. See Page 8 of this document for details.

## 4) Who can apply?

1. Applicants must be resident-led, resident-controlled 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 are also eligible to apply.*
2. Groups must be democratically run and managed by residents within the neighborhood to reflect the concerns of residents.
3. A group must conduct a regular election process to select leaders, and this process must be included in the group's bylaws or otherwise available in written form.
4. A group must have a defined geographic boundary, hold regular meetings, maintain records and meeting minutes, and be registered with the Office of Neighborhoods.
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 group must have a checking account. However, it is not necessary to possess a checking account at the time you apply.

7. To receive funding, a 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 Page 3.)
8. Consideration will be given to applications from individuals from three or more households within a neighborhood that currently has no active neighborhood 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 address governance issues and other requirements stated in 1-7 above.*
  - *Funding will be limited to \$500 or less, and such funding must be applied to steps involved in creating a new neighborhood organization.*
  - *To be eligible, at least one member of the start-up group must have contacted the Office of Neighborhoods prior to January 13, 2016.*

### **5) Ineligible Organizations**

Groups that are *not* eligible to apply include schools, city-wide organizations, healthcare facilities, individuals (except as herein described), religious institutions and organizations, political groups, governmental agencies and nonprofit organizations that are not resident-based.

However, neighborhood groups may partner with other organizations that would otherwise be ineligible.

### **6) Timeline**

|  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Pre-Application Workshop A             | 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 14, 2016 |
| Pre-Application Workshop B             | 10 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 30, 2016   |
| Application Deadline                   | 4:30 p.m. Monday, March 14, 2016  |
| Awards Announced by                    | Early May 2016                    |
| Funds Distributed                      | June 2016                         |
| First Project Report Due               | Mid-way through grant cycle       |
| End Date for Projects                  | July 30, 2017                     |
| Final Project Report due no later than | August 31, 2017                   |

### **7) Fiscal Sponsorship**

NSGP grants can be made only to tax-exempt organizations with 501(c)(3) status OR to eligible fiscal sponsors. If a neighborhood group has a 501(c)(3) determination letter from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), that group can receive funding directly from the City.

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.

**Requirement:** Please check with the Office of Neighborhoods on this matter well before submitting your application, especially if you wish to utilize the services of a fiscal sponsor.

## **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.

**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 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; attendance at neighborhood conferences; 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.

## **9) Matching Contributions**

Funds awarded under the Neighborhood Small Grants Program must be matched on a dollar-for-dollar basis with the total value of volunteer labor, donated goods and services, and any non-NSGP 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 strongly encouraged to maintain a log of volunteer hours in order to keep track of your time investment, and this log can 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 residents in support of the proposed project.

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, materials
- 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)
- Disaster preparedness items deployed for the benefit of the entire neighborhood
- Consultant fees
- Permit fees
- Equipment rental
- Food and soft drinks (in cases where potlucks and neighbor donations are not feasible)

*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 reduce your grant request.*

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

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

- Costs incurred in preparing the Application
- Direct grants, scholarships or loans for the sole benefit of specific individuals
- Loans or debt repayment, emergency funding
- Ongoing expenses of the organization
- Direct social services provided by social service agencies

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

Funds generally will be distributed in one payment for grants of \$1,000 or less, and in two payments for grants exceeding \$1,000. Funds will be authorized for distribution only when a project is ready to proceed.

The Office of Neighborhoods will monitor funded projects carefully and will require an exact accounting of how all funds are spent. The neighborhood organization will have to file two reports. The first, a Mid-Project Report, will be required before the second half of funds can be received or spent. A Close-out Report will be due within 30 days of the project completion but no later than August 31, 2017.

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

Neither applicant organizations nor associated individuals may profit financially from the project. Unused NSGP funds must be returned to the City via the fiscal sponsor.

### **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 the 2017 Neighborhood Conference or the 2018 Neighborhood Awards & Networking Luncheon to share your project story with others.
- Neighborhood groups should notify the City whenever a funded event is taking place, so that this event can be covered in the weekly newsletter published by the Office of Neighborhoods.

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

- The maximum NSGP grant for any one organization, application or project is \$3,000.
- Only one application per neighborhood organization will be accepted, unless the group partners with another neighborhood or community organization on a separate project.
- No more than two projects may be included in a single application, and they must be clearly distinguished with regard to purpose, budget, timeline, etc.
- Two or more neighborhood organizations may partner in a project led by residents of those neighborhoods.
- If a neighborhood organization partners with a community-based nonprofit, a support letter from that nonprofit should be included with the application.
- The Applicant is responsible for any needed permit fees and approvals that may be required, and these costs should be included in the budget.

## **15) Judging Criteria**

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following characteristics. Since the nature of projects can vary widely, these criteria are somewhat flexible. It is unlikely that any one project could meet all of these expectations. Instead, this list of criteria is intended to provide guidance to neighborhood organizations as they prepare their applications.

A strong application will propose a project that:

- Emerges from and addresses the unique needs and opportunities of the neighborhood and the neighborhood organization.
- Benefits the neighborhood as a whole.
- Addresses one or more of the goals of the NSGP program. See Page 1.
- 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 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.

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:

David Massey  
(865) 215-3232  
[dmassey@knoxvilletn.org](mailto:dmassey@knoxvilletn.org)

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

# Application Contents Checklist

**Use this checklist to make sure your Application is complete.**

\_\_\_ Submit a clean, easily readable copy of your application, with all sections filled out and questions addressed. Applications written in pencil will **not** be accepted, because they are too difficult to copy.

**Attach one copy of each of the following:**

\_\_\_ A copy of your 501(c)(3) tax-exempt certification letter or the certification letter of the organization that will serve as your fiscal sponsor.

\_\_\_ A letter from your fiscal sponsor indicating that it has agreed to accept, monitor and account for grant funds.

*[Above items are not necessary if you have made prior arrangements for the East Tennessee Community Design Center to serve as your fiscal sponsor.]*

\_\_\_ Your organization's two most recent treasurer's reports.

\_\_\_ A list of officers and board members, as well as their addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses.

\_\_\_ No more than five (5) pages of supporting documents, all of which must be 8.5x11 in size and suitable for copying. Such additional documents are not required.

\_\_\_ A letter of support from each partner organization, if applicable.

## **Application Submission and Deadline**

Applications sent by mail must be postmarked no later than March 14, 2016. Applications submitted via email or in person must be received no later than 4:30 p.m. Monday, March 14, 2016. No application will be accepted beyond these deadlines. No application will be accepted by fax.

By email to: [dsharp@knoxvilletn.gov](mailto:dsharp@knoxvilletn.gov)

By mail to: Office of Neighborhoods  
City of Knoxville  
P.O. Box 1631  
Knoxville, TN 37901

By hand to: Office of Neighborhoods / Community Development Dept.  
Room 528  
City County Building  
400 Main Street  
Knoxville, TN 37902