



Neighborhood Grant Program Guidelines

City of Waco - Office of Neighborhood Engagement

<https://waco-texas.com/neighborhoods>

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Program Overview

The City of Waco's Neighborhood Grant Program assists neighborhood associations with beautification, identity, and community-based projects. The program was created to engage residents, increase community spirit and pride, strengthen community relations, provide a public benefit, attract and retain a quality workforce, and ensure Waco neighborhoods remain vibrant places to live, work, and play.

The Neighborhood Grant Program is a matching grant program to further develop a partnership between the neighborhood and the City to improve the quality of life of our neighbors. The program awards up to \$7,500 per grant to neighborhood associations. Neighborhood associations can apply for up to two grants per application cycle, but no more than \$10,000 can be awarded to any association per year. If two grant applications are submitted, they must be for different projects (i.e., they cannot combine to achieve more than \$7,500 for the same project).

Eligible projects must:

- Support neighborhood goals;
- Be highly visible and accessible from the public realm;
- Provide a community benefit;
- Enlist community participation and/or community support;
- Result in an enhancement of the neighborhood;
- Be feasible for completion within the given timeframe;
- Have a plan and dedicated funding source for maintenance of the project (if applicable);
- Involve the benefiting neighborhood in project identification, planning, and execution; and
- Be within Waco city limits.

Projects not eligible for funding, include:

- Duplication or expansion of an existing private or public program or service;
- Ongoing services or requests that support service organizations' operating budgets;
- Projects that conflict with existing city policy;
- Projects that conflict with the neighborhood association's goals;
- Projects that could negatively affect the neighborhood or other neighborhoods;
- Projects exceeding the duration of six months to complete; or
- Maintenance of projects built with previous grants.

Project Ideas

Neighborhood Events

Events and gatherings for the community, such as a food truck event or movie night to bring the neighborhood together and increase the membership and involvement with the association's efforts.

Neighborhood Organizing/Organizational Development/Capacity Building

Activities, services, and materials that generate new neighborhood connections and activities, grow the neighborhood association, educate neighborhood leadership, or promote involvement.

Neighborhood Preservation

Materials, programs, or services that sustain or improve the health, public safety, and welfare of the neighborhood, such as:

- Park amenities, community gardens, trash cans or benches in public locations,
- Neighborhood markers, or
- Metal neighborhood identity signs installed by city staff.

Neighborhood Cultural, Social, and Recreational Activities

Materials or activities that promote diversity, equity, inclusion, family literacy, neighborhood access to technology, after school enrichment programs, and cultural activities, such as music, dance, or art programs.

Who is eligible for an award?

Neighborhood Associations must:

- Be in the City of Waco and included in the [list of neighborhood associations](#);
- Have by-laws governing the organization;
- Have Certificate of Formation or Articles of Incorporation filed with the Secretary of State and be in good standing (Check your status here: <https://mycpa.cpa.state.tx.us/coa/search.do?userType=public>.);
- Have membership open to all those living within their boundaries (and per the bylaws);
- Have a Federal Tax Identification Number to complete IRS Form W-9;
- Have a bank account in the name of the neighborhood association;
- Submit the application by the deadline; and
- Agree to submit the required project progress reports and final report.

Restrictions on Application Eligibility

- Neighborhood Associations that abandon a project will not be eligible to apply for 2 years.
- Neighborhood Associations that do not complete a grant project as planned, or on-time, will not be eligible to apply for one year.
- Projects must be for public use, and any project that only benefits an individual or group will not be eligible.

Funding

Grant Match Requirements

The Neighborhood Grant Program requires the neighborhoods to provide a 25 percent match contribution. The match can be in the form of cash, fundraising, or in-kind contributions, such as volunteer work or donated facilities, equipment, and services. For example, if a neighborhood association is awarded a \$3,000 grant for a project, the neighborhood must contribute an additional \$750 through their own funds, donations, or in-kind contributions. If a neighborhood association is using their own funds to use toward the match, they must provide proof of those funds with a recent bank statement.

Certain public improvement projects that can be set up with internal City of Waco departments do not require a 25 percent match (chart below); however, some level of neighborhood contribution is still recommended. Examples of projects that do not require a match are new metal identification signs, sign toppers, cameras and related technology for monitoring illegal dump sites or similar areas of concern, or other projects that specifically assist the city staff with permanent public improvements or enhanced services in the neighborhood.

Projects that require a Match	Projects that DO NOT require a Match
Signs or entrances/gateways into a neighborhood, whether located on City Right-of-Way or Private Property (or a combination of public and private space)	Signs in the public right-of-way that will be owned and maintained by the City
Events at the park (Movie in the Park, National Night Out, Neighborhood Association membership drive, food trucks, etc.)	Park improvements – park bench, exercise equipment, etc. that will be owned and maintained by the City
Community Garden on private or public land that will be owned and maintained by the neighborhood association.	

In-kind Contributions

Donated use of facilities, equipment, and professional labor or services can be counted as in-kind contributions toward the match at the normal rate it would cost to rent, use, purchase, or contract the contribution. For example, if a business is donating the use of their event space, which normally costs \$500 to rent for one day, the in-kind contribution would be calculated as \$500. Similarly, if an architect, designer, landscaper, or other contracted professional is donating their time to assist in the planning stages, their time may also be used in the calculation for in-kind contributions at their regular hourly rate.

If you anticipate receiving monetary or in-kind donations from partners or sponsors, please provide a letter of commitment from the sponsor written on company letterhead. Partners or sponsors are not required to provide the donation or contribution at the time of application; however, the neighborhood association should plan to receive contributions soon after the contract is signed.

Eligible volunteer activities can be counted toward the match at the hourly rate established by the Independent Sector as the Value of Volunteer Time in effect on the date the project is approved. Activities could include but is not limited to prepping a site, painting, removing and planting landscape, setting up event material, or cleaning after an event. Include your expected volunteer contribution in the budget table on your application. Volunteers must be a minimum of 15 years of age for their hours to be counted as part of the match. Photographs of volunteer work and a volunteer sign-in and sign-out log must be provided in your reports. A sample volunteer log is available at waco-texas.com/neighborhoodgrant.

Time used to discuss or plan the project can be counted toward the match, but it cannot exceed 20% of the total match, and it cannot include the time to complete the application. At least 5 hours of planning time will be allowed to count toward the grant match for all projects. Projects with budgets larger than \$3,000.00 may qualify for more hours of planning time. Contracted professionals donating their time for

a service that is normally charged by the hour can be counted toward the match at their normal billing rate. Any facilities, equipment, or services that are already provided at no cost to the neighborhood do not count toward the match.

How Funding is Distributed

Grant payments will not be made directly to the neighborhood association in advance of the incurred expense. Funds will be distributed on a reimbursement basis or through direct payment to vendors. Neighborhood associations can access funds in the following ways:

- Vendor Check: The City can directly pay the approved company or vendor upon the receipt of an invoice from the neighborhood association. Payments can typically be made within 30 days of receipt of the invoice from the neighborhood. However, if the vendor is not already a vendor with the City, they must allow at least 45 days to be paid.
- Purchase Order: The City can issue a purchase order to vendors on the City's approved vendor's list or vendors willing to be added to the list.
- Reimbursement: The neighborhood association may purchase the items themselves and submit the original itemized receipts to the Office of Neighborhood Engagement for reimbursement. The reimbursement will not occur until the contract is complete and the final report is submitted and approved. Please note that the City of Waco does not reimburse tax, and the neighborhood association will be required to provide their bank account information and submit a W-9 with their federal tax identification number.

The City must follow the City's Purchasing Policies and Competitive Bid Requirements and any applicable Purchasing Laws. All vendors or companies must be a vendor with the City of Waco or be eligible to become a vendor in order for the City to pay any invoices.

Funding Limits

Neighborhood associations must use all grant funds by December 31. If the project is completed under budget, the neighborhood association will only receive the amount required for the project and not the full requested funding amount.

Neighborhoods should not make any purchases or begin any stage of the project until the contract is signed and a Notice to Proceed is provided. Any expenses incurred prior to the official start of the project as determined by the City will not be reimbursed or considered part of the grant.

Each neighborhood association may receive:

- No more than 1 grant in the year that the neighborhood association receives their first grant.
- No more than 2 grants in any year.

Future project requests will be evaluated on the neighborhood association's ability to successfully complete previous projects according to the expectations in the project request and contract.

Bids

If the neighborhood association is using an outside contractor or vendor, the neighborhood must request two written bids or estimates from different contractors or vendors to include in their application. Bids

can be provided as a formal document, email, or text message (documented by screen shot). If an individual item costs more than \$3000, please consult with Neighborhood Engagement staff on bidding requirements and payment procedures.

Neighborhood Support

In order to ensure the proposed grant funded projects are in the best interest of the neighborhood, the City requires written support from neighbors to demonstrate significant support for the proposed project. As part of the application, please include a Private Property Approval Form from any individuals or businesses that are most affected by the proposed project, especially if the project will be on their property. The application also requires a Neighborhood Support Petition with at least five signatures from neighbors in support of the project. The Private Property Approval Form and the Neighborhood Support Petition form are included online at waco-texas.com/neighborhoods.

Application Process

Neighborhood associations interested in applying for the Neighborhood Grant program should contact the City's Office of Neighborhood Engagement before starting the application, so that a program staff member can ensure the proposed project aligns with the grant guidelines and purpose.

1. The application is open each year in the Fall, as determined by staff, and is available online. Paper versions of the application and other supplemental forms can be made available upon request.
2. Once the application is submitted, staff will review the applications for completeness and prepare the applications for the grant review committee.
3. The grant review committee will independently and collectively review the grant applications and prepare a recommended projects list.
4. The recommended projects will be presented to the City Manager or designee for final approval. During the review and approval stages, neighborhoods may be asked to provide additional information or documentation related to the proposed project.
5. Upon a decision, the Office of Neighborhood Engagement will provide the neighborhood a notification letter with a decision. If approved, the notification letter will provide instructions on how to complete the contract with the City of Waco. The contract will include the amount of funds awarded, purpose of the funds, payment terms, funding time limits, reporting requirements, and other expectations.
6. Once the contract is signed by both the neighborhood association and the city, the Office of Neighborhood Engagement will issue a notice to proceed, and your neighborhood association can begin their approved project.
7. Neighborhood associations are expected to provide monthly reports on the progress of the project. If the project is less than one month, only a final report will be required. Neighborhood associations are also expected to take pictures throughout the grant funding process to record

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progress and completion, verify volunteer work (if applicable), and for the City to use as marketing material.

8. The grant project must be completed by December 31, which includes finishing the neighborhood project, submitting invoices or reimbursement requests, and completing the final project report.

Application

The application is available online at waco-texas.com/neighborhoodgrant and a paper application is available from the Office of Neighborhood Engagement upon request. A sample of the application questions and format is also available [online](#) to assist you in previewing the application. Please do not attempt to fill out and submit the sample form. If you do not submit an online application through the proper website (or the official paper form), your application will not be considered for the grant.

Required Attachments

Grants will not be awarded until the following attachments are provided:

- Neighborhood Association Bylaws
- Proof of good standing with the Secretary of State. (Check your status here: <https://mycpa.cpa.state.tx.us/coa/>.)
- Certificate of Formation or Articles of Incorporation
- Project Budget (using the budget guidelines)
- Private Property Approval Form (if applicable)
- Neighborhood Support Petition Form (with at least 5 signatures)
- Bank Statement (if you are providing a cash match from neighborhood funds)
- Proof of Bank Account (if you are **not** providing a cash match from neighborhood funds)
- Completed [Form W-9](#). (If your neighborhood association does not have an Employer Identification Number (EIN), [click here to learn how to apply](#).)
- Landscaping or building plans of the proposed project site (if applicable)
- Bids or estimates (if applicable)
- Proof of commitment from partner or sponsor on company letterhead.
- Any additional attachments relevant to the project.

Budget Requirements

The budget must include the following information:

- Line items for each major component for the project
- A short description of each line item
- Total cost of each line item
- Funding source (volunteer match, donation match, neighborhood cash match, or grant)
- Total cash match provided by the neighborhood association
- Total donated match of services, materials, or supplies
- Total volunteer match
- Total project match
- Total project cost

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- Total grant funding requested (Cannot exceed \$7,500 or 75% of the total project cost)
- Percentages that show the neighborhood match is at least 25% of the total project cost

A sample project budget is provided online at waco-texas.com/neighborhoodgrant. The sample budget is not representative of accurate or reasonable costs for a specific project, and it is only a suggested budget format. You may use your own budget format as long as it includes the requested information above.

Project Evaluation

The Neighborhood Grant Committee is comprised of representatives from the following departments: Office of Neighborhood Engagement, Housing & Community Development, Code Compliance, Parks & Recreation, Public Works, Solid Waste, and Police. The Committee evaluates applications in accordance with the evaluation sheet and selects successful applications for final approval by the City Manager. The Committee will evaluate each application based on the following criteria:

Criteria Category	Scoring Weight	Explanation of Criteria
Community Benefit & Impact	35	The precise description of the project, benefits to the neighborhood, and accessibility by the public.
Project Planning	25	A clear demonstration of neighborhood support and participation and how the project will be accomplished.
Budget Information	30	Clear understanding of project costs with feasible budget and demonstration of a 25% neighborhood match.
Bonus	10	Additional demonstrated support from the neighborhood and greater contribution from the neighborhood toward the required match.
Highest Possible Score	100	

Should the number and value of requests for eligible projects exceed available grant funds, grants will be awarded to the highest scoring project first, then in descending order until all funds are distributed.

Reporting Requirements

Neighborhood associations are expected to provide monthly progress reports throughout the project in addition to a final project report. Projects that are one month or less should provide one final report. The final report must be completed and submitted within one month of project completion, but not later than December 31. Requirements for each report are included below:

Progress Report(s):

- Documentation of expenses paid, including receipts and invoices
- Documentation of volunteer hours, including a volunteer log sheet (signed by each volunteer), and photos of volunteer activity
- Photographs of the project progress
- Complete Progress Report form, which includes a narrative of the project status, challenges or obstacles that have impeded or may impede progress, and next steps

Final Project Report:

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- Documentation of expenses paid, including receipts and invoices
- Documentation of volunteer hours, including a volunteer log sheet (signed by each volunteer), and photos of volunteer activity
- Photographs of the project completion
- Complete Final Project Report, which includes a narrative of project completion, lessons learned, and feedback on the grant process.
- Exit interview with the Office of Neighborhood Engagement
- Site visit (either during an event or after completion of a physical improvement)

Progress and final project reports are available online at waco-texas.com/neighborhoods.