

# United Way of Central Maryland 2024 Neighborhood Grant Questions and Answers

This document includes answers to frequently asked questions as well as questions asked during the Neighborhood Grant Information Session held on October 11, 2023, and those submitted to United Way via email.

## GENERAL

### **When and where can I find the slide show presentation and recordings for the Neighborhood Grant Information Session and the Grant Writing Workshop?**

These presentations and recordings as well as all other Neighborhood Grant materials can be found on our funding opportunities webpage: <https://www.uwcm.org/funding-opportunities-for-organizations>

### **What is the website where I can find the RFP?**

Same as above: <https://www.uwcm.org/funding-opportunities-for-organizations>

### **The application is not showing up in the application portal.**

It is live. Go to <https://www.uwcm.org/funding-opportunities-for-organizations>. There you will find a link to access the online application through our CommunityForce portal.

### **If more than one person is working on the same application, do they use the same password to login?**

Yes, but you have the ability to invite others in your organization to collaborate on the application with you. Instructions for that can be found in your dashboard.

### **Will the grant cycle be the same next year?**

The grant cycle for this Neighborhood Grant opportunity is January 1 through October 31, 2024. United Way has not established grant cycle dates beyond this current application.

### **For the video submission, are you able to upload a video from a cellular phone? The last grant it stated that it needed to be on YouTube.**

Videos filmed using a cell phone are perfectly acceptable. However, your video must be submitted in the form of a YouTube video by creating the video in YouTube and cutting and pasting the video link into the application. Unfortunately, this is the only way CommunityForce can accept your video.

### **Can we use media clips from interviews of people we serve?**

How you put together your video submission is your choice – as long as it meets the requirements of 90 seconds maximum and submitted in the form of a YouTube video.

### **For the video, is there a specific role preferred for the video submission? For example, can the video be from the Org president or vice president?**

Who and what you include in your video is up to you.

**What if your organization has a collaborative shared leadership structure (no CEO, no exec director)?**

Within the *General Information* section, *Executive Director/CEO* please provide the name(s) of one or more members of your shared leadership team. Include their Title(s) as you best see fit (e.g., Leadership Team Member).

**Please clarify - is the Neighborhood Grant funded by public funding or private funding?**

United Way of Central Maryland will utilize private funding sources for the 2023 Neighborhood Grant.

**What are the reporting requirements for the grant? Narrative, Financial? Year-end?**

Brief mid-year update, and End of Year Narrative and Financial Report.

**If several organizations in our community apply for this grant, does it affect our chances of getting the award?**

It may. Depending on the overall volume of applications and the amount of funding available, reviewers may consider diversifying investment to different neighborhoods/communities as part of their grant award decisions.

**Are you giving a specific number of grants to each county/city?**

Each jurisdiction has an allocated amount of funding for grantmaking. The number and strength of grant applications as well as the amount of funding available for each jurisdiction factor into the number of grants awarded.

**The 2024 Neighborhood Grants RFP indicates that RUN (Region United Network) boards will assist in application review. Will United Way staff conduct a first-level review of the applications or does the review start with the RUN board? Is the list of RUN Boards members published?**

Program staff review applications first to check for/confirm applicant eligibility. All eligible applications are then reviewed by the RUN Boards for their corresponding jurisdiction. At this time, our RUN Board members are not listed on our webpage.

**Can I find information on who received Neighborhood Grant awards last year?**

The 2023 Neighborhood Grantees are currently listed on our website - [Nonprofit Funding Page](#).

**Please provide details about how the collaborator function works in CommunityForce.**

The Collaborator feature within our grant application portal allows applicants to share access to the application with others who are reviewing and/or contributing to the development of the application. For example, you may have a finance person who will help create/enter the application budget.

To assign someone as a collaborator, select the 2024 Neighborhood Grant hyperlink from the **My Applications** tab of your CommunityForce account. Then select the green **Add Collaborator** button in the top right corner of your dashboard. Next, select **Add Collaborator** and follow prompts. And finally, select **Assign Section** to connect the collaborator with the applicable section.

## ELIGIBILITY

### **Must a nonprofit be registered in Maryland? Or can an organization apply if it's incorporated in DC but serving Maryland?**

Nonprofits registered outside of the state of Maryland are eligible to apply. Please remember that all applicants must demonstrate that they have a strong connection to the community/neighborhood they are proposing to serve, and as with all applicants, they would need to make the case that their proposed project aligns with the **four main project criteria**:

- Is community-focused
- Is resident-driven
- Creates connections among residents
- Shows promise of community impact

Our service area includes Baltimore City and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard Counties.

### **How do you define “neighborhood” or “community”?**

Many neighborhoods or communities are defined by themselves. There is not a strict definition for the purpose of this grant. You may define it as you like. You may identify a neighborhood/community that is defined by geographic boundaries. We will also consider applicants that define a community of people they propose to serve - based on common interests, characteristics, and/or experiences. Either way, it is important that the applicant effectively describes how the people they will serve make up a neighborhood and/or community.

### **What is the total operating budget amount for an applying organization?**

To be eligible, applicants must have a total annual operating budget of **\$500,000 or less** in their current fiscal year.

### **If the organization's budget is over \$500,000 but the work in the specific neighborhood or jurisdiction is under \$500,000, can the organization apply?**

No. The established \$500,000 maximum budget eligibility criteria is applied to the applicant organization's total annual operating budget.

### **Do you need to submit all three fiscal documents if you're under \$300,000?**

If you are a smaller organization, you can submit an organizational budget, profit/loss statement or Form990. Just one - not all three.

### **How old can the certificate of good standing be?**

It must be within your current fiscal year. If you have a current certificate, you may upload it. Additionally, you may submit a screenshot showing that your organization is currently in good standing. Go to the Maryland Department Assessments & Taxation website - <https://dat.maryland.gov/businesses/Pages/Internet-Certificate-of-Status.aspx> under Businesses, select Business Entity Search, search for your organization, confirm you are in good standing, take a screenshot with a date time stamp and upload it to your application.

**My organization is new as of 2021, and they have their 501c3 and MD certifications. However, they have not yet filed taxes, so they do not have a 990 or other audited financials. Are they still eligible to apply for this grant opportunity? And if so, is there other documentation that you would like to see?**  
Yes, if your organization had annual gross income from charitable organizations of \$300,000 or less last year, we would also accept a copy of your current fiscal year's annual organizational budget.

**Do applicants need a building or infrastructure to be eligible for a Neighborhood Grant?**  
We do not have parameters regarding the use of a building/physical space.

**Is an organization with 501(c)4 tax status eligible to apply?**  
Yes

**Is an organization with 501(c)7 tax status eligible to apply?**  
Yes

**If we received a grant in 2022 ONLY, would we be able to apply for the 2024 grant?**  
Yes

**Must the organization have a physical street address in order to apply? Or is having a PO Box acceptable?**

A physical street address is not required. Please note though, reviewers look for strong evidence that you are from and/or working closely with the community you are proposing to serve.

**Would the Care a Lot grant be considered a Neighborhood grant and make an organization ineligible?**  
For the purpose of determining eligibility, we are only referring to previous United Way of Central Maryland Neighborhood Grants.

**Are schools eligible to apply?**

If they meet all of the eligibility criteria, then yes. The large majority of schools do meet the maximum annual budget of \$500,000 criteria, especially public schools which are part of a larger system. Identifying community-based organization partners to lead and submit applications is a potential strategy to consider.

**Can a school be considered a Community?**  
Yes

**A different nonprofit in my neighborhood received the grant I believe in FY2021/2022 or FY2022/2023. Does that disqualify my neighborhood association?**  
No

**Our Fiscal Agent annual budget is over \$500,000 but the project is under \$500,000, can we apply?**  
Please note: It is not the "project" budget that determines eligibility, but the applicant organization budget. So, if the Fiscal Agent's annual operating budget is over \$500,000, but the applicant organization that is being supported by the fiscal agent has an annual operating budget of \$500,000 or less, then yes, they are eligible to apply.

**If the neighborhood being served is defined as those within a Homeowner’s Association, and the interests of the disabled in that community, would that make us ineligible?**

No, this does not make you ineligible. Please refer to the answer provided above for the question: *How do you define “neighborhood” or “community”?*

**Can two organizations serving the same neighborhood/community “team up” to apply for a grant? Also - is a limit to the number of organizations from the same neighborhood that can apply?**

Yes, two organizations can work together; however, one of the organizations/lead staff would need to be the applicant and should mention the collaboration/partnership in the application.

And there is no limit to the number of applications from neighborhoods and/or communities within one of our six service area jurisdictions. However, please note that, depending on the overall volume of applications and the amount of funding available, reviewers may consider diversifying investment to different neighborhoods/communities as part of their grant award decisions.

**May an organization that is an incorporated business that has been developed/supported by a business incubator that is a nonprofit, apply for a Neighborhood Grant with the nonprofit incubator serving as their fiscal agent?**

Not if the incorporated business is a for-profit entity. Otherwise, if they meet the other eligibility criteria, then yes.

**Is a small school/organization that has an operating budget of between \$300,000 and \$400,000 (with revenues from tuition, grants, donations, program, etc.) ineligible to apply, because it has not had the capacity to obtain the required Financial Review document?**

United Way strictly holds to the following guidelines which are established in our 2024 Neighborhood Grant RFP.

To be eligible, “applicants must provide a copy (within the last two fiscal years) of one of the following financial documents, based on your annual gross income from charitable contributions from that year. Organizations using a fiscal agent/sponsor must provide this required financial document for their fiscal agent/sponsor.”

<b>Annual Gross Income from Charitable Contributions</b>	<b>Financial Document Required</b>
\$750,000 or more	<b>Financial Audit</b> (Performed by independent auditor)
Between \$300,000 and \$750,000	<b>Financial Review</b> (Performed by independent auditor)
\$300,000 or less	<b>Internal Financial Statement</b> (Such as a Form990, Profit/Loss Statement or Organizational Budget)

Please note that an independent auditor is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) or Chartered Accountant (CA) who examines the financial records and business transactions of an organization. They are not affiliated to the organization to avoid conflicts of interest and ensure the integrity of the audit.

**Is there the possibility of an exception for a non-profit with just over \$300,000 in annual gross income?**

There are no exceptions to criteria outlined in the RFP and restated above. Please review it closely.

**FISCAL AGENT/FISCAL SPONSOR**

**Can a fiscal sponsor support more than one applicant?**

Yes, a fiscal sponsor/agent can support more than one applicant.

**Can an organization submit an application for a project, and serve as a fiscal agent for another applicant?**

Yes, for the sake of eligibility and proposal review - we consider the organization that will be implementing the project as the applicant. If you meet the eligibility criteria, including the maximum annual operating budget, you can apply to implement a Neighborhood Grant project even if you are serving as a fiscal agent for other applications.

**If you are using a fiscal agent, are you listing that entity's legal name, EIN, and executive in the applicant section?**

For the sake of this RFP, the applicant organization refers to the group that will be implementing the proposed project. All information provided within the *Organizational Information* section application should be for the implementing organization, with the following exceptions:

- Indicate "Yes" that you will be using a Fiscal Agent/Sponsor for this application.
- Provide the requested information about your Fiscal Agent/Sponsor.
- Under *Required Organizational Documents*, provide the three required documents for your Fiscal Agent/Sponsor.

**What is the role of a fiscal agent for this grant?**

In addition to providing the required documentation with the application, if a grant is awarded, the fiscal agent will have a role in ensuring good stewardship and fiscal accountability for the grant funds. Additionally, the grant agreement will be between United Way and the identified fiscal agent.

**If an organization/school/church with an annual operating budget of over \$500,000 has a self-supported unit or chapter (covered by philanthropy, fee-based programming, other funding) and the annual operating budget of this unit is under \$500,000, is it eligible to apply.**

No - the \$500,000 maximum annual operating budget eligibility criteria applies to the overarching legal entity/the entity with its own IRS Determination Letter.

**If an organization has multiple chapters/programmatic sites in the same or different jurisdictions, can it submit different applications for each chapter/site?**

No - not unless they are separate legal entities, with their own IRS Determination Letters.

**What if fiscal sponsor is a church? They don't have to file a 990.**

All fiscal agents/fiscal sponsors are required to submit the appropriate fiscal document as stipulated in the Eligibility section at the bottom of page 3 of the 2024 Neighborhood Grant RFP. If the church that is identified as the fiscal agent/sponsor meets the criteria for the submission of an Internal Financial Statement, there are options, other than a Form 990 listed.

**Does the fiscal agent have to reside in the noted jurisdiction?**

No, the fiscal agent does not need to be located/headquartered in the noted jurisdiction.

**When I hear neighborhood grant, I think of physical improvements. We are doing more people focused work on trauma. It is more about the social fabric. Is that too far a stretch?**

No - please review the grant application categories, one of which calls for inspiring/supporting/building "Socially Connected Communities."

**We are aware that current grantees have to wait two years to reapply. However, could a current grantee act as a fiscal agent for the 2024 cycle?**

First, please note the above statement **is incorrect**. Organizations that received Neighborhood Grants in both of the previous two consecutive years must wait one year before they are eligible to apply again. This rule does not apply to organizations who are identified to serve as a fiscal agent in an application, even if they received grant awards in the previous two years.

**Can two organizations serving the same neighborhood/community "team up" to apply for a grant? Also - is there a limit to the number of organizations from the same neighborhood that can apply?**

Yes, two organizations can work together; however, one of the organizations/lead staff would need to be the applicant and should mention the collaboration/partnership in the application.

And there is no limit to the number of applications from neighborhoods and/or communities within one of our six service area jurisdictions. However, please note that, depending on the overall volume of applications and the amount of funding available, reviewers may consider diversifying investment to different neighborhoods/communities as part of their grant award decisions.

## **PROGRAM ACTIVITIES / USE OF FUNDS**

**Can inside capital improvements for a community resource organization such as an arts organization in a neighborhood apply?**

Applicants may use grant funds for capital expenses. As with all applicants, they would need to make the case that their proposed project aligns with the **four main project criteria**:

- Is community-focused
- Is resident-driven
- Creates connections among residents
- Shows promise of community impact

**Would an existing farmers market operation that is forming a 501c3 be funded?**

Applicants need to have current nonprofit status to be eligible to apply or they can apply in partnership with a fiscal agent that has nonprofit status.

**Do general operating funds for a community center qualify?**

We are not looking for general operating grant proposals. We are looking for grant applications that meet the main selection criteria outlined in the RFP, and that address at least **one of three project categories**:

- Build Vibrant Neighborhoods,
- Inspire Community Connections; and/or
- Empower Local Leaders.

**Can the application be the expansion of a current successful project that may focus on a different part of the neighborhood?**

Yes, you can have an asset-based approach. You can build upon successful things by deepening what you are doing, expanding to engage and/or serve more people, or working with different populations or a location. If you have demonstrated impact to build on, that would strengthen your application.

**Please provide a more in-depth explanation of ineligible religious activities:**

Religious organizations with nonprofit status are eligible to apply to conduct non-sectarian activities that support a community/neighborhood and its members/residents.

**What if the project serves and impacts more than one jurisdiction?**

You must select one jurisdiction that you are proposing to serve with your Neighborhood Grant.

**Can an organization submit one application that technically serves two programs?**

Yes, as long as the application focuses service on supporting one community/neighborhood and is aligned with the four main criteria established for the Neighborhood Grant.

**Can a portion of the funds be used to hire neighborhood residents to maintain a green space (e.g., mowing grass)?**

Yes

**Can funding support staff salaries/costs be included in the budget for this grant?**

Yes, not for general operating expenses, but to support staff time on the Neighborhood Grant project.

**In terms of the boundary requirement, if your organization has a property in Baltimore County, but pulls clients from Baltimore City, do we specify that? Can you only select one area?**

For the sake of this application, you must specify one jurisdiction, and your application, proposed, numbers served, etc. should focus on your plans/efforts to serve individuals in that jurisdiction.

**Is there a required match?**

No

**I see that community planning is an eligible activity. Would activities to support the creation of community “strategic/master plan” be acceptable?**

Yes - these activities are eligible.



**I know the grant runs from January through October, can we do one big event or do the activities have to stretch the length of the grant?**

You have the flexibility to propose how you will spend money to best implement your project in support of the community.

**Would public school needs assessment data qualify as "resident-raised" or "resident-driven"**

Public school needs assessment data can definitely serve as a source for establishing the need you plan to address - if you are planning to serve the school / its community. As this information can often be accessed by the general public, stronger proposals find a way to demonstrate the applicant has known and has served the community and has first-hand knowledge of their needs and assets. Additionally, a strong applicant also demonstrates that they are engaging members of the community in the project's creation, development, and implementation.