



Community Grants Program Winter 2025 Grant Guidance

For Spark Grant Proposals Spark Grant for Proposals up to \$2,000

Please read these guidelines carefully before completing your application.

**Grant Cycle Opens:
JANUARY 2, 2025 at 10:00AM**

**Grant Cycle Closes:
FEBRUARY 28, 2025 at 5:00PM**

Eligibility Check Deadline: February 14, 2025

Applicants can request an “Eligibility Check/ feedback” before their application is reviewed by the SBGP Board, if submitted by February 14th. Staff will review applications to ensure appropriate documents are included to allow applications to be eligible for review among Board members. SBGP staff will email applicants by February 21st about any missing or incorrect materials. Applicants will have until 5:00pm on February 28th to update the application or resubmit.

A Letter of Support from Community or Neighborhood Association OR 501c3 Nonprofit within the SBGP District is required for all community grant applications.

Community Grant Support Sessions:

[Info Session #1 \(virtual\): Thursday, January 9: 6:00 – 7:00pm](#)

Join us virtually for an application overview and tips for prospective grantees so you can prepare a strong grant proposal.

[Grant Application Drop-in Clinic \(virtual\): Thursday, February 13: 6:00 – 8:00pm](#)

Applying for an SBGP Community Grant? Join us for a drop-in clinic where we will cover: Advice for writing a persuasive project narrative and budget; Technical assistance for using our online application platform; Community Grants decision-making process information; and answers to your questions.

Assistance is available by contacting:
Acacia Asbell, Director of Grant Programs
aasbell@sbgpartnership.org and

Liz Van Oeveren, Senior Community Grants Manager
lvanoeveren@sbgpartnership.org

Ashley Davis, Community Grants Manager
adavis@sbgpartnership.org

For more information, follow us on social media and visit
www.sbgpartnership.org



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ABOUT US

In 2015, Baltimore adopted the South Baltimore Gateway Master Plan, a sweeping plan to improve neighborhoods across South and Southwest Baltimore that are close to the Horseshoe Casino. The City then began to implement this plan, with the advice of the Local Development Council and funding provided by local impact grants (community grants) generated by area casino revenues.

It soon became clear that another organization was also needed to help spend these funds -- something that could be more flexible, nimble, and entrepreneurial. So, in 2016, the South Baltimore Gateway Partnership was established, governed by a Board of Directors comprised principally of residents and business owners. Now, the City and the Partnership split Baltimore's share of the local impact grant funds.

In order to successfully implement this ambitious agenda, we created our own Strategic Plan to narrow our focus to three crucial priorities of the South Baltimore Gateway Master Plan:

- Environmental Sustainability
- Health and Wellness
- Community Development and Revitalization

Guided by these priorities, the Partnership also invests in large-scale and long-term projects that enhance services for the region as well as initiatives that will, over time, have a beneficial, transformational impact on our communities. These are not grant-based programs. This document describes how to apply for Community Grants (the other two programs are not grants).

Our Strategic Plan, and the Master Plan, can both be found at www.sbgpartnership.org.

Our Grant Programs

The Partnership administers four levels of community grants:

- **Spark Community Grants – up to \$2,000 (the sole focus of this guidance)**
- Small Community Grants – up to \$5,000
- Medium Community Grants – below \$50,000
- Large Community Grants – up \$100,000

The Community Grants program opens a new application cycle twice a year—once in the summer and once in the winter.

Spark Grants (up to \$2,000) Small Grants (up to \$5,000) are very flexible and have more relaxed criteria. Both Medium (below \$50,000) and Large Grants (up to \$100,000) have much more specific criteria.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To be eligible, an applicant must be one of the following:

- A non-profit organization with 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status;
- A mission-based organization without 501(c)(3) tax exempt status but with a 501(c)(3) fiscal sponsor;
- A faith-based organization proposing a non-religious project; or,
- A school or government agency.
- Individuals and for-profit businesses **may not apply** and you can't use funds for your own personal benefit.

Individuals and for-profit businesses are **not** eligible for community grants. Applicants proposing projects that they or family members will benefit from tangibly or financially are **not** eligible. For example, projects such as home renovations and improvements are excluded.

Applicants must be **based in** South Baltimore Gateway neighborhoods, **work in** those neighborhoods, or **partner with** an organization based in those neighborhoods.

The project must **serve or otherwise benefit** the residents, businesses, institutions or organizations of the South Baltimore Gateway Community Impact District in these neighborhoods:

- Barre Circle
- Carroll-Camden Industrial Area
- Cherry Hill
- Federal Hill
- Federal Hill South
- Lakeland
- Mount Winans
- Otterbein
- Pigtown / Washington Village
- Ridgely's Delight
- Riverside
- Saint Paul
- Sharp-Leadenhall
- South Baltimore Neighborhood
- Spring Garden Industrial Area
- Stadium Area
- Westport

Baltimore Peninsula is not in the SBGP District.

If you are unsure whether your organization or your proposed project, meets these eligibility requirements or if you would like to request Technical Assistance, please contact Acacia Asbell, SBGP Director, Community Grants, at aasbell@sbgpartnership.org, Liz Van Oeveren, SBGP Senior Community Grants Manager, lvanoeveren@sbgpartnership.org or Ashley Davis, SBGP Community Grants Manager, at adavis@sbgpartnership.org

Overview of community grants process



APPLICATION PROCESS & INSTRUCTIONS

Technical assistance is available for any applicant who requests it. Contact Acacia Asbell, SBGP Director, Community Grants, at aasbell@sbgpartnership.org, Liz Van Oeveren, SBGP Senior Community Grants Manager, at lvanoeveren@sbgpartnership.org or Ashley Davis, SBGP Community Grants Manager, at adavis@sbgpartnership.org

PREPARING THE APPLICATION

All Community Grant applicants must submit an application online through Submittable—an online form that makes it easy to enter the required information. Paper applications will not be accepted.

Simple instructions on how to submit to organizations that use Submittable can be found at:

<https://submittable.help/en/articles/904856-how-can-i-submit>

Click [here](#) to access the application form when you are ready to submit or visit

<https://sbgpartnership.submittable.com/submit>.

Important: The application form will not be accessible until January 2, 2025, at 10:00AM. Please allow enough time before the deadline on February 28, 2025, at 5:00PM to gather all the documents and information you will need.

However, you may **download the application online now** to review it in advance by visiting <https://sbgpartnership.org/community-grants/#grant-resources>. Scroll down the page for **Spark Grant Application** and click on the “download” arrow.

Seek Letters of Support or Commitment early, as well as any document that must be signed or authorized.

PREPARING THE PROJECT NARRATIVE

Most of the application questions are self-explanatory. Below are guidelines that correspond with particular questions on the Submittable application:



Question 29:

Project Narrative: Must not exceed 2 pages. Project Narratives above 2 pages will be considered ineligible and not eligible for further review consideration.

The following outline is a guide to the information to be provided in the Project Narrative. **Use and adapt this guide as-is appropriate for your organization's request.**

*Now accepting video submissions of the project narrative. Video submissions should not be more than 10 minutes.

Please answer **ALL 3 questions** within your narrative: **A) Describe the project that you are asking SBGP to fund, B) High quality outcomes the project will accomplish, C) Plan to measure the impact of the project, D) Additional narrative elements for capital requests only.**

A) Describe the project that you are asking SBGP to fund.

Organizational Background. Describe the organization's history, mission, and goals.

- Purpose of Request and Anticipated Results. Explain whether this application is for an Existing Project, a New Project, or General Operating Support. State the issue or need to be addressed, describe the size and/or severity of the issue or need, and explain the evidence regarding this issue or need. If applicable, provide demographic and geographic information regarding the community or population benefiting from or served by the request.
- Describe the program or project. For new programs, describe how the program model was developed. For ongoing programs, describe the program's track record.

B) High quality outcomes the project will accomplish.

Your funders, including SBGP, need to understand how you plan to measure the success of your program and how people are affected by it in measurable ways. The applications asks you to define the following:

- **A Goal:** a broad statement about the long-term expectation of what should happen as a result of your program. *Example: To help participants achieve a healthy weight by the end of 2021.*
- **An Objective:** describes the results to be achieved and how they will be measured. *Example: By December 31, 80% of participants will decrease total body weight by 2% as measured by weekly scale readings.*
- **An Output:** What you will do, e.g., the number of activities, services, events, etc. This may include types, levels, and targets of services to be delivered by the

program. *Example: Deliver 24 one-hour fitness classes, conduct weigh-ins at each class, and provide each participant with 6 individual nutritional counseling sessions.*

- **An OUTCOME:** The specific changes in participants' behavior, knowledge, skill, condition and/or level of functioning that your program is expected to achieve. *Example: All participants will be exposed to the benefits of regular exercise and learn specific ways to make healthier food choices.*

<u>Inputs:</u> I, We, They...	<u>Outputs:</u> And spent time doing_____...
<u>Activities:</u> Went to or received_____...	<u>Outcomes:</u> Which is a step towards_____.

Remember to be “smart”:

Specific: Includes the who, what, and where.

Measurable: Focus on how much has changed.

Achievable: Realistic, given program resources.

Relevant: Relates directly to program/activity goals.

Time-bound: Focus on when the objective will be achieved.

C) Plan to measure the impact of the project.

Discuss the anticipated results and a plan for measuring outputs and outcomes. Explain how the activities directly and/or indirectly address the issue or need and support achievement of these results. Indicate what process and/or impact information will be collected to measure and demonstrate success.

Data Collection Methods for Program Evaluation may include:

Access partner organization records or your own records	Convene discussion groups (take notes)
Interview clients/participants (take notes) or observe participant actions or interactions	Administer surveys before and after the program

D) Additional narrative elements for capital requests only.

Capital requests are designated for construction, renovation, or improvement of a property. Include information on the following, as applicable to your organization's request:

- Provide a case statement for the project that discusses the feasibility and cost of the capital campaign and its implications in relation to the organization's ongoing operational expenses.
- If additional funds are needed beyond the ones applied for here, specify prospects and naming opportunities.
- Indicate the board's financial participation in the campaign (percent participating and amount contributed).
- Identify regulatory approvals, if required.
- Describe plans for funding the ongoing maintenance of the new capital project.

PREPARING THE GRANT BUDGET

Question #30:

Project Budget and Budget Narrative. Provide a detailed line-item Project Budget for the specific project that you are asking SBGP to fund. Your budget might include staff/volunteer time, materials, professional services, food, etc. Highlight or otherwise indicate those line items that you are asking SBGP to fund. Indicate all funding/donations from other sources for the other line items, and whether that support is pending or committed. Your Project Narrative and Project Budget should reference each other as necessary.

SBGP Budget Template in either the Word version or Excel version has been provided as a guide. Those templates are linked below (as well as on the online Submittable application itself). Copy and paste either link into your web browser. You will be prompted to open or save the document:

You may download either budget template in advance, complete it, and then upload it when you process your application online:

<https://sbgpartnership.org/community-grants/#grant-resources>

[Grant Budget & Narrative Guidance](#)

[Grant Budget Template \(Microsoft Word\)](#)

[Grant Budget & Narrative Template \(Microsoft Word\)](#)

[Grant Budget & Narrative Templates \(Excel\)](#)

For sample budgets and sample budget narratives, we encourage you to review this Sample Budget Narrative/Justification located on the SBGP Community Grant Resource Page <https://sbgpartnership.org/community-grants/#grant-resources>

Indirect Costs:

SBGP will consider indirect cost reimbursement on a case-by-case basis. Indirect costs **must** be articulated within the requested application budget. SBGP considers a rate of 15% to be standard and will accept a higher rate from a grantee only with documentation of a negotiated indirect cost rate with the federal government. At a minimum, indirect costs must be supported by an invoice from the grantee to SBGP. The invoice must list the total for indirect costs being requested with each draw request.

CAPITAL PROJECTS

Question #31:

Does the proposed project involve capital construction, expenses, or improvements?

A capital construction or improvement project is the addition of a permanent structural change or restoration of some aspect of property. Capital construction or improvement projects may include but not be limited to: engineering/capital design plans, building or enhancing building/parks and public spaces, carpet replacement, major lighting or landscape projects, pool deck refurbishment, security system upgrades or replacements, exterior painting, painting of garages, stairways, replacement of roof, windows, doors or pavement.

Question #31a:

Who is the owner of the property where the proposed capital project will take place?

Owned by City agency, owned by Private Owner/LLC, Owned by nonprofit, owned by individual, or unsure.

Question #31b: Has the applicant obtained an agreement to conduct the proposed capital project with property owner? (for example: Right of Entry, MOU or leasing agreement, letter of support from owner)

Yes, no, or have a pending agreement.

Question #31c: What best describes the current phase of the proposed capital project?

1. Planning Phase/Pre-Development and Programming: establish goals and objectives, gather pertinent information, and identify strategies

2. Design – Conceptual, Schematic, and Design Development Phase: organization may be working with an architect and a range of consultants including civil, structural, mechanical, and electrical engineers

3. Design – Construction Documents Phase: drawings and specifications are finalized that establish all the information the contractor needs to construct the building

4. Bidding or Negotiation Phase: Drawings and specifications are usually 100% complete before the bidding phase begins. In this phase, depending on the project delivery method, the architect may assist the organization in establishing a list of prospective contractors and agrees on an evaluation method

5. Construction Phase – Construction Administration: development or renovation has begun, site inspections, building/mechanical system adjustments.

SUSTAINABILITY, SBGP STRATEGIC PRIORITIES & ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Question #33: Project's sustainability plans or efforts (This question is optional for Spark Grants):

- Describe how the project will be sustained in the long term or if there is a plan to obtain other funds for this project. May include community sustainability, financial sustainability, or organizational sustainability.
- For general operating support, describe how the project will directly and indirectly address the issue or need within SBGP neighborhoods.
- Indicate if timing is a factor, or if a "window of opportunity" exists that impacts the success of the project.

Question #34: SBGP Strategic Priorities (This question is optional for Spark Grants):

Describe how the project creates meaningful and measurable change in one of our SBGP Strategic Priorities: Environmental Sustainability, Health and Wellness, Community Development and Revitalization.

- **Environmental Sustainability:** Improve parks, public spaces, and waterways.
- **Health and Wellness:** Expand access to healthy foods, wellness programs and space for recreation and physical activity.
- **Community Development & Revitalization:** Help neighborhoods to attract the kinds of investment they are looking for.

For example: ABC Organization proposes to deliver 24 one-hour fitness classes that include weigh-ins at each class, 6 individual nutritional counseling sessions and a fresh produce voucher. This proposed project relates to the SBGP strategic priority, Health and Wellness by exposing up to twenty SBGP residents to the benefits of regular exercise, specific ways to make healthier food choices and proven strategies that decrease participants' total body weight by 2%.

Question #35: Organizational Capacity. Describe the organization's capacity to implement the project or explain the organizational limitations that funding will address. Describe if the organization has the expertise, staff and/or resources to successfully complete the project, if the proposed project has been implemented in the past, explain if and/or how the project may expand or change.

- Explain how this proposal relates to the organization's mission, goals and/or strategic plan, and other activities planned for this year.
- Describe how the request will enable the organization to build its capacity, address current limitations, or improve its ability to meet program or organizational goals.

FULL DISCLOSURE & CERTIFICATION OF INTENT TO APPLY

- Describe the organization's current programs and activities, track record, related program or organizational accomplishments, accreditation, awards, or other strengths that enhance capacity or sustainability.
- Describe the organizational structure and board/staff responsibilities. List the names, qualifications, and number of years in their position for key staff and/or volunteers relevant to the current request.
- Indicate links with other organizations doing similar work in your geographic area or on the same issue.
- Describe the organization's relationship with stakeholders, such as community residents, clients, board members, partner organizations, or other constituents.

Question #43:

Full Disclosure: Please describe any affiliation(s) or potential conflicts of interest among staff, board members or volunteers at your organization and the South Baltimore Gateway Partnership. Failure to disclose affiliations will be grounds for rejecting this application or terminating a future grant agreement.

Question #44:

Certification of Intent to Apply. You must check/certify that each and all of the statements are true to be eligible for funding consideration.

1. The proposed project will serve or otherwise benefit the residents, businesses, institutions or organizations of the South Baltimore Gateway Community Impact District.
2. The local community association(s) have been consulted and informed about the proposed project.
3. The person submitting this proposal on behalf of our organization has the legal authority and approval to do so.
4. The proposed project is not intended to financially benefit any private individual or business.
5. If receiving a grant of \$50,000 or more, we will comply with City of Baltimore MBE/WBE requirements.
6. I confirm that I and my organization understand and meet all of the conditions stated above.

LETTER(S) OF SUPPORT FROM COMMUNITY OR NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION(S) OR 501c3

A letter of support is required from a community/neighborhood association that is based within SBGP' neighborhoods and has a legal address listed OR a 501c3 nonprofit that is based within SBGP' neighborhoods and has a legal address listed within the SBGP neighborhoods where you will carry out your Project. Please seek these **early** in your application process - they can take time to acquire. If additional neighborhoods benefit from the project, they must also provide support letters. Optional letters may come from local religious organizations, businesses, or other informal local groups who support the project.

1. The applicant should submit at least one letter from each neighborhood where the project takes place.
2. If the project affects four or more neighborhoods, then the applicant should provide letters from at least three representative neighborhoods that accurately reflect the demographics and conditions across the project area.
3. An applicant may not submit a letter on its own behalf.
4. If multiple organizations with slightly different missions work in one neighborhood, then our preference is to receive a letter from the one whose mission relates most directly to the project (or an explanation of why this is not appropriate or possible in your case).
5. If multiple organizations with similar missions work in one neighborhood, then our preference is to receive one letter from each (or an explanation of why this is not appropriate or possible in your case).
6. If the project is housed within or affiliated with a local institution (such as a church or a school) that is not the applicant, a separate letter from that institution should also be provided.
7. If the applicant is itself a community organization, then it must get a letter of support from either another community organization working in the neighborhood, OR a 501c3 nonprofit organization within SBGP district and the neighborhood where the project will take place.
8. Even if you are not soliciting a letter of support from a community association or neighborhood organization, we strongly recommend that you inform them of your application for the sake of transparency.
9. If the project appears to lack meaningful community backing, or if other questions emerge during the review process, we may request that you provide additional letters of support.

HOW COMMUNITY GRANTS ARE EVALUATED

Community Grant applications are reviewed in a professional and organized manner by a committee of volunteers drawn largely from the Partnership’s Board of Directors. Then the committee’s recommendations are voted on by the full board.

To ensure fairness, the committee uses a pre-established rubric to evaluate applications, and follows a strict policy to prevent conflicts of interest. The following chart summarizes the factors that the committee will use to review applications. The factors in each tier build upon the previous ones. Thus, while each size category has its own criteria, the criteria for the previous size category apply as well. This means that projects seeking larger amounts of funding need to meet more requirements. There is obviously no penalty for exceeding the minimum criteria for your size category.

Spark & Small Grants: Baseline Criteria	Medium Grants: Additional Criteria	Large Grants: Additional Criteria
To what extent does the proposed project result in high-quality outcomes?	Does the project create meaningful change in one of our three priority topics under the Strategic Plan?	Is the project self-perpetuating (e.g. does it build local capacity, create a durable capital project, or include a realistic plan for future funding)?
To what extent does the proposed project plan to measure positive outcomes to the District?	Does the project leverage or maximize other resources from within or outside the SBGP District?	
If executed as intended, does the project have an appropriate implementation plan and timeline?		
Is the budget feasible for the requested grant period?		
To what degree is the applicant capable of accomplishing the project?		

SBGP does provide feedback to denied applicants and can be available to schedule a meeting to offer technical assistance.

EXECUTING THE GRANT

Organizations that are awarded funds will receive an award letter via e-mail. The date of the e-mail is the official start date for the grant. Grant-related expenses incurred from that date forward are eligible for reimbursement. The Partnership reserves the right to award less than the full amount requested. Note that all grant activities must be completed within one year from the date of the award.

Grant recipients are subject to the following requirements:

- **Grant Agreement.** You will need to sign a grant agreement describing the project and detailing the roles and requirements of all parties. This will include a projected draw schedule, which can be updated over time. **You will be expected to sign and return the agreement within 60 days of the award letter.**
- **Payment Process. We do not pay funds in advance.** We will either reimburse you (or your fiscal sponsor) for expenses as they occur, or in rare circumstances, directly pay a vendor on your behalf. We are glad to work with you to make this as painless and easy as possible.
- **Board Resolution.** We believe it is important for the Board of Directors of your organization to be aware of the award and be committed to completing the project. Therefore, as part of the grant agreement we will need a board resolution (or equivalent document) confirming their approval of the grant and project.
- **MBE/WBE. All projects of \$50,000 and over are subject to City MBE/WBE requirements.** Using your budget as a guide, the Office of Minority & Women-Owned Business Enterprise will determine what subcontracting and procurement goals to apply to your project, based upon the specific details of the project itself. Elements of the budget that cannot be subcontracted to certified MBE/WBE firms (e.g. tasks that must be performed by nonprofits, volunteers, or uniquely-qualified contractors) will be exempted. Elements that can be subcontracted will have participation goals assigned to them (typically 27% MBE / 10% WBE). Projects of \$50,000 and above are subject to these requirements.
- **Interim & Final Report.** All grants, regardless of size, will require a process of oversight, including a final report, to make sure that the funds are used as intended.

DOCUMENTS CHECKLIST

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Organizational Budget (Question #23)</p>	<p>Organizational or Operating Budget is organizational/operating budget is a planning document used to predict expenses and allocate resources for your organization. It details both the costs that your organization will incur as well as the revenue you expect to receive over a set period of time. This is your organization's current or larger annual budget, typically separate from the Project Budget that seeks SBGP support.</p> <p>If you have a fiscal sponsor, please provide both the fiscal sponsor's organization budget and the mission-based organization's organizational operating budget.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Project Narrative (Question #29)</p>	<p>Please answer ALL 3 questions within your narrative: A) Describe the project that you are asking SBGP to fund, B) High quality outcomes the project will accomplish, C) Plan to measure the impact of the project, D) Additional narrative elements for capital requests only.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Project Budget AND Budget Narrative (Question #30)</p>	<p>Provide a line-item Budget AND Budget Narrative for the Proposed Project that you are asking SBGP to fund.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Financial statements for the past two completed years or 990 tax return (Optional) (Question #37)</p>	<p>If applicant does not have audited financial statements, provide both financial statement and a copy of the organization's most recent IRS Form 990 tax return. Explain any significant changes in the budget (percent increase or decrease) that may have occurred.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Board of Directors (Question #38)</p>	<p>List board members, responsibilities and affiliations. Describe the board's financial support of the organization.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Letter(s) of Support (Question #40)</p>	<p>A letter of support is required from a community/neighborhood association that is based within SBGP' neighborhoods and has a legal address listed OR a 501c3 nonprofit that is based within SBGP' neighborhoods and has a legal address listed within the SBGP neighborhoods where you will carry out your Project.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Letter(s) of Commitment (Optional) (Question #41)</p>	<p>Letters of Commitment specifically describe how or what your project partners will contribute to your project. A partner is any other nonprofit, service provider, or business that has formally committed to implementing the project with you. This commitment should also be noted in Project Narrative, Project Budget and you must upload a commitment letter from each partner.</p>

For guidance only. You must submit your grant application online here: <https://sbgpartnership.submittable.com/submit>

Thank you for reviewing and considering these grant application guidelines.

If you have any questions about the application, guidelines, or process, please contact:

Acacia Asbell, SBGP Community Grants Director,

aasbell@sbgpartnership.org or

Liz Van Oeveren, SBGP Senior Community Grants Manager,

lvanoeveren@sbgpartnership.org