Vibrant Neighborhoods Grant Program

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is the Vibrant Neighborhoods Grant Program?

The Vibrant Neighborhoods Grant Program (VNG) is a matching grant program that provides funds to neighborhood and homeowners' associations to undertake small-scale neighborhood improvements, enrichment projects, and neighborhood events that enhance a sense of place and build community connections. Qualified applicants can apply for grants ranging from $750 to $2,500 to fund projects within a neighborhood located in the City of Tallahassee. Grants will be awarded on a first-come, first-approved basis to qualified applicants whose project and funding request meet the program's funding criteria. Projects must be completed no later than August 15 within the fiscal year that the grant is approved. A final project report and a request for reimbursement must be submitted no later than September 1.

Who may apply to the program?

This program provides grants to neighborhood and homeowners associations, both formally and informally organized, that represent neighborhoods within or partially within Tallahassee city limits. Neighborhood residents must be engaged in the development and completion of the grant funded projects.

Can I apply to this grant if my neighborhood is within the CRA District?

Yes, however, neighborhoods located in the Greater Frenchtown Southside Community Redevelopment District can only apply for funding for projects in the Community Enrichment Programs/Initiatives and Neighborhood Events categories. Neighborhoods within the CRA District should apply for funding for Community Beautification/Placemaking projects from the Neighborhood Partnership Grant. More information on the grant funding categories can be found below in the response to the question, "what types of projects are funded?"

Can Individuals apply to this grant program?

No, individuals are not eligible for this grant. Only neighborhood and homeowners' associations are eligible to apply for a VNG. Applicants for the grant must demonstrate neighborhood support for the proposed project. If the project is a physical improvement and will be constructed next to/adjacent to a home(s), the applicant must demonstrate that adjacent property owners have been notified of the proposed project and the grant application must indicate whether the adjacent property owners support or does not

of support the proposed project. Any necessary permits necessary for the project, whether federal, state and/or local will be the responsibility of the grantee.

What types of projects are funded?

- Projects submitted for grant funding must provide a clear public benefit and fall within one or more of the following categories:
- Community Beautification/Placemaking (Maximum Award - up to $2500)
- Community Enrichment Programs/Initiatives (Maximum Award - up to $1,000)
- Neighborhood Events (Maximum Award - up to $750)

Proposed projects examples include, but are not limited to neighborhood lighting enhancements, neighborhood signs, community gardens, community events, public workshops, landscaping, or public art, such as murals and sculptures. Projects that are physical improvements must be constructed/install in the public rights of way, on public property or property owned/controlled by the neighborhood or homeowners' association.

What does "Matching Grant" mean?

Applicants must provide a minimum match of 50% of the requested funds. For example, a proposal requesting $1,000 of VNG funds must provide an additional $500 in matching funds/ contributions towards the project (which would mean the total project cost is $1,500).

How can a neighborhood meet the matching funds requirements?

Neighborhoods are required to match awarded grant funds at a minimum of 50% through one or more of the match types:

- Cash contributions: Funds are supplied from the HOA/Neighborhood Association and/or other individuals that are supporting the project. Proof of funds such as the HOA's bank account balance must be shown.
- In-kind donations: Goods or services are received at a free or reduced rate that will be used to complete the project. A contribution form must be filled out.
- Volunteer time: Volunteer time is calculated at $28.54/ hour and must be documented on the volunteer pledge sheet at the time of submission, and on the volunteer sign in sheet at the time of completion.

What is the minimum funding eligibility criteria?

To be eligible for funding, a project must:

- Be submitted by a Homeowners or Neighborhood Association, organized either formal or informal and with or without nonprofit status, located within or partially within Tallahassee city limits.
- Satisfy one or more of the following project category requirements: Community Beautification/Placemaking, Community Enrichment Programs/Initiatives and Neighborhood Events.
- Provide a clear public benefit.
- Involve neighborhood residents in the project's development and completion.
- Provide a minimum match of 50% of the requested funds.
- Be completed by August 15 within the same fiscal year the grant is approved (for Fiscal Year 2026, the project's final report and request for reimbursement must be received by September 1, 2026).
- Include a detailed budget.
- Show the applicant's capacity to complete and maintain the project. Examples:
    - Include previous partnership support and/or completion of similarly sized projects, etc.
    - Identify a person, association, or a responsible entity who will lead and then maintain the project.
- Not conflict with, but rather enhance existing or proposed public improvement projects or programs.

Additionally, an original copy of the application must be provided with supporting materials clearly labeled. Refer to the application checklist to verify that all necessary items have been included.

What is the grant application period for VNGs?

The VNG has a rolling grant application period that opens from November 1st to July 1st of each fiscal year that the grant is funded. Grants will be approved on a first come, first approved basis until the funds appropriated for that fiscal year are exhausted.

Can I apply for a VNG for an already completed project?

No. The VNG funds proposed projects as outlined in the associated grant application. The City will notify applicants of the funding status of their grant proposal within fourteen (14) days of receiving a completed application. Prior to commencing a VNG funded project, successful grantees must complete a grant contract with the City of Tallahassee. The grant contract obligates the grantee to complete the project as described in the grant application and the City to pay the grantee the funds awarded in the contract if the project is completed according to the grant contract.

How much money can a neighborhood receive in a grant?

The maximum grant award is $2,500. A neighborhood or homeowners' association may only apply for one grant per fiscal year, with amounts ranging between $750 and $2,500 depending on the project. The Neighborhood Affairs Manager reserves the right to make an award for less than the amount requested in the application. The same neighborhood will not be funded in consecutive years.

- Community Beautification/Placemaking – up to $2,500 (Examples: Neighborhood signage, new landscaping, new lighting, new public art installation, new public seating areas);
- Community Enrichment Programs/Initiatives – up for $1,000 (Examples: Community Garden, free little library installation, community mural, youth programs, yard of the month program); and
- Events – up to $750 (Examples: Block parties, neighborhood festival, holiday gathering.)

Are multi-neighborhood applications allowed?

Multi-neighborhood projects are encouraged and allowed only in the "Community Enrichment Programs/Initiatives" and "Events" grant funding categories. If there is a demonstrated budgetary need, the maximum funding amounts allowed for multi-neighborhood Community Enrichment Programs/Initiatives and Events projects may be increased up to 50%. The designated lead neighborhood would serve as the primary applicant and project administrator. The lead neighborhood for a funded multi-neighborhood application is ineligible to apply for additional grants in the same fiscal year or in a consecutive year; other partner neighborhoods can apply for a VNG grants to fund in the Community Beautification/Placemaking funding category.

How are funds disbursed?

This is a reimbursable grant. After signing the grant contract, funds will be reimbursed upon submission of receipts or invoices for approved items. In some cases, the City of Tallahassee can pay an approved vendor directly. For grants of $750, a prepaid credit card can be supplied if that is preferable to the grantee. Receipts would still need to be submitted as documentation.

What are the reporting requirements?

Neighborhoods receiving grant funds will be required to submit a final report to document the project and the use of grant funds. The final report form will be provided to grantees shortly after selection.

Do I have to get quotes for everything included in our budget?

Single purchases over $3,000 will need to get three quotes. For purchases under $3,000, quotes are not required. However, it is recommended that quotes are obtained whenever possible to ensure proper stewardship of grant funds.

How will Neighborhood Affairs decide which projects are funded?

A Grant Review Team (comprised of City of Tallahassee staff) will review the applications received to determine eligibility and funding levels for qualified projects. The Grant Review Team will notify applicants whose proposed projects do not meet the eligibility criteria. An applicant can revise the project to meet the grant eligibility criteria and resubmit the application. No funds will be reserved for a project that does not meet the eligibility criteria, as specified above in the response to the question on Minimum Application Criteria. Resubmitted applications will be treated as a new application.

How will my grant proposal be evaluated?

In addition to meeting the funding eligibility criteria mentioned about, grant proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Project Criteria

- Project Design
    - The project is well-designed and ready for execution.
    - The applicant demonstrates the capacity to implement the project.
    - The project is innovative and creative.

- Participation & Collaboration
    - Broad-based neighborhood participation is evident; there is a clear plan for ongoing participation.
    - The project demonstrates a collaborative effort and makes use of other community resources.
- Project Impact
    - The project provides a substantial and lasting benefit in a neighborhood within or partially within City of Tallahassee limits.
- Budget & Matching Funds
    - The budget is clear and realistic.
    - The minimum required match is met.
    - The proposed match is clearly documented and ready to expend.

When will I know if my project is funded?

The Grant Review Team will notify applicants within fourteen (14) business days of the receipt of a completed grant application of its decision to fund a proposed project. All successful applicants must sign a grant contract with the City of Tallahassee, after which they will be given notice to proceed with their projects. Projects utilizing the City's rights- of-way (ROW) will also need to sign an additional rights-of-way encroachment agreement.

How will I receive the awarded grant funds?

To receive grant funds, successful grantees must register as a Supplier with City of Tallahassee. This must be done prior to execution of the grant agreement. The VNG is a reimbursable grant. Grantees must complete and submit a final report on their grant funded project, which must include documentation of the expenses incurred in implementing the project. The City of Tallahassee will pay the grant monies via an ACH deposit to grantee's bank account. To prevent fraud, grantees must provide the banking information for their neighborhood/ homeowners association, including a photocopy of the voided check from the account to which the deposit will be made. Also, a photocopy of the identification of the person who signs and submits the Supplier ID registration documentation on behalf of the grantee is required.

What happens if my project does not meet the criteria?

If the proposed project does not meet the eligibility/funding criteria for the VNG Program, the application will be returned. The applicant can modify the project to meet the requisite criteria and resubmit the application. For recording and time-stamping purposes, resubmitted applications will be treated as a new submittal.

Who do I contact for more information or to receive assistance?

Contact the Neighborhood Affairs Division at (850) 354-3740 or Theodus.Baker@talgov.com. Theodus is happy to help talk through neighborhood project ideas and connect you to other City resources that may help with project planning.