



2026 Neighborhood Council & Community Assembly Grant Program Guidelines

Purpose

This document outlines the City of Spokane's Neighborhood Council and Community Assembly (CA) Community Engagement (CE) Grant program, which is administered by the Office of Neighborhood and Planning Services (ONS), in concert with the CA Budget Committee. This program provides a mechanism to offer grants to neighborhood councils and the CA for the development of engagement and enhancement opportunities.

Information about the program can be found on the City website here:

<https://my.spokanecity.org/neighborhoods/programs/community-engagement-grant/>.

Under this program, qualified NCs, under SMC 4.27, and CA Committees may apply to the CA Budget Committee to receive funds for outreach and capacity building projects from the ONS. Eligibility, terms and conditions, and approval for participation are set forth herein.

Eligibility

Only those Neighborhood Councils (NCs) recognized by the City of Spokane, pursuant to the City Charter, including CA committees, are eligible for assistance under this program. *If a NC chooses not to participate in the grant program or does not use all funding apportioned for that NC, any unused funding may be reallocated by ONS and the Budget Committee to other NCs or the CA during the grant fund year (see Reallocation section).* No NC may give its money directly to another Council. Only neighborhood councils that are considered "active" can apply for CE Grant funding.

To participate in the program, each NC and CA Committee must submit a grant application for all funding requests and notification of participation in the reallocation process to the ONS and to the Budget Committee by **June 19, 2026**, on the application form. If no application is received **June 19, 2026**, the NC will not be eligible for participation in the 2026 program. There are no exceptions. The next eligibility will be 2027. ONS will be responsible for administering all funds.

Council or CA Committee Grant Coordinator

Each NC or CA committee that chooses to participate in the Community Engagement (CE) Grant program must appoint a Grant Coordinator who will be responsible for attending training. That same person will be responsible for completing and submitting the application and maintaining communication with the Budget Committee and ONS regarding all program funded projects.

All neighborhoods that plan to apply for 2026 CE Grant funding **are required** attend a 2026 CE Grant Training. Neighborhoods that do not attend one of the 4 trainings will be ineligible to receive 2026 CE Grant funding.

Grant Coordinators or Neighborhood Council Chair must notify if there has been a change of their Grant Coordinator to Gabby Ryan, ONS, at gryan@spokanecity.org and their respective Budget Committee Liaison.

Funding

The Community Engagement Grant program is funded by the City of Spokane through ONS. The grant funding is available to the NC's, CA Committees and CA. It is a principle of this program that all Neighborhood Councils are

eligible to benefit.

Each qualifying NC may apply for up to \$850.

NCs are encouraged to collaborate with other NCs on projects. If neighborhoods collaborate on events and plan to use multiple NC allocations for a combined event, each neighborhood is still responsible for completing individual NC applications. NCs cannot donate funds to another neighborhood. Each application is subject to the maximums above.

Unused funds will *not* be carried over from a previous year and *no refunds* are made of any unspent credit balance.

Because CA committees represent all 29 neighborhoods, they may be eligible for more than \$850, pending a valid application and CA approval.

Key Dates & Deadlines

- **March 17, 2026** – Applications may be submitted beginning on this date, after attendance at a CE Grant training.
- **March 23, 2026** – Budget Committee begins reviewing applications.
- **June 19, 2026** – Deadline for grant application submittal. No applications will be accepted after this date. Both initial allocation AND alternate requests must be submitted by this date. Applications that are incomplete but submitted by the deadline will be returned and the applicant has one week after submission to correct the application.
- **September 21, 2026** – All receipts from grant expenditures and all City inter-fund orders are due.

Directors' and Officers' Liability Insurance (D&O)

On November 26, 2018, the Spokane City Council adopted Resolution 2018-0095 allowing purchase by NCs (that are organized as non-profits and have bank accounts) of liability insurance providing legal defense/insurance coverage for individual officers against lawsuits related to their volunteer activity on the Neighborhood Councils if they are named as individuals. The operative text is here:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that beginning on January 1, 2019, the City of Spokane's neighborhood council capacity and engagement grant program shall offer an option to any Neighborhood Council that is organized as a non-profit corporation and has a bank account to receive all or a portion of its share of the program as a direct grant on the condition that it provide documentation that it spent the money on liability insurance by way of direct payment or reimbursement for the purpose of increasing capacity and engagement, and documents the impact of that purchase in alignment with the grant program.

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The entire text can be found at <https://publicdocs.spokanecity.org/cityclerkrecords/>. (Enter "2018-0095" as "File Number.")

NCs wishing to use their CE Grant for this insurance must supply evidence of their non-profit corporation status and bank account as part of their application. The NCs will need to provide documentation that it spent money on liability insurance for the purpose of increasing capacity and engagement, the amount of their grant used for this purpose and a copy of the premium statement from the insurance company are also required. D & O liability insurance for the current calendar year can be submitted during the application process regardless of the renewal month for the insurance.

Responsibility for Excess Billing

Each NC or CA Committee is solely responsible for cost control. If a NC or CA Committee accrues a service or bill of more than the grant amount, or submits receipts outside of the deadlines, the NC or CA Committee is responsible to pay any outstanding balance.

Responsibility for Holding Events in Spokane's City Parks

The Parks and Recreation Department have guidelines for neighborhood councils wishing to hold events in City parks. Neighborhood Councils are eligible to hold events in the park but need an MOU on file with the Parks Department (would be submitted during the special event application process).

The Parks Department also has requirements regarding event insurance for certain events held in Parks. When planning an event in the Parks, a Parks staff member will reach out to neighborhoods if it is determined the event requires event insurance. If required, neighborhoods will be responsible for securing event insurance for their event. There are resources available through the Spokane Parks Foundation, reach out to Gabby Ryan for more info.

Responsibility for Holding Events (in public spaces that are not Park spaces)

The Special Events team has processes for submitting a special event application to hold an event in public spaces that are not Park spaces. The Special Events page for the City can be accessed [here](#). Like Parks, the special event application will require an MOU to be uploaded with the application to receive the \$50 special event application fee waiver.

The Special Events team also has requirements regarding event insurance for certain events held in on public property. The Special Events team can help you determine if insurance is required. If required, neighborhoods will be responsible for paying for event insurance.

Non-Permitted Uses of Credit Balances; Cancellation of Program

This program is for NC and CA Committee capacity building and outreach. Any use of CE Grant funds is required to prove that it increases awareness or participation in the neighborhood council system.

- It is not intended to support nonprofits, businesses, individuals, or other entities if not directly related to promoting neighborhood council participation and awareness. This program may be revoked at any time. Any unused credit balances would then be canceled.
- Grant funds cannot support software licenses, website domains, clothing used as giveaways or prizes, specialized software, purchase of equipment (exception made for end of year expenses determined by Community Assembly), prizes and other giveaways, gift cards or gifts.
- School fees for janitors or other reasons are not an allowable expense.

Facebook Ads can be submitted for funding but the ad must include the NC's information and meeting schedule. Any cost overruns for Facebook Ads are the neighborhoods responsibility.

If uncertainty arises regarding a potential expense, contact Gabby Ryan at 509-625-6858 or gryan@spokanecity.org before purchasing the item or service.

Reallocation of Unused Funds

Any funds not used or scheduled for project use by September 22, 2025, shall revert to the Budget Committee's

available pool of unused funds. Cost overruns from previous projects will not be covered by the reallocation process. NCs are strongly encouraged to work closely with their assigned Budget Committee Liaison and ONS staff (509-625-6858), and to stay within their grant budget.

When remaining funds are determined, neighborhood councils and Community Assembly (and the respective CA committees) are permitted to submit ideas to the Budget Committee for what they believe the remaining program funds should be spent on. Typically, remaining funds go towards the benefit of all NCs and CA (promotional mailers to widespread populations, adding inventory items to the CA inventory closet, and paying for training materials are some past examples).

If a NC chooses not to participate in the grant program or does not use all funding apportioned for that NC, any unused funding will be reallocated by ONS and the Budget Committee to other NCs or the CA during the grant fund year.

Charges against Grant Funds

Neighborhood grant allocation funding may only be used to support capacity and participation building efforts for NCs and the CA. This can include support for events such as hiring bands or speakers permit fees, space or equipment rentals, signage, and outreach. Grants can fund support for NC and CA activities and meetings such as obtaining a Zoom account, printing fliers, newsletters, banners, magnets, etc., and other projects as approved by the Budget Committee and ONS staff. See applicable Inter-Fund purchases.

Using Grant Funds – Inter-Fund Purchases, Reimbursements

2026 Program Change for Eligible Expenditures:

This year, a change in the CE Grant guidelines is that neighborhood councils demonstrating that they do not have access to free spaces to host their neighborhood council meetings may request CE Grant funds to pay for meeting space fees. This request will be reviewed by the Budget Committee, CE Grant Program Administrator and Director of ONS before approval.

Inter-Fund Purchases:

Inter-fund purchases happen between City departments. Inter-fund purchases do not require NCs to pay out of pocket as the City covers costs directly. Details of them are below:

- For Special Event application fee waivers: Each NC can receive a special event application fee waiver. For the NC to receive their waiver of a special event application fee, the NC will need to upload their Special Events/Parks MOU during the application process to show proof that it is a valid event for an application fee waiver.
- If an NC wishes to have food trucks or other vendors at their event on Parks property, a \$50 vendor permit is required by Parks for each vendor. NCs can use CE Grant funds to cover those permit costs, as an interfund transfer. The \$50 per vendor permit fee must be requested in the application. Parks staff will contact the applicant if vendors are included in the permit application, with instructions to pay the vendor fees; make sure to contact Gabby when this happens so the funds can be transferred.
- Postage can only be paid via CE Grant funds if the items are mailed thru the City Bulk Mail System as part of a Reprographics order.

Reimbursements:

NCs and CA Committees also have the option to have the ONS process a reimbursement for expenses. Reimbursement allows more options regarding vendor choice, but NCs or CA Committee will have to pay out of pocket for purchases before applying for reimbursement. The City will only reimburse for products already purchased or services already rendered. The City requires documentation to support reimbursements. For the grants, this documentation must include:

- A completed Neighborhood Invoice Voucher Form for each reimbursement request, provided by the City and available to download on the City's program website;

- Original receipts or invoices showing paid for expenses;
- A flier or notice for the event that the purchase supports;
- ACH Vendor Form if you're requesting an electronic payment (not required if you want payment mailed); and
- W-9 form completed or one on file to be set up in the City's system as a vendor eligible to receive City funds.

ONS staff will review all reimbursements received to ensure that all expenses are eligible, the NC or Committee has adequate remaining funds, and that all necessary documentation has been received. Due to the staff time required to process reimbursements, the City will not accept reimbursements of less than fifty dollars. Please do not submit reimbursable expenses until the aggregate amount equals or exceeds fifty dollars if possible.

Many neighborhoods wish to purchase high cost items or services from vendors, bands, artists, etc. that have required NCs to cut a check to them and then wait for reimbursement. To avoid financial burden of NC officers, there are a couple of ways to cover the costs without it coming from the NC officers. Gabby has a purchasing card that can be used to place online orders, pay for digital invoices, or purchase items from stores. For example, if a neighborhood is purchasing event supplies from a local store or through an online retailer, Gabby can place the order with their purchasing card. The order requests and details would need to be submitted with enough time in advance, so please contact Gabby if this is desired by the NC or Committee.

Additionally, many NCs have concerts that require them to cut the check to the performer ahead of time and wait for a reimbursement. To avoid this, the bands can be set up as vendors with the City of Spokane, which means the band can directly invoice the City for the services. If an NC plans to do this, please reach out to Gabby so that the band can receive the invoice template and other documents required by the Accounting Dept. to be set up as a vendor.

Food/Beverages as a CE Grant Expenditure:

No more than \$300 of a NC's grant funds can be spent on food items. Using grant funds to purchase alcohol is strictly prohibited. Receipts for reimbursement of food items must be itemized, showing the food items purchased and their costs. Purchasing gift cards for restaurants or grocery stores is not allowed.

Purchasing paper or plastic goods (cups, plates, bowls, utensils) for food items doesn't count towards the \$300 and can just be requested as "Event supplies," that CE Grant funds can be used for.

If you are planning to bring a food vendor to your event held on Parks property:

There is a Vendor Permit fee that costs \$50 and must be paid to the Parks Department. CE Grant funds can be used to cover the cost of that Vendor Permit fee, but you need to give Gabby/ONS a heads up, prior to submitting your special events application, that you plan to have a vendor present at your parks event so that ONS can initiate an inter-fund transfer for that fee.

Application

NC Grant Coordinators, approved by their NC Chair, and CA Committee representatives may apply to the ONS for participation in this program. Applications are fillable pdf files that should be saved and emailed to ONS by **June 19, 2026**.

A complete application package is as follows:

- NC or Committee's meeting minutes showing a vote taken by the council on what is their approved use of the CE Grant funding
- 2026 CE Grant application, fully completed and signed by CE Grant Coordinator (please make sure that you have alternate requests in case your initial requests do not work out).

- 2025 Performance Measures

Approval of each NC's or CA Committee's proposed grant shall be based on the quality and intent of the project, eligibility of proposed expenses, and proposed performance measures. Access the application and performance measures forms here (they are fillable pdfs that can be digitally signed):

<https://my.spokanecity.org/neighborhoods/programs/community-engagement-grant/>

Performance Measures & why they are required:

As the City of Spokane provides the public funds for the grants, accountability to the public is required. Grant applications must include a plan to track performance of projects. NCs and CA Committees must measure their use of funds to meet the objectives of their programs. The goal of the CE Grant program is to increase awareness and participation within the neighborhood council system.

Examples of tracking performance measures: If the goal of printing and distributing fliers is to increase participation at NC meetings, the council should have a plan to either have surveys for attendees asking how they heard about the meeting or at least collect sign-in sheets before and after distributing fliers to see if attendance increased. Each NC or CA Committee is responsible for creating performance measures to submit with their application and tracking these measures over the life of the grant funded project(s).

The Budget Committee will collect and analyze this information. This will help the Budget Committee and ONS determine successful project types or best practices to fund in the next grant cycle. Future funding may be based on performance and best practices created through this grant program.

Disclaimer

This policy or any action or approval undertaken pursuant thereto is not a contract, offer to contract, or any other commitment by the City of Spokane. This policy is subject to revocation or cancellation at any time with or without cause and without further notice. The Director of the Office of Neighborhood Services has final authority to determine any disputes arising under this policy. This provision is pre-emptive and shall govern all others in case of ambiguity or conflict.

Once a project has commenced, it will be completed as per the approved application and schedule.