



## NEIGHBORHOOD MATCHING FUND

# 2026 GUIDELINES

The Neighborhood Matching Fund is founded on a simple concept:  
City and community partnerships strengthen Seattle.





## About Us

The Neighborhood Matching Fund (NMF) was created in 1988 to provide city resources to help make our communities stronger and more connected. Over the years, we've funded over 5,000 projects across the city of Seattle. Every funding award is matched by volunteer labor, donated materials, donated professional services, and cash.

NMF is founded on a simple concept: City and community partnerships strengthen Seattle.



## What We Fund

We fund an array of unique and creative community projects that meet these requirements:

- Involve community members in creating and completing the project.
- Create community improvements.
- Be free and open to all members of the public.
- Are feasible and ready to begin within 2 months from award date.
- Demonstrate community match.
- Occur within the Seattle city limits.
- Community events may be funded every other year.



## Who Should Apply?

We encourage applications from neighborhood groups, community organizations, informal groups, and business groups who want to do a project to build stronger community connections.

All applicant groups must be open and inclusive, actively engage diverse community members, and be significantly composed of people who live and/or work in Seattle.

NOTE: Information submitted is considered a public record and may be subject to public disclosure. For more information, see the Public Records Act, RCW Chapter 42.56. To learn more about how we manage your information, see our Privacy Statement at [www.seattle.gov/privacy](http://www.seattle.gov/privacy).



## Expense Categories

Expenses must be directly related to the project and fall within the following four categories:



### PERSONNEL

Expenses related to staff and interns who will manage the project.

Project management costs are limited to 10 percent of the total project award.



### SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS

Expenses related to materials needed to complete project.

Food expenses are limited to 20% of award but may not exceed \$5,000 per project.



### PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Expenses related to consultants, vendors, artists and services.



### CONSTRUCTION AND CAPITAL

Expenses related to construction and renovation of parks, facilities, and other public spaces.

## Community Match

Core to our fund is the community match, which requires awardees to match their award with contributions from the community.

- A significant portion of the match should come from the community that will be impacted by the project.
- The total match must equal at least half of the funding request (1/2 match: 1 funding request).
- City of Seattle resources such as City staff time, usage of City facilities, and/or any funding may not be counted as match.
- Any individual or business paid with award dollars may not also be counted as community match contributions.

## Match Categories

There are four types of contributions eligible for our match requirements:



### VOLUNTEER TIME

Individuals can contribute their time to a project in a variety of ways: such serving on planning committees, attending events, promoting the project, and more. Volunteer time is valued at \$35/hour.

Volunteer hours may be counted starting on the application due date.



### DONATED PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Professionals may donate project relevant services at their customary rate, up to a maximum of \$100/hour. These services must be verified by the donor.



### CASH

Cash contributions from individuals, businesses, organizations, or other grant programs may be counted as match. These donations must be verified by the donor or in your possession at time of application.



### DONATED MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES

All donated materials and supplies are valued at their retail prices or standard rental fee. These donations must be verified by the donor.

## Requirements for Awarded Projects

Being mindful of our program requirements for awarded projects will help as you plan and complete your project.

All design and capital projects on City of Seattle property are required by federal law to provide readily accessible facilities per the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).



### FISCAL SPONSOR

Awarded projects are required to have a fiscal sponsor. A fiscal sponsor is an organization that agrees to act as the trustee of your project's funds and assumes financial responsibilities related to the successful completion of your project.

For this work, the fiscal sponsor may charge you a fee of 3% to 10% of the award which may be included in your project budget. Some established organizations may serve as their own fiscal sponsor.



### CONTINGENCY

All physical improvement project budgets must include 15% cash contingency funds.



### INSURANCE

Awarded projects will be required to provide Commercial General Liability insurance for the project duration to limit the liability of your organization and the City. NMF award may be used to pay for insurance-related fees.

### HIRING PROCESSES

The City requires that your group give opportunity to a broad set of businesses to bid on the work your project generates. In particular, the City encourages opening that opportunity to women and minority-owned businesses. Architecture and engineering consultant selection must be based on consultant's qualifications and ability to fulfill the scope of work, not cost.

- For consultant services worth more than \$15,000, you must advertise and solicit at least three responses to a written scope of work.
- For consultant services less than \$15,000, you must solicit and select consultants directly from the City of Seattle Consultant Roster or advertise.
- For vendor or contractor services worth more than \$5,000, you must select the lowest or best bid or quote for those services.

The following are the two funds within the Neighborhood Matching Fund:

**Small Sparks Fund**

**Community Partnership Fund**

Awards	\$500 to \$5,000	\$5,001 to \$50,000
Application Deadlines	Accepted on a rolling basis as long as budget is available or until October 30, 2026 at 5pm.  Applications must be submitted at least six weeks prior to project start date.	<b>2026 Round One</b> Jan 6 - Mar 10 at 5pm  <b>2026 Round Two</b> July 7 - Sept 8 at 5pm
Notice of Decisions	Within six weeks	Within ten weeks
Contract Signed & Work Ready to Begin	Within four weeks from award date	Within six weeks from award date

## Application Steps



### Review NMF Guidelines and Application

### Call an NMF Project Manager (206) 233-0093 who will help you:

- Understand the program guidelines and application process
- Navigate our online grants system
- Review draft applications



### Complete and Submit Application by deadline



## Application Review Process

All applications are reviewed by Neighborhood Matching Fund program staff and, if needed, screened by the affected city department.

Applications are rated on a point system for building community partnerships (50 points) and project readiness (50 points).

For projects involving improvements to property owned by public or private entities, property owner approval is required at time of application.



For improvements to City property, the appropriate City department will provide permission and approval during the application review process.



## What We Will Not Fund

### INELIGIBLE GROUPS:

- Individual persons.
- For profit businesses.
- Religious organizations.
- Major institutions: government agencies, universities, hospitals.
- Political groups.
- Organizations outside the city of Seattle.
- Groups that currently have an active NMF project.
- Groups that have failed to successfully carry out an awarded NMF project within the last two years.
- Consecutive CPF awards are not given. You must wait a full year to reapply.

### INELIGIBLE PROJECT IDEAS:

- Project not free and open to the public.
- Duplication of an existing private or public program.
- Ongoing and/or existing programs or services support.
- Replacement of funding lost from other sources.
- Pay for an organization's ongoing operating expenses.
- Projects that do not have property owner permission for proposed improvements.
- Social services.

### INELIGIBLE EXPENSES:

- Pay for expenditures or financial commitments before the organization is under contract with the City of Seattle.
- Purchase of land or buildings.
- Pay for out of city travel expenses, lodging, or hotel expenses.
- Pay for private transportation expenses including mileage, gas, insurance, car rentals, rideshare, etc.
- Rental or purchase of bouncy houses/bouncy toys.

Seattle.gov/neighborhoods/nmf  
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