Community Development

919 Palm Street, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401-3218
805.781.7170
slocity.org

Neighborhood Matching Grant Pilot Program
2017-18 Guidelines

What is the Neighborhood Matching Grant Program?

San Luis Obispo's quality of life is tied to strong neighborhoods and active residents. The purpose of the Neighborhood Matching Grant Program is to support grassroots projects that enhance and strengthen neighborhoods. All projects are initiated, planned and implemented by neighborhood members in partnership with the City. Neighborhood involvement and relationship building are key components of the program.

Grant requirements include: a match amount from the neighborhood equal to or greater than the grant request; tangible neighborhood benefits; documented neighborhood support and involvement; project readiness; and project sustainability, as described further below.

The Neighborhood Matching Grant Program was originally authorized in the 2015-17 Financial Plan as a two-year pilot program. $5,320 was awarded in year 1, and $6,982 was awarded in year 2. It was reauthorized in the 2017-19 Financial Plan, with $20,000 available for grants.

Grant requests may range from $250 to $5,000 and for every dollar awarded by the City, the neighborhood provides an equal or greater match consisting of volunteer labor, donated professional services, donated materials and/or direct financial contributions.

Who is Eligible to Apply?

Proposals will be accepted from groups of people living or owning property within the neighborhood. A neighborhood group may be an existing group whose membership is from a commonly-recognized geographic area (e.g., neighborhood association, homeowners association) or an ad hoc group formed to work together on a specific project. Many areas in San Luis Obispo do not have identified neighborhood boundaries or organized representation; therefore it is up to the group applying for funds to demonstrate that they are representing their neighborhood.

Although businesses or community-based organizations (public, private or non-profit) are not eligible to apply on their own, they may do so in active partnership with a lead neighborhood group.

What Types of Projects May be Considered?

Projects may include, but are not limited to:
- Physical improvement projects that improve or enhance publicly visible areas of the neighborhood, including landscape improvements, tree planting, waterway enhancement, and natural area restoration activities.
- Events, activities and celebrations open to all neighborhood residents that encourage interaction and communication between residents.
- Initiatives that serve to create, expand or increase participation in a neighborhood-organization, or promote an understanding of issues important to neighborhood residents.

As this is a pilot program, staff is interested in hearing what kinds of projects residents believe will benefit their neighborhoods. Early consultation with City staff is encouraged.

What Types of Projects are NOT Eligible?

Grant funds cannot be used for:
- Projects that conflict with existing City policies, standards or codes
- Duplication of existing activities or services
- Operating expenses that are not directly related to the neighborhood project
- Projects fully outside the City limits
- Expenses or financial commitments made before the project contract is signed
- Funding for items or services not included in the project description
- Projects that require new connections to utilities
- Alcoholic beverages
- Public art projects (There is an existing program to support these types of projects. Please contact Public Art Manager Melissa Mudgett at (805)781-7296.)
- Neighborhood Traffic Management CIP projects (There is an established NTM program. Please contact Transportation Manager Jake Hudson at (805)781-7255 for more information.)

How Are Projects Selected?

Projects are selected using the **Project Criteria**. The Human Relations Commission (HRC), an advisory body to the City Council, will select Neighborhood Matching Grant projects.

The HRC has the discretion to approve full or partial funding for any or all of the project applications submitted. However, the HRC is not required to allocate any or all of the grant money for a cycle if it determines that proposals require further refinement or consideration at a later date.

Proposed projects will be scored and ranked on how well they meet the following Project Criteria:

Tangible Neighborhood Benefits (35 points)
The project:
- Produces an observable improvement to the neighborhood
- Provides a continuing benefit into the future
- Reflects a priority need of the neighborhood in which it is proposed

Neighborhood Involvement and Support (35 points)
The project:
- Fosters collaboration between neighbors, and maximizes opportunities for neighbors to participate
- Clearly describes your neighborhood boundary, and quantifies the number of people outreached to, in support of and participating in your project
- Demonstrates a broad neighborhood commitment. Ideas include:
    - Circulate information regarding the proposed project to all addresses in the neighborhood. Include renters, owners, and businesses (if present). Provide a way for recipients to express support or concern to the person or group leading the effort.
    - Post notices of the proposal in the neighborhood, with information on how to provide feedback and get involved
    - Obtain letters of support from neighbors
    - Include a list of signatures from those who are supportive of the project
    - Include a list of neighbors who will be *participating in* the project (not just in support of it)
    - Discuss your project at a neighborhood association meeting, or other similar forum

Project Readiness (20 points)
- The application is completed and consistent with grant guidelines
- The project is clearly defined and feasible
- For physical improvements, including landscaping, ongoing and long-term maintenance is adequately addressed
- The project budget is based on documented and verifiable costs and specifications
- The project will be managed by capable operational and fiscal managers
- The project is compatible with plans, policies and practices of City of San Luis Obispo

- Permission has been secured for use of the site from the property owner(s)
- The matching portion of the grant, including the availability of volunteers and donated materials, is well documented and credible

Sustainability (10 points)

The project:
- Contributes to the environmental health of our community
- Has a positive effect on the local economy and minimizes costs to the community, now and over the long term
- Supports responsible stewardship of public resources
- Contributes to social equity by including vulnerable or underrepresented populations or promoting community safety and cultural awareness while building relationships and neighborhood cohesion.
- Contributes to the goal of evenly distributing grant awards to neighborhoods throughout the community

What Are the Project Match Requirements?

Requested grant funds must be matched by an equivalent amount of **volunteer labor, donated materials and supplies or professional services**. The following are the project match requirements:

- This is a 1-to-1 match grant, meaning the value of your match must be equal to or greater than the grant amount of funds requested
- No more than 25 percent of volunteer labor may come from outside of the neighborhood
- Other City resources may not be included as a match
- Only volunteer labor or professional services contributed after the grant agreement is signed can be counted towards the match
- The value of volunteer labor is based on the latest estimated value for volunteer time. Currently, this value is $24.14[1] per hour.
- Donated materials or supplies are valued at their retail price. Loaned equipment may also be included as part of the match and valued at the standard rental fee.
- Professional services are valued at the reasonable and customary value of the product or service provided. Donors of professional services must provide the value of their contributions with documentation of professional qualifications.
- A Match Pledge Form provided with the application must be used to document volunteer labor, materials, supplies and services, and copies of the completed forms must be included with the final application.
- All portions of the match must be able to be documented.

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[1] Independent Sector, https://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time

What Project Costs are Eligible for Reimbursement?

This is a reimbursement grant. Meaning, after your project is complete, the City will reimburse you for actual expenses. In order to be eligible for reimbursement, items and their estimated costs must be described in the project application budget. Eligible items must be specifically purchased for the implementation of the project, and may include: materials and supplies, professional services, rented equipment (e.g. tables, chairs, tents, tools), food and drink (non-alcoholic), permit costs, insurance costs, plant materials, soil supplements and other related expenses. All reimbursement requests must include sufficient documentation. Only direct project costs documented in the project application are eligible for reimbursement.

What is Required to be Submitted for the Project Application?

The following information is included in the Neighborhood Matching Grant Application:

- Application Checklist
- Project Information
- Project Narrative (includes a project description and how it meets the project criteria)
- Project Schedule
- A Project Budget that includes estimates for:
    - All materials and supplies
    - Permits (if applicable)
    - Insurance (if applicable)
    - All other project expenses
    - Identified neighborhood match
- Required Attachments:
    - Location/Site Map, including neighborhood boundary
    - Match Pledge Form (documentation of volunteer commitments, donated materials and/or professional services)
    - Neighborhood Petition Form
    - Written permission from the property owner (if applicable)

It is required that applicants discuss their project with City staff *before* submitting a Project Application to gain a full understanding of project expectations and requirements. Contact Associate Planner Rebecca Gershow at (805)781-7011 or at rgershow@slocity.org.

See the Neighborhood Matching Grant Application for full submittal details.

How Do I Develop a Successful Project?

Step 1: Select a project for your neighborhood, and build neighborhood support
Choose a project that will generate as much neighborhood support as possible. Successful projects will have a well-defined set of goals and objectives, as well as a detailed list of the steps and activities required to meet those goals and objectives. Take your cues from neighborhood discussions – is there a known problem or issue in the area? Is there an opportunity to build neighborhood relationships? As much of the neighborhood as possible should be involved in identifying and shaping the project. Including the entire neighborhood in the development of the project will increase support for the project. So will meeting the Project Criteria (see Page 3).

Step 2: Discuss your project early with City staff
Discuss your project with City staff well before submitting an application to make sure your project qualifies for a neighborhood matching grant, or to ask questions and receive technical assistance. Contact Associate Planner Rebecca Gershow at (805)781-7011 or rgershow@slocity.org.

Step 3: Ensure site control
If your project involves property which your applicant group or organization does not own, you must obtain written permission from the owner. Projects may involve private property, but must provide a clear public benefit, and documentation must be provided that confirms property owner support and approval of the proposal.

Step 4: Commit to maintaining your project
If your project is a capital improvement or involves new plantings, you will need to commit to maintaining it for at least 5-years.

Step 5: Research the regulations
Many projects need permits, insurance, or design review before proceeding, and may have a lengthy process for getting approved. Grant funds are contingent on meeting city standards and approvals. Find out what regulations and permits apply to your project and how much they cost by looking on the City website and talking to City staff (see Step 2).

Step 6: Determine resources needed
What will it cost to complete your project? Develop a list of all the resources needed at each step of the way. Resources include expertise, equipment, supplies, volunteers, services, permit fees, etc. Identify which of those resources you can provide as your match, and clearly document in the application.

Step 7: Insurance
Depending on the nature of the project, you may be required to have liability insurance to limit the liability of your organization and the City. If your project will involve the use of a contractor, the City of San Luis Obispo will require proof of liability insurance from the

contractor. Usually, liability waivers will be adequate. If applicable, the cost of insurance must be reflected in your project budget.

Step 8: Develop a budget and project schedule
Project budgets should be as comprehensive and accurate as possible:

- When possible, get cost estimates from more than one reliable source
- Provide documentation of professional qualifications to justify professional rates
- Include permit and insurance costs, if applicable
- Use the budget form provided in the application

Project schedules should be realistic, reflect the schedule constraints of potential service providers and typically designed to be completed within one year from final contracts.

What Are the Program Deadlines and Important Dates?

Grant Cycle Opens:	Monday, **October 2, 2017**
Grant Info Meeting:	Monday, **October 30, 2017** at 12:00 pm at 919 Palm St, Conference Room 1. Bring your lunch.
Application Deadline:	Monday, **February 12, 2018** at 5:00 pm
Funding Decisions On:	Wednesday, **April 4, 2018**
Contracts Signed By:	**May 4, 2018**
Projects Completed By:	One year from final contract

How Do I Apply?

Application materials will be available online (www.slocity.org) on Monday, October 2, 2017. **Final Applications are due by 5 pm on Monday, February 12, 2018.** Final applications must be complete, with all documentation provided. Incomplete applications will not move forward for consideration.

It is required that applicants discuss their project with City staff *before* submitting a Project Application to gain a full understanding of project expectations and requirements.

All applications should be dropped off, mailed or emailed to the attention of: Rebecca Gershow, Associate Planner, Long Range Planning, Community Development Department, 919 Palm St, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401. Email: rgershow@slocity.org. See the Neighborhood Matching Grant Application for more information.

What Happens If My Project Is Selected?

Congratulations! You are almost ready to get started.

Grant Agreements: Successful applicants will enter into an agreement with the Community Development Department that details the terms and conditions of the grant. Grant recipients will be eligible for reimbursement of expenses incurred only after grant agreements are in place.

Fiscal Agents: Applicants will need to identify someone to handle and account for the money raised as well as the funds the City reimburses for the project. The person who handles the financial side of the project is called a fiscal agent.

Reimbursement: If your project is awarded a grant, purchases that were clearly identified in the project budget will be reimbursed by the City. At completion of the project, the fiscal agent will submit receipts for reimbursement, along with project match and photo documentation of the completed project and the City will issue a reimbursement check.

Project Examples From Other Communities

Below are neighborhood matching grant projects from other communities. Feel free to use these examples to generate ideas for a matching grant in your neighborhood, or come up with your own!

- Invasive species removal and native plant restoration. Includes a commitment to water during plant establishment
- Construction of raised accessible garden beds for neighborhood use, with optional education programs on urban gardening
- Installation of theft-resistant, decorative neighborhood signs
- Free outdoor "theater in the park" performance, or concert in the park
- Traffic circle landscaping
- Bike path beautification
- Tree planting (along streets or in underutilized open spaces or parks)
- The start-up of a new neighborhood association
- Neighborhood BBQ and clean-up event
- Turf removal along a neighborhood street, and replanting with drought-tolerant native landscaping
- Organizing a neighborhood book drive – collection and purchase of books for neighborhood elementary school kids to take home over the summer
- Installing bike racks at needed locations in neighborhood
- Neighborhood pancake breakfast
- "Neighbors Night Out"– a free, family-friendly event with entertainment sponsored by the neighborhood association to bring neighbors together
- Neighborhood web site or newsletter
- Development of a Neighborhood Tool Co-Op or Neighborhood Sharing Program
- Neighborhood elementary school butterfly garden