

2026 Sparked at Inspire Grant Program– Policy

Program Description

Through the Sparked at Inspire Micro-Grants, the City's Department of Neighborhoods has partnered with the Indiana Michigan Power Foundation to provide Fort Wayne neighborhoods- whose residents have attended an Inspire Conference- with an opportunity to apply for up to \$1,500 in funding to implement projects aligned with or inspired by conference content.

Neighborhood Engagement Requirement

Applications must include evidence of neighborhood engagement in the selection, implementation, and support for the Project. Neighborhood engagement shall be of such character and amount satisfactory to City.

Funding Match Requirement

Grant recipients will be required to provide a 20% funding match (\$300 if asking for the full \$1500), which can include a combination of local sponsorships, in-kind donations, and cumulative volunteer hours at a rate of \$20 per volunteer per hour.

Eligibility of Associations

Only Associations which are registered with the Department of Neighborhoods and whose neighborhoods are located entirely within the boundaries of the City of Fort Wayne are eligible to submit Applications.

Only Association's whose members or residents have attended at least one (1) of the 2023, 2024, 2025, or 2026 Inspire Neighborhoods Conferences are eligible to apply.

All documents submitted by Association to City are subject to open records requests.

Whenever possible, Projects should engage local contractors, vendors, and suppliers.

Decisions made by City regarding the acceptance or rejection of an Application and the eligibility of Project are final and not subject to appeal.

Program Grant Funding Eligibility

Eligibility for Program funding requires that a Project fit within one of the following categories: (1) Neighborhood Awareness, (2) Neighborhood Promotion, (3) Legal Infrastructure/ Insurance, and (4) Innovative Project Concepts (preapproval required). Routine or required infrastructure maintenance projects are not eligible for Program Grant funding.

- **Neighborhood Awareness** – newsletters, mailers, doorhangers, meeting signs or banners; websites and site maintenance; keeping residents informed!
- **Neighborhood Promotion** – branded merchandise or promotional products such as, stickers, magnets, t-shirts, or membership discount cards; subscriptions to graphic design and promotional applications (i.e. Canva, MailChimp, Hootsuite, etc.) to encourage participation and continued engagement!
- **Legal Infrastructure and Insurance** – legal fees or application fees associated with formalizing bylaws, becoming incorporated, or pursuing nonprofit designation; and insurance, such as, general liability and directors and officer's coverages; to provide stability, legitimacy, and access to broader resources for associations.
- **Innovative Project Concepts** - This category is designed to capture creative ideas that may not fit neatly into existing grant programs. Grant applicants wishing to apply to this category **MUST** have their Innovative Project Concept pre-approved by the Program Grant Administrator prior to application submission.

Application Scoring

Only completed Applications may be submitted. **Incomplete Applications will be rejected.** A point system for rating the Applications has been designed to identify and reward original, deliberative, comprehensive responses to each section of the Application. Associations are encouraged to become knowledgeable about the Application process by attending one (1) of the two (2) Program workshops or meeting with the Program Grant Administrator prior to submitting their Applications.

Each Section of the Application will be scored separately and the total score for each Application will be considered independently and in comparison, to the scoring of other Applications. Additionally, each Application will be reviewed to determine the extent to which a Project can achieve the following benchmarks:

- Project includes a comprehensive plan for significant neighborhood involvement in the selection and implementation of the Project.
- Residents will have the opportunity to participate, assume leadership roles, and/or develop new skills through the Project.
- Project builds neighborhood organizational capacity
- Project strengthens or builds new partnerships with public/private entities and community groups.
- Project generates letters of support, pledges of volunteer services, and/or other evidence of broad neighborhood support.
- Application identifies issues to be addressed and resolved by implementation of the Project
- Application illustrates commitment to seek creative and workable neighborhood solutions
- Project benefits a significant number of neighborhood residents
- Project improves health, safety, or quality of life for neighborhood residents, eliminates or reduces potential property damage or provides relevant neighborhood facilities.
- Project has a well-defined scope, timeline, goals, detailed phases, measurable outcomes and will be completed by Project Completion Date
- Required permits and approvals from applicable City departments and offices have or will be obtained prior to Project commencement
- Project has high level of visibility and impact and is accessible to all neighborhood residents
- Project has a realistic plan and budget for ongoing maintenance, if needed
- The contractors, vendors, and suppliers required for Project have been identified by Association
- Project has been approved by neighborhood residents (provide documentation)
- Project budget is well-planned and realistic
- Additional support exists for Project through cash and in-kind contributions from neighborhood residents, businesses, community groups and others.
- Application clearly illustrates desired outcomes and ways to measure the success of Project

Program Grant Award Process

The award of a Program Grant requires review, unconditional approval, and, if applicable, permitting of a Project by all municipal departments and divisions and private sector entities having jurisdiction over the Project. For example, a Public Art Project must be reviewed and approved by the Public Art Review Committee, a Project involving public right-of-way must be reviewed and approved by the Department of Public Works, and a transit-related project requires an agreement between the Association and Citilink.

Projects may not promote, advance, depict, or include any religious or political belief, practice, or affiliation or any derogatory reference. Projects may not promote discrimination based on race, creed, color, national origin, gender identification, sexual orientation, or disability.

Submission of current Bylaws and/or Covenants is required to assist in determining if a Project would constitute a maintenance obligation.

Program Grant recipients shall maintain timely and responsive communications with the Project Grant Administrator. Failure to do so may result in rescission of a Grant Award.

Evidence of the Association's site control for the Project must be submitted prior to the execution of the Grant Agreement.

Direct Payment or Reimbursement of Grant Award Funds

An Association may elect to have the City pay the Association's Grant award directly to contractors, vendors, and suppliers contracted to provide labor and/or materials for the Project. Alternatively, the Association may elect to be reimbursed by the City upon providing the City satisfactory evidence of proof of the Association's payment to contractors, vendors, and suppliers for labor and/or materials to the Project. The City requires a W-9 on file for any vendor, contractor, supplier, or association to complete any payment. All invoices provided to the City for direct payment must be tax-exempt.

Program Timeline

Grant Workshops

- **Sat 9/26 at ACPL Main Library, Meeting Room B/C 10:00- 11:00am**
- **Tues 9/29 at Citizen' Square, Meeting Room 324 4:00- 5:00pm**

Grant Applications Open

- **Mon 9/14 at 8am**

Grant Applications Deadline

- **Fri 10/30 at 5pm**

Grant Awards Announcement

- **Fri 11/6 (approx.)**

Grant Agreement Deadline

- **Wed 11/25 at 5pm**

Project Completion Deadline

- **Fri 1/29 at 5pm**

Program Survey Report Deadline

- **Fri 2/19 at 5pm**