

Partnership Engagement Fund 2026 Application Guidelines

This document is an overview of the Partnership Engagement Fund application, review and contracting processes.

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Partnership Engagement Fund overview and goals

This program supports collaboration and partnerships between community-based organizations (CBOs)¹ and neighborhood organizations to increase diverse public participation through project development and implementation, engaging historically underrepresented residents meaningfully and effectively on policies and programs that impact them and in decision-making with a focus on furthering equity. The Neighborhood and Community Relations Department (NCR) administers the Partnership Engagement Fund.

Assistance

For any questions or to request accommodations or alternative formats:

1. Call Ariaah Fine at (612) 673-2243 or email partnershipfund@minneapolismn.gov
 - Text (612) 321-8649
 - Visit minneapolismn.gov/partnership-fund.
- People who are deaf or hard of hearing can use a relay service to call 311 at (612) 673- 3000. TTY users call (612) 263-6850.
- Para ayuda, llame a Mariano Espinoza (612) 281-8629 o mariano.espinoza@minneapolismn.gov.
- Rau kev pab, hu Michael Yang (612) 327-2830, michael.yang@minneapolismn.gov.
- Hadii aad caawimaad u baahantahay, wac Farhia Budul (612) 704-5811 ama farhia.budul@minneapolismn.gov.

¹ For purposes of these application guidelines, “community-based organizations” (CBOs) includes individuals, groups, organizations, companies and other entities that have a proposal which operates exclusively for charitable or educational purposes.

Eligibility

The Partnership Engagement Fund dollars are available to community-based organizations that are partnering with [recognized neighborhood organizations](#) to further the City's goals as stated in the Strategic Racial Equity Action Plan and Minneapolis 2040: "The people of Minneapolis will be socially connected, healthy and safe."

Funding is available for new projects or expansion of existing programs. General organization funding or ongoing programming are ineligible. Community-based organizations must operate exclusively for charitable or educational purposes.

Partnerships

Each CBO will partner with a recognized neighborhood organization. The purpose of partnering with a neighborhood organization is to give organizations the opportunity to build relationships with one another. Doing so can help both organizations become more effective and inclusive. [See neighborhood organization list.](#)

Funding in 2026

The funding in 2026 is limited and funding opportunities are based on the applicant organization's overall budget. Applicants will be asked to submit a copy of their most recent 990 if needed. Contract awards for up to \$25,000 will be available for organizations with annual budgets under \$300,000. Priority will be given to organizations with budgets under \$150,000.

Organizational budgets are based on publicly available 990s in recent years and will not include real estate assets in the calculation. There is \$500,000 available in 2026. We expect about two-thirds of the funding will be distributed to organizations with budgets under \$150,000.

Timeline

- January 5 – Groups can begin the application process to seek funding.
- January 14 – Optional informational session by NCR
- February 11 – Initial interest form due. This is required to be eligible to complete the full application. Email, call or text NCR Partnership Fund staff before deadline if you need help completing.
- March 4 – Deadline for fully completed application.

Application overview

Application process

Proposals will follow a guided process before final approval decisions are made.

1. Groups interested in applying should reach out to NCR to start the process.
2. Organizations will complete the interest form, application, identify partnership with a recognized neighborhood organization, participate in an optional virtual interview, and prepare for the City contracting process.
3. Final and completed applications will be reviewed by community members and City staff, who will make funding recommendations.

The NCR director will make the funding recommendations to the City Council who will then make the final decision. NCR staff will reach out to the selected applicants to begin the funding process.

Application form and optional interview

Applicants will receive a link to the application upon submission of the interest form. In addition to submitting a completed application, you may participate in an optional video interview.

The optional virtual interviews allow applicants another way to show their work. Reviewers can watch a recording afterwards when reviewing applications.

Applicants are invited to participate in a virtual interview based on their preferred language. Meetings are scheduled online according to language needs.

Required tasks and time commitments

There are several tasks and time commitments required to qualify for funding. See the list below.

Task description	Estimated time commitment (hours)
Attend information session (optional)	1
Complete fund application	4
Respond to finalist review	2
Contracting process	3
Ongoing contract administration	2 hour/month
Project evaluation/success	4

Vendor application

If you or your organization are not contracting through a neighborhood organization or using a fiscal agent, you must be registered as a City vendor.

To register, you will need your tax identification number (your social security number or employer identification number), legal entity name on file with the IRS (business name or individual name that matches your social security number), business classification, organization's address, and contact information. Organizations will be asked to submit a W9 with their application.

[Register to become a City vendor.](#)

Use of funding

Public purpose doctrine

The public purpose doctrine limits government spending to activities and projects that:

- Benefit the community as a whole.
- Directly relate to a function of government.
- Do not, as their primary objective, benefit a private interest.

The doctrine ensures that taxpayer funds are only used for the overall wellbeing of the city's residents. The application will ask for an explanation of your project's public purpose. Your project must meet this public purpose criteria to be eligible for the Partnership Engagement Fund.

Public vs. private benefit

The public purpose doctrine forbids the government from spending money that primarily benefits a private interest. This means government funds must be spent on programs and activities which benefit the public interest.

Public interest

An example of a government project that benefits a public interest is one that funds the renovation of a public park. The park is open and accessible to all residents, allowing the community as a whole to reap a benefit from its improvement. To put it another way, a public benefit helps the entire community or a significant portion of it, whereas a private benefit is more focused on individual or exclusive advantages.

It is important to note that projects benefiting a public interest may also, incidentally, benefit a private interest. For example, the homeowners who surround the newly renovated park may see the value of their homes increase because of the renovation. While this is a benefit to the private interest of those homeowners, it does not take away from the larger benefit to the public interest of the city's residents, all of whom can use the park.

Private benefit

An example of a government project that primarily benefits a private interest is one that funds the remodeling of an organization's offices. In that example, only the organization is benefitting from the government funding.

Equal protection

A commitment to equal protection means that every person, regardless of differences such as race, gender, or religion, will have an equal opportunity to benefit from projects and initiatives.

The Partnership Engagement Fund is dedicated to ensuring that all members of the diverse community receive the same chances and benefits, with a specific focus on promoting equity for those who may face additional challenges or disparities. No program can limit participation or select participants based on race, gender, religion, national origin, or any other similar category or class.

Deliverables in the contract

Organizations must establish goals or outcomes they seek to accomplish by the program's end. These goals or outcomes are often called "deliverables" in contracts. They are written into the contract so that programs can be held accountable to produce their intended results. The Partnership Engagement Fund application will ask applicants to list their "deliverables" which will be included in the final contract.

Examples

For example, if an applicant seeks funding to start a program to teach people how to swim, possible deliverables include an estimate of the number of people who will sign up for the program, an estimate of the number of people who will pass a final test or receive a certification, or a survey of a certain number of participants on how much they learned. These are just some examples.

Clearly defining your objectives ensures transparency and accountability in the use of public funds to benefit the community.

Consumables vs. durable goods

A consumable good, such as office supplies or event rentals, is used up quickly. In short-term contracts, like those used for the Partnership Engagement Fund, consumable goods are typically allowable expenses.

A durable good lasts longer. These are things like machinery, appliances, or furniture. Durable goods are generally not allowable expenses.

Essentially, any goods bought for the publicly funded program should be used during the project and not outlast it.

Allowable selection criteria in programming

It is preferable for programs to reach many people rather than to benefit only a select few. If your program is only open to a limited number of participants, you must explain how you will be selecting them.

For example:

- Will there be an application process?

- How are participants selected?

A few key things to remember are:

- Programs should focus on public benefit and community needs in their selection process.
- Programs cannot select participants on protected classes such as race or gender. The Partnership Engagement Fund emphasizes inclusivity and providing equitable opportunities for all applicants.
- Programs cannot pre-select participants or limit participation to friends and family.

Application review process

The Partnership Engagement Fund review committee will be made up of City staff and community members. The City of Minneapolis will use subject matter experts and other community partners to assess the feasibility and appropriateness of applications. This ensures that the process is community-driven and that proposals reflect the needs of the community.

2. Reviewers will use a guided process with NCR staff to score the ideas.
3. Based on the review committee recommendations, a City internal funding team will select finalists to recommend for funding. The City's internal funding team may request additional information from applicants at this stage.
4. The internal funding team's recommendation will go to the NCR director. The NCR director will make a funding recommendation to the City Council.
5. The City Council will make the final decision on the projects and programs to be funded.

Reviewer selection process

NCR staff will provide a simple application for interested reviewers to complete. Additionally, NCR staff will use their relationships in the community to recruit appropriate subject-matter experts.

Using the application, the review committee lead staff will identify an appropriate mix of members according to:

6. Cultural community knowledge
7. Representation of historically underrepresented communities
8. Minneapolis geographic representation
9. Issue-based specialized knowledge (unsheltered populations, youth, seniors, immigrants and refugees, etc.)
10. Compliance with City's conflict of interest and ethics policies.

Reviewer expectations

Selected reviewers have an important role in the evaluation of applications. To ensure reviewers are equipped with the tools needed, the following list shows tasks and estimated time commitments for reviewers. Reviewing will begin shortly after the application deadline listed above.

Task description	Reviewer time (hours)
Attend a reviewer pre-meeting	1
Read and score applications	5
Attend an evaluation/reviewer discussion	3
Compile and submit scores to NCR	0.5

The number of applications assigned to each reviewer depends on the total number received; however, no more than 20 applications will be reviewed by any individual.

Reviewers will be asked to:

1. Review the Conflict of Interest Statement immediately. If a conflict of interest exists, notify the review committee lead staff.
2. Attend a reviewer pre-meeting that will be held online. The pre-meeting will include an overview of best practices, the process and expectations for application reviewing. Carefully review and score each assigned application using the application score sheet. Scoring should be based solely on the contents of the application and an objective assessment of each application's merits.
3. Meet to review and discuss the applications based on the established criteria. All review meetings will be held in person at NCR's office (Crown Roller Mill: 105 5th Ave S, Minneapolis, MN 55401) All applications will be discussed and a ranking of applications will be created based on their scores.
4. Make recommendations for funding to the NCR director who makes the final decision on which proposals to submit to City Council for approval.
5. Turn in all review materials, which will be kept on file as public record. Reviewers will only be identified by an assigned reader number, not by name.

Contracting process

Because the Partnership Engagement Fund uses City funds, there are City processes that must be followed for contract management and administration. City staff will help partnership organizations set up and navigate these contracts.

Every Partnership Engagement Fund program will consist of a community-based organization (CBO) in partnership with a neighborhood organization. There are two ways for contracts to be set up:

1. The CBO or fiscal agent can register as a vendor and contract directly with the City.
2. The neighborhood organization can contract directly with the City and subcontract with the CBO.

Regardless of how the contract is set up, NCR will assign a neighborhood support specialist to every contract to assist. If needed, NCR will also involve a cultural support specialist.

Community-based organization as the contracting organization

If a CBO is registered as a vendor with the City, NCR will complete a contract that allows for a direct payment to the CBO.

Neighborhood organization or fiscal agent as the contracting organization

If a CBO is not a registered vendor with the City, NCR will create a contract directly with the neighborhood organization partner or a fiscal agent for this specific program.

Insurance requirements

The organization that holds the program contract, in compliance with the City of Minneapolis requirements, must hold general liability insurance (\$1 million aggregate), worker's compensation (if applicable), and Auto, Hired and Leased (if applicable). Neighborhood organizations are required to carry this insurance already as part of their existing contracts. This information should be discussed between partners, and an insurance certificate that includes the City of Minneapolis as an additional insured must be provided prior to contracting.

Rejection of proposals

The City reserves the right to reject any or all applications, to waive any formal application requirements, to investigate the qualifications and experience of any applicant, to reject any provisions in any application, to seek new applications, to negotiate the requested services and contract terms with any applicant, or to proceed to do the work otherwise. Incomplete applications and applications not sufficiently detailed or not in acceptable form may be returned for completion or may be rejected by the City. The City reserves the right to cancel or amend these guidelines at any time.

Data practices advisory

Information requested by the City of Minneapolis throughout the Partnership Engagement Fund application process may be classified as “private” data under the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. The purpose and intended use of this data is to assist the City of Minneapolis in administering the Partnership Engagement Fund in accordance with program criteria and City ordinances and policies.

Your participation in this process is completely voluntary. If you do not supply certain information, your eligibility for the Partnership Engagement Fund may be negatively impacted.

This information will be available to City employees, community review panelists, and others acting on the City’s behalf for the purpose of administering the Partnership Engagement Fund. Where access to the data is authorized by federal or state law or court order, it may be made available to others as so authorized. To the extent that any part of this information is deemed “public” under the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, that information may also be released to the public to the extent required by law.

Sample contract

[See a sample contract for the Partnership Engagement Fund.](#)