



TO: NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

**FROM: KEVIN HOWARD, DIRECTOR
HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOOD PROGRAMS**

SUBJECT: NEIGHBORHOOD CHALLENGE GRANT PROGRAM

DATE: FEBRUARY 20, 2026

The City of Little Rock is happy to announce a competitive grant program designed to help Neighborhood-Based Organizations (NBO) meet their most pressing challenges through community service and focused city services. The purpose of the grant is to promote and increase volunteerism in the city while partnering with city staff to improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods.

The City anticipates awarding approximately fifteen (15) grants up to \$2,500 per any one organization (**maximum of five (5) grants per ward**). Any City of Little Rock Neighborhood-Based Organizations registered with the city is eligible to apply. The objective of the “Neighborhood Challenge Grant” Program is to encourage projects that promote volunteerism, foster civic pride, enhance and beautify neighborhoods, or encourage improvements in the way residents connect and solve problems. **In order to assist you and your organization with your project, we require that you complete your projects in the months of May-December.** This will provide city staff with the opportunity to work with you and coordinate staff resources (mulch, debris removal, tools, etc.) to provide enhanced city services, thus making a bigger and lasting impact to your neighborhood.

As an added incentive to neighborhoods, Housing and Neighborhood Programs will review the completed projects in January of the following year to ensure that all program requirements have been met and announce a “Neighborhood Challenge Grant Project of the Year” in the Housing and Neighborhood Programs Newsletter.

Please review the enclosed information carefully, **complete the grant application documents, attach your group’s W-9** and return the forms to **Housing and Neighborhood Programs, ATTN: Neighborhood Challenge Grant, C/O: Crystal Shoals, 500 West Markham Street, Ste. 120W, Little Rock, AR 72201.**

NOTE: APPLICATIONS WITHOUT A W-9 WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED. NEW W-9s ARE REQUIRED ANNUALLY.

NOTE: SUBMISSIONS NOT ON THE OFFICIAL CITY OF LITTLE ROCK “NEIGHBORHOOD CHALLENGE GRANT” APPLICATION WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.

If you have any questions regarding this grant program, please contact **Crystal Shoals at (501)371-4490.**

City of Little Rock

Program Objective

The objective of the “Neighborhood Challenge Grant” Program is to promote and encourage volunteerism in the city through completion of Neighborhood-Based projects that foster civic pride, enhance and beautify neighborhoods, and expand citizen involvement in local government. The City of Little Rock seeks well-qualified Neighborhood-Based Organizations to submit proposals that will result in impactful improvement to the neighborhoods they serve. Citizens across the city are the best caretakers of their neighborhoods, and the Neighborhood Challenge Grant Program will help to foster a sense of community and belonging.

Project Description, Specific Goals of the Initiative

- To encourage block and civic associations throughout the seven (7) wards to engage their members in an organized event/activity held between May and December, that aims to beautify their block;
- To support and provide resources in the form of a cash grant to Associations; and
- To bring relevant and focused city services that will support the efforts of each association.

Community Grants

The City of Little Rock Department of Housing and Neighborhood Programs will administer up to fifteen (15) grants, each for up to \$2,500 per one Neighborhood-Based Organization (NBO). The Department of Housing and Neighborhood Programs will manage fund dispersal, provide technical assistance and guidance to NBOs, and facilitate city services. City services may be provided by Parks and Recreation, Public Works and other city departments.

Data Collections and Reporting

NBOs will be required to report the following information to the Department of Housing and Neighborhood Programs on a monthly basis (May – December):

- Detailed descriptions of all proposed activities;
- Before, during and after color pictures of beautification projects in email format only;
- The number of volunteers engaged in the Project; and
- Other impact metrics found in the formal application.

General Grant Policies

NBOs submitting proposals for grant funds must meet the following criteria:

- Organizations must be registered with the City of Little Rock Department of Housing and Neighborhood Programs
- Proposers must operate as a Not-For-Profit Organization/Association in nature and their projects will not exclude the general public from us, if applicable
- Proposals must have lasting and/or a direct benefit to the neighborhood
- If awarded, organizations must maintain records reflecting program expenditures, number of volunteers taking part in the project and in-kind contributions. These records are to be made available to the city in the Final Report.

- The group’s W-9 **must** be submitted by **December 31st by 3:00 p.m.** to qualify.

Grant recipients will hold the city harmless of all claims of every kind and character that may arise out of or are in any way connected to the project. Grant recipients are considered independent contractors and not as agents of the city. Proposed projects must be within the established, recognized and registered boundaries of the Organization submitting the Proposal. (Requests for an exception to this requirement will be considered on a case-by-case basis).

Selection Criteria

Each NBO must have a detailed and realistic Project Plan for engaging residents to carry out a physical transformation of the public spaces on their block. Specifically, each NBO must:

- Operate on a not-for-profit basis. For purposes of the Neighborhood Challenge Grant Program, an organization operating on a not-for-profit basis is defined as a Corporation, Organization, or Association that exists for charitable and/or public purposes without a profit motive or shareholders.
- Demonstrate the ability to mobilize a minimum of 20 neighborhood volunteers to take part in the revitalization of their block.
- Include one or more block beautification event(s) in its/their action plan which must occur between May 1st and December 31st.
- Send a contact person to a grant orientation workshop where they will meet with representative from the Department of Housing and Neighborhood Programs if required.
- Please respond to all questions in the application. If additional space is needed, please attach separate pages for your responses to all questions and number paragraphs accordingly.
- The following projects will be prioritized: Blocks within a 500 foot radius of an elementary, middle or high school (this should be noted in the grant application); projects that address one or more vacant lot(s); projects that improve the overall neighborhood aesthetics; projects that eliminate blight; and, projects that benefit a business district.
- After project completion, grantees will be required to submit digital photos of the block that was revitalized, and a written report that includes the number of blocks (or other geographic unit such as number of vacant lots or neighborhoods) revitalized, AND at least two of the following: square feet of graffiti removed; pounds of litter collected; number of trees planted,; and/or number of green spaces or community gardens created. Other questions will include but may not be limited to:
 - ✓ Specific communities impacted or engaged through the initiative, if any (such as veterans, seniors, youth, etc.)
 - ✓ Number of citizens who participated in the transformation of the space;
 - ✓ Number of physical resources created (such as benches, picnic tables, planters/flower boxes), if any; and
 - ✓ Any anecdotal information you can share about the use of the space following the transformation (OPTIONAL)

All final documentation must be submitted by December 31st by 3:00 p.m.

Section 1: General Information – Type responses to the following questions in the fillable pdf application

1. What is your organization’s name?
2. List two (2) contacts for your organization along with their phone number and email address.
3. What is your organization’s mailing address, including zip code?
4. If your organization has a website, what is the URL?

5. Specify when your organization forms (month/year). If your organization is new, is this the first project it is undertaking?
6. What neighborhood does your organization work in?
7. Briefly describe (no more than 250 words) your organization's purpose, history, and accomplishments.

Section 2: Project Description

1. Please describe your block in detail. Please include an estimate of the block's demographics.
2. What are some of the specific concerns you have about its physical appearance?
MANDATORY: Include photographs of the present state of the site/block in your application.
3. How would you like to improve its physical appearance?
4. Please include a detailed action plan that indicates the various steps your organization will take to carry out the block improvement project. Please refer to the template below, complete on a separate sheet of paper and attach it to your application. (Note: Project participants will be required to sign releases/waivers of liability when performing projects on city property and/or performing projects on private property using city awarded grant funds. Written permission of property owners will be required for projects on private property).

Examples Follow:

Action	Person/ people responsible for project	Date(s) the action(s) will take place	Intended outcome(s)
Distribute fliers to all neighbors announcing the event & upcoming Planning meeting	John Smith Linda Jones	July 21-22 Aug 1-2 Sep 7-8	Raise awareness about upcoming event; recruit new resident volunteers to attend planning meeting and take part in the event.

5. What materials will you need? Please provide a budget that includes all planned expenses related to the project. Neighborhood Challenge Grants are up to \$2,500.00 reimbursable from the City of Little Rock. Grants do not cover personnel costs or ongoing operating costs. The city reserves the right to require a lease, rather than purchase, of certain equipment.

Costs included in this budget should only consist of one-time expenses related to the project and/or items such as equipment or supplies. Please refer to the template below, complete on a separate sheet of paper, and attach it to your application.

Item	Description of Use	Cost
Paint	To paint the walls surrounding the community garden	\$50.00
	TOTAL	\$50.00

6. How will you reach out to your neighbors to encourage participation? How will you involve them? How many neighborhood participants do you anticipate becoming involved?
7. Will you work with local businesses and other community-based organizations? If so, in what capacity? Please name each business engaged.
8. How do you plan on sustaining the changes your project will create: (i.e. for a block clean-up, what is your plan for keeping the block clean)?

Important Note on City Service – Please read carefully:

As part of this grant, each organization can receive support from various city departments. Below is a list of city services that are available through this program. Grantees will be able to learn more about these services at the Grantee Orientation if required.

- Provide trash collection services and litter clean-up supplies (bags and gloves) for the block project.
- Clean City-owned vacant lot(s).
- Remove undesired, city-owned trees from tree pits & prune overgrown city owned trees.
- Graffiti removal on city property.
- Repair damaged/missing street signage.
- Board up vacant city-owned building(s).
- Fill potholes.
- Survey block for new tree planting opportunities on city owned property or in the public right of way.
- Prioritize demolition(s).
- Investigate building code violation(s).
- Provide information about grant and loan programs available to Little Rock homeowners.
- Provide information about community greening resources and other resources available for business districts.

Please note that requests for service are not guaranteed. City Departments will review requests and will be fulfilled as feasible.

Grant funds must be expended within the grant window (May 1st – December 31st). Completion of projects shall not be dependent on additional or future funding from the city.

Proposals will be reviewed and selected by a committee composed of city staff. All selected applications will be forwarded to the City Manager for funding.

Grant Guidelines

ALL GRANTS MUST BE RECEIVED BY 3:00 P.M. APRIL 14, 2026

Up to a \$2,500.00 reimbursement from the City of Little Rock will be awarded to the applicant at the conclusion of the project and after meeting **all** grant submission requirements. Therefore, it is extremely important that all grant recipients keep receipt copies and accurate financial records of costs associated with each project. **Original receipts are to be submitted.** The maximum grant award will be **\$2,500.00 per organization.** A minimum 25% match in the form of either donated materials, donated equipment and/or in-kind labor (volunteers) is required. **(Note: Donated labor is calculated at a rate of \$10/hour. Volunteer hours must be documented by forms provided by the City of Little Rock. Additionally, these grant dollars are subject to audit by the city's internal audit staff; therefore, it is the responsibility of each organization receiving a grant to keep accurate records of all expenditures and in-kind contributions).**

Examples of Previously Approved Projects

- Footbridge across park pond;
- Upgrading of playground equipment;
- Landscaping of neighborhood parks or common areas;
- Replacement of roofs on community buildings and storage facilities;
- Sprinkler systems for parks and flower beds;
- Entry signs into neighborhoods;
- Installation of house numbers;
- Purchase of tools, mowers, weed eaters and landscaping equipment to set up a too-loan inventory
- Storage sheds for neighborhood equipment;
- Equipment and supplies to publish and distribute newsletters, flyers, brochures, etc.;
- Equipment for crime watch programs;
- Litter control activities and equipment;
- Park benches and grills;
- Summer jobs for youth;
- Neighborhood sponsored youth activities;
- Youth mentoring programs; and
- Construction of neighborhood basketball courts.

****Neighborhood Organizations that were awarded in the previous year Neighborhood Challenge Grants, but failed to provide the required information to close out those grants will not be eligible for current year awards, unless an extension was requested before the end of the previous year. If the required information is provided before April 14, your new application may be considered. ****

The deadline for submitting your grant application is 3:00 p.m., April 14.

If awarded, city staff will notify the Project Coordinator identified in the Project Proposal.