**City of Johnstown**

**Neighborhood Opportunity Fund (NOF)**



**Overview**

The Neighborhood Opportunity Fund (NOF) was established by the City of Johnstown to support and encourage the formation of neighborhood level community groups throughout the City’s fifteen recognized neighborhoods. The City of Johnstown committed up to $10,000 per group through its 2023 budget to support a project developed by each neighborhood community group. A primary goal of the fund is to establish community groups in each neighborhood. A secondary goal is to financially support a small project in each neighborhood that helps to build capacity and cohesion amongst these neighborhood community groups and establish a framework for future community development efforts between the City and its residents.

**What Can the Program Fund?**

Neighborhood groups are encouraged to be creative; many projects may be considered. The NOF seeks to support projects that demonstrate shared benefit with a goal of improving neighborhood quality of life. All projects must meet the following minimum criteria:

* Be achievable within 6 months of contract execution. Projects contingent on other funding sources that are not approved at the time of application will not be funded.
* Occur within Johnstown city limits.
* Provide a public benefit and be free and open to all members of the community.
* Be initiated, planned and to the greatest extent possible, implemented by community group members.
* The project shall demonstrate significant volunteer match. Preference will be for projects completed using 100% volunteer efforts.

**What Can the Program Not Fund?**

* Staff salaries/administrative overhead
* Programmatic funding
* Improvements to privately owned buildings
* Travel expenses
* Daycare/childcare expenses
* Promotional Activities/Marketing/Lobbying

**Program Criteria**

All residents must be welcome into the neighborhood group that applies for funding through the NOF. The group shall be inclusive as possible and shall not discriminate membership on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, income status, disability, marital status, sex, gender, age or sexual orientation.

Neighborhood groups must have held regular, monthly meetings for the last six consecutive months. Minutes of meetings must be kept and available for City inspection.

Neighborhood groups must have designated board positions (chair, vice chair, etc.) who reside in that neighborhood.

**Required Proposal Components and Application Process**

**To be approved for City funding, each community group is required to provide an application and detailed grant proposal that presents the proposed project, the need for it, the problems it attempts to solve, project goals and a project budget. The proposal will need to address in full detail the five components listed below. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis.**

A grant proposal is your neighborhood’s opportunity to talk about all the ways your group makes a difference in your community. You know your neighborhood has the potential to do some amazing things and you know the barriers to reaching that potential. No one is better positioned to write about where you live than you.

A strong proposal will tell a compelling story of your neighborhood group and your community. It will prove the need in your community, establish the credibility of your organization and the people in it, paint a picture of the proposed program, and convince the City that your program will make a real difference in your neighborhood. You know your neighbors, you know the problems your neighborhood faces every day, and you have a great idea for tackling it. Tell us about it!

1. **Need Statement**

A need statement establishes the problem that the proposed project will solve. This section will describe and analyze the problem that will be addressed through the proposed project. A problem to be addressed by a grant proposal may be something relatively simple, or it may be more complex, such as a high crime rate in a certain neighborhood. In all cases, remember that the need section is about the need of your community not the need of your organization.

When describing the problem, demonstrate that it is:

• Important - it is serious in nature, it is a real problem with real implications for the populations involved.

• Significant - it is large in scope in terms of those affected, or large in terms of resulting negative outcomes, or large in actual consequences and costs to the greater community.

• Urgent - it needs action now before it gets worse, before more are affected, etc.

1. **Project Design**

The Project design section is where you will describe all components of the proposed project, how it will be completed, and any established best practices that are being used. You can also describe your experience in implementing similar projects. Detail past success, but don’t shy away from also talking about lessons learned. It’s important to provide a high-quality project and show how you use past experiences to improve is a powerful way to discuss this.

It is important that you make it clear that the program will address the need you expressed in the need section of the proposal. Be as specific as possible in this section. Your goal is to allow the City to picture the program easily without confusion. The City may not be aware of your program, so make sure to describe it fully.

1. **Budget**

Each project proposal will need to contain a detailed project budget. Ensure that budget items listed in the budget worksheet are fully discussed in the proposal. Please be sure to include price quotes, especially for project components that will potentially be paid for with NOF funds. For example, if your group would like to install recreational equipment, please provide at least one price quote from a reputable supplier, in writing, that documents the exact cost of that piece of recreational equipment.

Other project funding sources also need to be documented and listed under the project budget. The project budget is one of the most important components of the application. Please be sure to include relevant budgetary documents and estimates for the application to be considered.

1. **Goals, Objectives, Outputs, and Outcomes**

This section can vary from project to project. In order to maximize the impact of this funding, the City needs to understand what the project intends to accomplish, and what the outcomes of the project will be that hopefully have a positive impact on the neighborhood, community and City. It is important to understand the difference between goals, objectives, outputs, and outcomes. In the grants world, these are generally defined as:

* Goals: Overarching aims, generally not specific enough to measure.
* Objectives: Specific achievements that contribute towards reaching the goal(s). When writing objectives remember to make them S.M.A.R.T.: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound.
* Outcomes: Changes in behavior, attitudes, perceptions, knowledge, skills, and/or behaviors as a result of your project.
* Outputs: Tangible deliverables from the project.

When submitting your groups project for funding, discussion of these project components will help the City understand the project better. Many times community groups will have more than one idea for funding. So this can also be an exercise for neighborhood groups to use to prioritize and rank projects.

1. **Organizational Capacity**

Now that you have illuminated the need, described how your program addresses the need, and described how you will measure your impact, you need to prove that your organization is capable of delivering on the proposed program. New organizations should highlight the skills and experience of volunteers and members of the neighborhood association. Are any of your people uniquely qualified to administer the program through training and education? Have they administered programs like this before? Anything you can point to showcase personnel expertise and experience is useful here.

This is also a good place to showcase the dedication to the cause of the people in your organization. Most neighborhood groups rely heavily on volunteers. Not only can you help the City understand that your volunteers are dedicated, but turn that dedication into an asset in the proposal. What other programs have your volunteers or members diligently participated in?

The organizational capacity section is also a good place for existing community groups to highlight community support for your association or program. Do you have a large number of volunteers and members in your neighborhood association? Do you have any unique assets that will help deliver a high-quality project? Do you have other sources of funding? That last question is particularly of interest. You are more likely to receive funding if you have already secured other sources. The good news is, even if you do not have a lot of cash to contribute, you probably have in-kind resources to match. In-kind resources are volunteers, existing assets like equipment or buildings, and donated professional services. Not only are these great items to think about for matching, but they highlight community support and demonstrate sustainability.

**Reporting and Evaluation**

Neighborhood groups approved for funding through the NOF will be required to provide monthly status updates to the City about the project.

A project evaluation meeting will also be held with City staff following the completion of the project. At this time, City staff will document that the project is complete and that funds were spent in accordance with the approved project application.

**Contact**

For application questions or additional information about the Neighborhood Opportunity Fund, please contact Art Martynuska, City Manager, City of Johnstown, at (814) 539-2504, ext. 102.

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