



2023 Neighborhood Mini-Grant Program Guide



Hillsborough
County Florida

Section I: Grant Guidelines & Planning

Introduction

The Neighborhood Mini-Grant program is designed to foster healthy, safe, and engaged neighborhoods that strengthen our community. This guide provides information to help neighborhood organizations navigate the application submittal process and is a resource throughout the mini-grant cycle. The Neighborhood Mini-Grant Program is open only to eligible organizations located within Hillsborough County, Florida and its municipalities.

Eligibility

To qualify for mini-grant funding, neighborhood organizations must meet the criteria outlined in this program guide.

Eligible	Not Eligible
Civic Associations Homeowner Associations Special Taxing Districts	For-Profit Service Providers Nonprofit Service Providers Local Government Entities Political Groups Individual People

Projects submitted for mini-grants must demonstrate community support and engagement in both the application and the implementation phases.

Only one Neighborhood Mini-Grant application will be allowed per neighborhood organization, including Master Associations, Community Development Districts, and/or Special Taxing Districts.

Prior to applying for Mini-Grants, eligible organizations must be registered in the Hillsborough County's [Neighborhood Directory Listing](#). To confirm that your organization is listed, click the Register/Update button. Click on the magnifying glass and type your organization's name in the box. If your organization is listed, a box will appear with the organization's information. Please verify that this information is current. To update the information, use the [Neighborhood Directory Update Form](#). If your organization is not listed, scroll down the page until you see the [Neighborhood Directory Registration Application](#) and follow the directions. If you have questions regarding these tools or the related process, contact your [Neighborhood Liaison](#).

Project Categories

Your mini-grant application must describe how the proposed project fosters healthy, safe, and engaged neighborhoods. Projects are required to engage the community as active participants, and they must address a need(s) or improve quality of life in one of the following categories.

- **Neighborhood Identification:** “Place-making” by creating or enhancing assets that are sources of neighborhood pride and identity, and that help engage the neighborhood. Ideas include signage to identify your neighborhood, message boards, and a neighborhood website.
- **Leadership Empowerment:** Training neighborhood leaders and/or engaging them in activities/events that will bring your community together for the sake of the neighborhood or others. Ideas include organizing food pantry donations, cleanups, and assisting neighbors or seniors in need.
- **Safety Opportunities and Education:** Equipping the neighborhood with knowledge or tools to prevent, prepare for, confront, or respond to crime or danger to help keep the neighborhood safe. Programs such as swim safety, stranger danger, anti-bullying, gun safety, or cyber safety can provide hands-on learning, training, and education that support safety needs in the community.
- **Environmental Enhancements:** Protecting water, energy resources, and native plants contributes to a healthy environment and community. Projects in this category should positively impact your neighborhood’s natural environment. Ideas include neighborhood litter walks, neighborhood cleanups, Florida-friendly landscaping, low-volume irrigation, and composting.
- **Health and Wellness Engagement:** Increasing access to nutritious food, health education, or physical or mental fitness opportunities to promote a healthy community. Projects can range from exercise and healthy eating to supporting mental health and wellbeing. Ideas include creating play or exercise spaces for people of all abilities, walking paths, nature trails, healthy cooking demonstrations, and Zen gardens/beautification
- **Neighborhood Preparedness:** Increasing neighborhood resilience to natural disasters by encouraging individual and/or neighborhood-wide disaster preparedness planning through programs and partnerships with local agencies. Ideas could include organizing groups such as a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), resident-led neighborhood preparedness plans, hurricane preparedness events, and adopt-a-shelter programs.
- **Neighborhood and Community Innovation:** Unique projects that engage and bring neighbors together to solve a problem, celebrate neighborhoods, or keep them informed. Ideas include projects to keep your neighborhood better connected and informed, art to celebrate your neighborhood, or a community driven project to resolve a problem.

Leveraging Other Resources

Neighborhood organizations in the unincorporated area of Hillsborough County are encouraged to plan projects with greater impact by also leveraging Hillsborough County's Community Clean-up Grant, Low-Volume Irrigation Mini-Grant, or Tree Mini-Grant where applicable. For more information about these programs, visit [HCFLGov.net/Neighborhoods](https://www.hcflgov.net/Neighborhoods).

The Children's Board of Hillsborough County offers grant opportunities to neighborhood organizations for proposals that are focused on children. Find out more by visiting [Children's Board of Hillsborough County website](https://www.hcflgov.net/ChildrensBoard).

Partnerships with non-governmental entities are encouraged to enhance project effectiveness and sustainability, but they are not required. To qualify as a partnership, the partnering organization must contribute to the project in a substantial and meaningful way, including in-kind support. This could include providing critical resources, services, or technical expertise, or collaboratively executing the project. For each organization identified as a partner, the mini-grant applicant must submit a statement of support (an email or letter) from the partnering organization that explains the partner's specific role in the project.

Permit Review and Approvals

Before applying for a mini-grant, all applicants must contact their county or city permitting department to determine whether permits are required for the proposed project. The Permit and Sign Review Form must be completed and uploaded with the online grant application. This serves as official confirmation whether or not permits are required for your project. This form and other Neighborhood Mini-Grant resources are online at [HCFLGov.net/MiniGrant](https://www.hcflgov.net/MiniGrant).

Signs and Message Boards in Unincorporated Hillsborough County: If proposing a sign or message board to be located in the *unincorporated area* of Hillsborough County, you must meet with Kim King of the Hillsborough County Development Services Department. Contact Kim King at (813) 276-8490 or KingK@HCFLGov.net. After the meeting, she will sign the required Permit and Sign Review Form that you must upload with your application. For *unincorporated area permitting not related to signs and message boards*, simply use the Hillsborough County contact information listed in the next section of this program guide.

This meeting requirement does not apply for signs and message boards proposed within the cities of Tampa, Plant City, or Temple Terrace.

Government Permitting Contacts

- Hillsborough County Permitting – (813) 272-5600 or visit [Hillsborough County Development Services Department](#)
- City of Tampa Permitting – (813) 274-8405 or visit [City of Tampa Permit Contacts](#)
- City of Temple Terrace Permitting – (813) 506-6460 or visit [City of Temple Terrace Permitting Services](#)
- City of Plant City Permitting – (813) 659-4200, ext. 4140 or visit [City of Plant City Building Division](#)

Sunshine 811

At least two business days before performing any digging, the grantee or their service provider must call 811 or visit [sunshine811.com](#) so affected utility companies can mark underground lines. 811 will provide a reference number for your use.

Consider the Grant Timeline

The mini-grant timeline is a key component to consider when planning a project proposal and before applying. You'll need to allot enough time to develop a project/program proposal, complete the application on time, then implement the project by the deadline, including the required documentation. Timeline considerations include:

- Brainstorm possible projects that will foster healthy, safe, and engaged neighborhoods.
- The neighborhood organization's board must consider and approve the project at a meeting with quorum.
- Permitting agency review is needed to determine whether permits are required.
- Complete the application, including narrative, required information and attachments by the deadline.
- Determine the time necessary for key aspects of project implementation, including:
 - Agency issuance of any required permits and/or approvals.
 - Manufacture, shipping, and installation – confirm with your intended vendor/provider that grant items will be **delivered and installed prior to the mini-grant completion deadline**. If the intended vendor/provider is unable to do this, it is the neighborhood organization's responsibility to find a different vendor/provider who can accommodate the mini-grant program's required timeline.

- The awarded project/event **must be finished by Friday, July 28, 2023**. This means all installations must be complete and open to the residents, and/or all events must have occurred by this date.
- The **final report, along with** all required documentation must be submitted by **Friday, July 28, 2023, at 5 p.m. (no exceptions)**.

Section II: Application Process

Key Dates



How to Apply

Neighborhood Mini-Grant reference materials are located online at [HCFLGov.net/MiniGrant](https://www.hcflgov.net/MiniGrant). It is important that you review these online resources prior to submitting your application, so that you are fully informed of the requirements and can be ready to submit a complete and competitive application. To apply, go to that same website and click the link to the online application. The online application will guide you to submit the information described below. You may want to prepare this information before starting the online application, however, you will have the option to save your work and resume later if necessary. Applications that are incomplete or received after the deadline are not eligible for mini-grant funding.

1. **Organization Information:** Provide the legal name of your neighborhood organization, indicate your organization's type (Civic Association, Homeowners Association, or Special Taxing District), your organization's [County Commission District](#), your organization president's contact information, and the organization's other address and contact information.
2. **Project Information:** In this section of the application, you'll provide your project's name, then put a checkmark(s) next to your project's category(ies). There are also four narrative sections as follows:

- A. Neighborhood Benefit – Explain how the project will foster a healthy, safe, and/or engaged neighborhood. (900-character limit)
 - B. Neighborhood Legacy –
 - Explain how the project will be sustainable (maintained and continued by the community in the future).
 - How will the project lead to long-term enrichment of the community and foster a healthy, safe, and engaged neighborhood?
 - C. Neighborhood Creativity – Explain how your proposed project is creative, unique, or innovative for your neighborhood.
3. **Budget Section:** Provide a detailed proposed budget including a description and estimated cost of each item to be purchased. Costs should be based on actual estimates from your intended vendors/providers, including any shipping expenses. Refer to the Budget Section of this guide for detailed instructions on preparing your proposed budget. Note that the maximum grant award is \$5,000.
 4. **Volunteer Section:** The Neighborhood Mini-Grant Program is participatory and volunteer-centric. A minimum of ten volunteers are mandatory to qualify for funding. In the online application, you must list at least 10 volunteers. Their first and last name, and number of volunteer hours, are required information. Their phone numbers and email addresses are optional.
 5. **Required Documents:** You must upload the following documents for your project to be considered for a mini-grant award.
 - A. **Organization’s Official Board Minutes:** Upload a copy of detailed minutes from the organization’s board meeting wherein the mini-grant project was voted on and approved. Review the [Board Meeting Minutes Requirements](#) document, which describes the exact requirements for the meeting minutes and includes an example.
 - B. **Permit and Sign Review Form:** [This form](#) must be completed and submitted for all mini-grant applications. It confirms the city or county permitting department has reviewed the proposed project and stated whether or not permitting is required.

6. Save your work and review every page of your application to verify that it's filled out completely, all required documentation has been successfully uploaded, and that your budget calculations are correct. You will not have the option to edit your application after submitting it.
7. Submit the grant application **no later than 5 p.m. on Monday, November 14, 2022**. We recommend submitting applications well in advance of the deadline to avoid any technical concerns.

Section III: Budget

How to Prepare a Budget

The Budget section of your application should paint the financial picture of your proposal. Other than the project narrative, the budget is one of the most important elements of your grant proposal. If the project budget is not correct, the application will be deemed incomplete and therefore will be ineligible for award. Think creatively about how you can use neighborhood assets to accomplish your project and work within the budget.

1. Expenses you are requesting to be paid using grant funds must be entered in the "**Mini-Grant**" column.
2. In-kind contributions must be entered in the "**Other Funding**" column. Examples include:
 - A. The value of donated food
 - B. The value of borrowing a tent
 - C. Your association's funds
 - D. The value of volunteer hours – This may be calculated at \$29.95 per person per hour. Volunteers do not receive money for their work. The \$29.95 per person per hour is only used to reflect residents' contribution (in the form of work) to the project.

Example Budget

The following is an example budget completed within the online application system.

Budget: **Please click "Add Row" to start adding to the budget.**

DESCRIPTION OF BUDGET ITEMS	MINI-GRANT	OTHER FUNDING
Florida Friendly Plants + Sales Tax	\$ 800.00	
Butterfly Chrysalises (shipping is free from vendor) + Sales Tax	\$ 200.00	
Lighting (Lightning Bug Electrical, Inc.) + Sales Tax	\$ 1,100.00	
Bench (Bench + \$50 Shipping/Delivery + Sales Tax)	\$ 650.00	
Butterfly Garden Signage (crafted and donated by resident)		\$ 200.00
Permitting Fees for Garden Signage	\$ 350.00	
Gardening tools + Sales Tax	\$ 50.00	
Pots for flowers (20 pots + Sales Tax)	\$ 200.00	
Soil (20 bags + Sales Tax)	\$ 400.00	
Volunteer Hours - In kind (\$29.95 per hr X 10 vols X 5 hrs per vol)		\$ 1,497.50
	\$ 3,750.00	\$ 1,697.50

Budget Planning Considerations

1. Make sure the budget ties in with your project narrative.
2. The budget must include all needed expenditures. Use actual costs. Include tax, shipping, permit fees, and event insurance if applicable. Include supplies, equipment, professional services, postage, printing, training costs, and any other allowable related expenses. Provide clear descriptions of the products and/or services you are requesting.
3. Don't guess or base your requested funding on rough estimates or sale prices. It is a good practice to get estimates from the intended vendor/provider and have them to confirm how long the estimate is guaranteed. Estimates are typically not guaranteed beyond 30 days. In your proposed budget, account for an increase in cost if applicable.
4. You're encouraged to use existing resources in your neighborhood when possible, and to try to get items donated (such as food or space for an event).

5. Be realistic about the dollar amount you're requesting – what's the minimum amount needed versus what will make the project a great success? If you can justify the requested budget amount (up to \$5,000), then ask for it.
6. Make sure the dollar amount you enter for each item is correct. This seems obvious, but it is a common mistake in mini-grant applications.
7. Food and drink can only be listed under Other Funding (as in-kind contributions). These items are not eligible for purchase with grant funds.
8. It is the neighborhood organization's responsibility to confirm that vendors/providers who are paid with mini-grant funding have a current business license to work in Hillsborough County or the municipalities.

Projects and Items Not Eligible for Funding

The following are **not eligible** for funding. Hillsborough County Neighborhood Relations reserves the right to deem unlisted items ineligible based on County policies and guidelines.

1. Funding for organizations located outside of Hillsborough County
2. Alcohol, tobacco, or controlled substances
3. Beverages and food
4. Computers (laptop/desktop), monitors, printers, and related equipment
5. Operating expenses and software, and maintenance – some examples are yearly/monthly maintenance or repairs (pool cleaning, lawn service, repair of broken equipment, painting, and pressure washing)
6. Duplication of an existing public or private program, and/or current or future programs that receive funding from another source. Examples include government owned community center, park programs, street signs, pet adoption fees, purchase of items for service agencies like law enforcement, public parks, for profit agencies, and school sponsored programs
7. Expenditures or financial commitments made before the Letter of Understanding has been signed by the awarded organization's president, and before Neighborhood Relations staff has confirmed in writing that the project may begin.
8. Fines, penalties, and associated costs

9. Fundraising, investment management costs, administration costs, employee salaries, and associated costs
10. Gift cards, gifts, marketing items, giveaways, prizes, trophies, awards, and associated costs
11. Home improvements. Mini-grant funding cannot be used for individually owned property.
12. Lodging and associated costs
13. Multi-year projects/phasing. Mini-grant applications are reviewed to ensure the project meets the current mini-grant requirements. Each proposed project application must be able to stand on its own and not be dependent on future funding.
14. Private transportation expenses including but not limited to mileage, gas, insurance, and car rentals
15. Projects that conflict with existing city or county plans, policies, ordinances, directives, zoning, and restrictions
16. Government owned facility improvements including but not limited to streets, parks, playgrounds, rights-of-way, and painted intersections.
17. Projects already funded or eligible for funding from a government source (including county or city departments), such as but not limited to street or traffic signs, intersection art projects, streetlights, sidewalks, roadway improvements, and traffic calming

Considerations for Previous Mini-Grant Projects

- Projects previously funded through the mini-grant program are not eligible for new mini-grant funding to address wear and tear or to provide ongoing maintenance.
- Projects previously funded through the mini-grant program may be considered for new mini-grant funding if at least ten years have passed since the project was initially funded, and if proper justification for new funding is provided.
- Projects previously funded through the mini-grant program may be considered for new mini-grant funding, if the newly proposed project is in a different area/location from the previously funded project.

- For questions, contact your [Neighborhood Liaison](#) before applying.

Spending Authorization for Grant Recipients

No project expenses may be incurred until after the Letter of Understanding (LOU) has been signed by the awarded organization's president, a copy of the signed LOU has been sent to the Neighborhood Liaison, and the Neighborhood Liaison has confirmed via email that the LOU has been received and you are approved to begin your project.

Budget Modifications for Grant Recipients

If the neighborhood organization has determined that a budget modification is needed, it is the responsibility of the neighborhood organization to submit a written Budget Modification Request via email to your Neighborhood Liaison. The email must outline all proposed budget modifications including the reason for the budget modification, the proposed changes to each item, and the cost difference of each item. The written request will be reviewed by Neighborhood Relations pursuant to the mini-grant guidelines and a written determination will be sent via email to the awarded organization's president.

Requests to modify the type of item(s) to be purchased can be considered if the item fits within the scope of your approved project and there is an issue with the originally budgeted item, such as it being out of stock, a price increase, or delivery of the item would be outside of Neighborhood Mini-Grant deadlines.

Section IV: Grant Recipient Requirements

If your organization is awarded a mini-grant, you will receive follow-up documentation and information. All awardees must recognize the Board of County Commissioners for funding their project. Instructions for providing this recognition are outlined in the Final Report instructions that grantees receive. The following reports and documents are part of the requirements for grant recipients.

Key Dates

1. Neighborhood Mini-Grants awarded: Early January 2023.
2. Neighborhood Mini-Grant recipient resources available online: Early January 2023.
3. Letter of Understanding deadline: Friday, January 13, 2023, by 5 p.m.
4. Midterm Report deadline: Friday, March 31, 2023, by 5 p.m.
5. Purchases Neighborhood Relations makes for grantees - Deadline: Friday, June 30, 2023, by 5 p.m.

6. Final Report deadline: Friday, July 28, 2023, by 5 p.m.

Final Report Must Include:

- All required documents for reimbursement (review the reimbursement instructional resources)
- Ten (10) high resolution photos in JPG or PNG format
- Proof of acknowledging funding by the Hillsborough County Board County Commissioners
- Substitute W-9 form

Important: Failure to submit the Final Report and required documents by Friday, July 28, 2023, by 5 p.m. may impact any outstanding reimbursements and future mini-grant application submissions for two years. There are no exceptions.

Section V: Neighborhood Relations Contact Information

If you are not sure whether your project will qualify for a mini-grant, or if you have any questions about the program, the application process, or requirements, please contact your Neighborhood Liaison listed at [HCFLGov.net/MiniGrant](https://www.hcflgov.net/MiniGrant) (also noted below).

District 1 - [Mary-Elizabeth Fuentes](#) at (813) 277-1645

District 2 - [Gabrielle Nickerson](#) at (813) 274-16285

District 3 - [Julie Nail](#) at (813) 307-3607

District 4 - [Wanda Sloan](#) at (813) 307-3564