



HAND General Small & Simple Grant Application Guidelines 2026

The City of Bloomington, Department of Housing and Neighborhood Development (HAND) invites neighborhood groups to apply for the Small & Simple Grant program. The purpose of this grant is to promote neighborhood community building activities with a demonstrated neighborhood benefit. Possible uses for a Small & Simple Grant include, but are not limited to:

- training sessions and educational workshops,
- neighborhood newsletter mailings,
- sustainability projects
- physical improvements
- special celebrations
- invasive plant removal

If you are considering applying for a grant and you are unsure whether your project is eligible for the program, please contact Angela Van Rooy at 812-349-3505 or angela.vanrooy@bloomington.in.gov.

*****BEFORE YOU BEGIN to fill out the application form, please read through these guidelines in their entirety.***

I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

1. The maximum annual grant total per neighborhood is \$500.00. This may be requested for one larger project, or for multiple smaller projects throughout the year.
2. The Small & Simple Grant does not require a match component.
3. Applications may be submitted anytime between January 1 and September 1, 2026, or until all allocated program funds have been depleted.
4. Grant awards must be expended, and receipts submitted to HAND no later than November 16, 2026.
5. Grant final reports must be submitted to HAND no later than December 14, 2026.
6. Applicants will be notified of award decisions within ten business days after submission of a completed application. If any specific conditions apply these must be met before a contract may be executed.

7. After your application is approved by HAND, if applicable, you will need to secure appropriate approvals from other City Departments (e.g., a permit from Public Works for temporary street closure to hold a block party).
8. All entities who will seek reimbursement or payment from the City, must complete vendor documents and be vetted by the Controller's Office.
9. A Funding Agreement will be executed between the HAND Department and the neighborhood. Once all signatures are in place, the neighborhood may start their project. ***The City is under no obligation to reimburse the organization for expenses incurred prior to a finalization of the Funding Agreement.***
10. Grant funds may not be used to pay for out-of-city travel expenses or for food, beverages, and/or catering services.

II. ELIGIBILITY

Eligible Applicants

Applications are accepted from neighborhood-based organizations located within the Bloomington city limits (to determine whether your area is within the city, visit [myBloomington](#) and enter your address). A neighborhood-based organization is a group with a majority of its members residing or doing business in a commonly recognized neighborhood, whose purpose is, at least in part, to improve the quality of life in that area. The group may include representatives from churches, schools, businesses, and other institutions operating in that neighborhood, in addition to residents. Groups may be formed for the sole purpose of completing a grant-funded project, and need not be formally recognized neighborhood associations.

Who is NOT eligible to apply?

Single businesses, single institutions, single government agencies, single religious organizations, political groups, individuals.

Eligible Projects

In the development of your project, please keep in mind that *the purpose of the Small & Simple Grant is to promote neighborhood community building activities with a demonstrated neighborhood benefit*. Cash awards to participants are not allowed, however, it is allowable to pay for labor and services.

1. **Neighborhood Physical Improvement Project**—Build or enhance a tangible (physical) improvement in your neighborhood.
 - a. Provide proof of the property owner's permission to install your proposed improvement.
 - b. Include information on how ongoing maintenance will be provided.
2. **Neighborhood Non-Physical Improvement Project**—One-time events such as special celebrations, training sessions or educational campaigns, neighborhood clean ups, or newsletter mailings. *Funds cannot be used for political campaigns.

- a. Provide the start date, end date, and location of the proposed project.
 - b. Provide proof of the property owner's permission to use their property for this purpose.
3. **Partnership Projects**—Pilot or start-up program that demonstrates benefits to the immediate neighborhood and those organizations involved in the partnership. Partners may include: public school, day care facility, eldercare facilities, or social service agencies.

III. APPLICATION EVALUATION CRITERIA

Small & Simple Grant applications will be evaluated based upon the following competitive rating criteria:

1. Project Quality. The project is well planned and ready to proceed. The budget is realistic, well thought out, and accounts for all necessary expenses.
2. Neighborhood Participation. The application demonstrates significant neighborhood involvement in selecting, planning, and carrying out the proposed project.
3. Community Benefit. The project activities are a good approach to a recognized neighborhood issue, and they provide opportunities for community building within the neighborhood and/or larger community.

IV. GRANT REQUIREMENTS

1. The neighborhood will identify a Neighborhood Project Coordinator. This individual will act as the primary contact person with HAND for purposes of facilitating every step of the grant process.
2. The neighborhood will enter into a Funding Agreement stating the amount of the award, along with specification of activities to be performed. No expenditures will be allowed before finalization of the Funding Agreement.
3. The neighborhood will identify one individual (or organization) who will purchase goods and services and seek reimbursement from HAND. This individual/organization will complete and submit vendor documents as required by the City Controller's Office.
4. If the grant-funded project involves volunteer labor, the Neighborhood Project Coordinator must record volunteer hours on the Volunteer Hours Computation Sheet. Each volunteer must sign and date a Waiver, Release, and Hold-Harmless Agreement and submit it to the Neighborhood Project Coordinator. If the volunteer is under the age of 18, a parent/guardian must sign the Agreement.
5. The Neighborhood Project Coordinator is responsible for a final report which may be submitted electronically, and must be received by HAND no later than December 14, 2026. The final report must include:

- a. A list of all expenses.
 - b. A brief summary of the project, to include:
 - i. no more than 250 words,
 - ii. explanation of why you undertook this project;
 - iii. what worked, what didn't?
 - iv. what did you learn?
 - v. how did the neighborhood benefit?
 - c. At least three electronic photos of the project (e.g., photos of neighbors working together, before and after photos, etc.). The City reserves the right to use these photos for future promotion of the program.
 - d. Copies of all Waiver, Release, and Hold-Harmless Agreements, signed and dated by each volunteer (electronic copies preferred).
 - e. Final Volunteer Computation Sheet listing all volunteer hours.
6. If the neighborhood encounters a problem, and is unable to with complete the project by November 16, 2026, the date stated in the Funding Agreement, the neighborhood must contact the HAND office for an extension of time.
7. All promotional pieces that receive any funding through this grant program must include the following mandatory grant identification statement: *"Funding provided in part through the City of Bloomington's Small & Simple Grant Program."*

V. PROJECT NARRATIVE

Please describe your project in no more than 250 words. Consider the following details:

- What is your motivation for undertaking this project?
- How did your neighbors come an agreement about the project to be undertaken?
- How did/will you recruit neighbors to participate?
- How will you communicate with neighbors as the project progresses?
- What is your timeline for completion of the project?
- How will the neighborhood benefit from the project?
- Are you collaborating with any partnering organizations? If so, please explain.

VI. BUDGET

Your budget must include:

1. Total funds needed to complete your project,
2. Total funds requested from HAND (\$500 or less),
3. An itemized list of all purchases to be made for the project.
4. Source of funding for each item, either HAND, the neighborhood, or partnering organization(s).

For example: Neighborhood Newsletter Copying & Mailing Project

Total project budget = \$324.00**Total requested from HAND = \$324.00**

Item to be purchased	Cost	Source of Funding
300 copies w/ envelopes	\$150.00	HAND
Postage for 300	\$174.00	HAND
	\$324.00	Total requested from HAND

VII. APPLICATION

Please complete all portions of the application. In order to submit the application you will need a Google account. This will allow you to upload files, receive a copy of your completed application, and edit your application after submission. Upon submission of the application form, you will receive an email containing a copy of your application. At the top of this email there will be an "edit submission" button. If you need to make changes, you may do so by following that link.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN to fill out the application form, please read it in its entirety and have the following documents available to upload:

1. Project narrative of no more than 250 words,
2. Budget,
3. If applicable, a [Volunteer Hours Computation Sheet](#), complete **Name** and **Hours** fields only.

For application assistance, please contact Angela Van Rooy, Neighborhood Services Program Manager, at angela.vanrooy@bloomington.in.gov or 812-349-3505.

The Small & Simple Grant application form can be found here:

[2026 Small & Simple Grant Application Form](#)

VIII. CITY REIMBURSEMENT PROCESS

1. Your neighborhood should designate one individual to handle expenditures for reimbursement (e.g., the neighborhood grant coordinator, the neighborhood association treasurer, etc.). This individual will make purchases (ensuring that no sales tax is charged) and submit receipts to HAND for reimbursement. If your

neighborhood group has funds available, the organization may pay for goods and services rather than an individual doing so. In this case, HAND will reimburse the organization.

2. Any entity that will request reimbursement (individual or organization) must complete and submit vendor documents, as required by the City Controller's Office. This step must be completed as part of the funding agreement between HAND and your neighborhood group. Upon approval of your grant application, HAND staff will provide guidance.
3. After all expenditures have been made, submit your receipts to Angela at HAND. These may be submitted electronically or in hardcopy form.
4. Once received, there is an approximately three week timeframe for reimbursements. All payments from the City are made by electronic funds transfer (EFT) to the bank account specified on the vendor documents.

***All documents referred to herein are available on the
[Small & Simple Grant website](http://bloomington.in.gov/neighborhoods/grants/small-and-simple)
(bloomington.in.gov/neighborhoods/grants/small-and-simple).***