

COMMUNITY CATALYST GRANTS

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM INFORMATION SESSIONS

(NOV. 12 AND NOV. 23, 2020)

General Questions

1. Where are the Funding Guidelines?

The Funding Guidelines can be found on the CCG webpage:

<https://dhcd.baltimorecity.gov/nd/community-catalyst-grants>

2. Are these grants available for a for-profit LLC that is open to all residents in a neighborhood? Are the grants only for non-profits or can community based for profits apply? Do you have to be a 501(c)(3) or have a fiscal agent, or can an applicant just be an LLC?

A for-profit LLC is an eligible applicant only for Capital Funds and must be a co-applicant with a 501(c)(3) or other eligible applicants. Community based for-profits are eligible applicants only for Capital Funds and must be a co-applicant with an eligible applicant. Please refer to pages 3 and 4 of the Funding Guidelines for additional information.

3. If we are a new company who has only fixed one home so far, can we still apply?

The CCG program is intended to support emerging organizations, which will include those who are starting a new initiative.

4. How should an organization apply who is currently fiscally sponsored but is in the process of obtaining its own status?

If an organization is in the process of obtaining 501(c)(3) status and is uncertain of when the process will be complete, they may want to consider applying with a fiscal agent. In the event the applicant receives a 501(c)(3) status when an award of funds is made, funds can be awarded directly to the applicant even if that status changes before a grant is awarded.

5. How do we know if we were awarded as an established or emerging organization in the last round?

If current grantees are uncertain of their classification from the prior CCG round, they should contact DHCD to verify their classification. Current grantees should also be sure to include a summary of their classification from their previous application and an update on that classification (if applicable).

6. Is there a list of emerging/established orgs that can be used for potential collaboration?

Applicants determine whether they want to be classified as established or emerging, so there is not a formal list. The list of prior CCG grantees that is posted on DHCD's website does not include their classification.

7. If the application of an emerging organization includes an in-kind contribution by an established organization, then must the established organization submit all of the financial information that the emerging organization would have to file?

An organization who receives in-kind contributions from another organization does not qualify as a partnership or collaboration. Applicants applying for a grant as a partnership or collaboration are formally applying as a collaboration or partnership. A Memorandum of

Understanding or Partnership Agreement between all participants is required for collaborative applications at the time of submission.

8. Can an emerging organization file two different applications for two different projects?

Applicants can submit multiple applications for different projects but need to rank them in priority order. Please indicate the ranking in the Project Description Narrative.

9. Are out-of-state emerging companies allowed to apply?

Out-of-state emerging companies are eligible applicants provided they meet all other terms and conditions described in the guidelines. Applicants must apply with a project located in Baltimore City. Grantees whose primary location is in another state may be required to register their business with the State of Maryland before executing a Funding Agreement.

10. Does the matching need to be included up front in full, or can it be added over the course of the two years?

Matching funds do not to be included up front in full. The template form for matching funds has a column to indicate the status of the funds. For additional information, please refer to pages 5-6 of the Funding Guidelines.

11. How do you determine the grant amount?

Applicants submit their requested grant amount and submit a budget that demonstrates the need for the funds requested. The project narratives allow applicants to tell their project's story and justify the requested amount. Final award amounts are determined by a variety of factors including the review panel recommendations.

12. What criteria makes an organization an emerging organization versus an established organization?

Emerging organizations are generally defined as organizations that work primarily in disinvested communities and that historically have lacked access to capital or are under-funded. Please refer to Page 4 of the Funding Guidelines for additional information. If an applicant has questions or would like clarification on any of these criteria, please submit a question to the DHCD.CCG@baltimorecity.gov email address.

13. Ineligible projects include those that can be funded through the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Does that mean 1) those projects that are currently funded through the AHTF; or 2) those projects that could conceivably be funded through the AHTF?

Page 6 of the Funding Guidelines state that Community Land Trusts and projects that are eligible for funding through the Affordable Housing Trust Fund are not eligible for CCG Funds. This includes projects that have received an award of Trust Funds.

14. What is the definition of "partnership or collaboration"?

The definition of partnerships and collaborations are intentionally vague so that applicants can make their own determination of how they want to create these partnerships or collaborations. The parties should jointly determine their benchmarks for success and evaluation measures as part of their collaboration. Please consult the Threshold and the Required Documents Checklist in the application to verify that all required documents for partnership or collaborative applications are included with the application.

15. If two organizations submit an application together, and one organization submits a separate application, then what is the impact on the decision-making process? Seems like potential conflict/disincentive to partner?

If one of the organizations has submitted two applications, they will need to rank their project's priorities in their Project Description Narrative. Submitting multiple applications will not affect the scoring process. An applicant's decision to partner with another organization should be based on whether or not the collaboration will strengthen the application and how it fulfills the goals of the CCG program.

16. Does the review committee evaluate based on the number of applications in a given neighborhood to balance funding around the city?

The review panel reviews all of the applications and makes recommendations for awards to the Housing Commissioner based on the scoring criteria that can be found in the Funding Guidelines.

17. Is it possible to see applications or projects that won previously?

A list of previous awardees is on the CCG webpage:

<https://dhcd.baltimorecity.gov/nd/community-catalyst-grants>

DHCD is not publishing applications received in past rounds of CCG.

18. Would it be okay to build upon the project funded in year 1?

Yes. If an applicant is a past grant awardee, the applicant can request funds to support the same project. Question B.5 of the application asks the applicant to indicate if their application is for the same project that received CCG Funds.

19. Is anything being done to help expedite the payment of awards for CCG grants to be awarded this round?

We are always working to improve processes that will help to expedite payments.

20. What are the reporting requirements if awarded?

Status reports are required for both Operating and Capital Grants on a quarterly basis. The applicant determines the report's format and the information that will be included based on the information included in the Project Evaluation question that is required for both the Operating and Capital application.

21. Are all of the forms necessary on the website?

The CCG webpage includes the following forms that are required for all applications:

<https://dhcd.baltimorecity.gov/nd/community-catalyst-grants>

Whether or not they are required depends on the application type submitted (Capital or Operating or both) and whether or not the waiver for Capital Grant applications with 3 or fewer properties is necessary. Please review the Funding Guidelines for the checklist of Threshold requirements. Please do not submit your application until you have completed all relevant fields and uploaded all of the documents required for your application.

22. We attempted to apply for the last round of grant funding as an emerging organization and could not get through the application. The amount of paperwork including audited findings made it difficult to complete as an emerging organization. I heard from other emerging

organizations that they felt that the previous operational application was challenging. Is HCD considering offering any work sessions outside of this conference call?

At this time, DHCD is unable to provide additional work sessions outside of the Information Sessions. There are different financial requirements depending on an organization's annual budget. Please refer to page 13 of the Funding Guidelines to determine what is required for your organization. If an applicant has questions or would like clarification on any of these criteria, please submit a question to the DHCD.CCG@baltimorecity.gov email address.

23. Will this recording be available for review?

Yes. Recordings from the information sessions are available for review on the CCG webpage: <https://dhcd.baltimorecity.gov/nd/community-catalyst-grants>

24. Do emerging organizations need to submit audited financials? 990 Tax returns?

There are different financial requirements depending on an organization's annual budget. Please refer to page 13 of the Funding Guidelines to determine what is required for your organization. If an applicant has questions or would like clarification on any of these criteria, please submit a question to the DHCD.CCG@baltimorecity.gov email address.

25. If you operate as a department under the umbrella of a non-profit community organization is that considered a partnership for this funding?

A partnership is considered to be two or more organizations collaborating on a project. Being a program as part of an umbrella organization may not be the same as a partnership. However, when the organization applies, the applicant needs to indicate that they are a non-profit registered in the State of Maryland. If an applicant is a department as part of an umbrella organization, the umbrella organization needs to be registered in the State of Maryland. As a general rule, organizations must be registered and in-good standing in the State of Maryland to receive CCG funds.

26. Are accounting firms permitted to serve as Fiscal Agents?

A Fiscal Agent must be a non-profit with 501(c)(3) tax exempt status that offers fiscal agent or fiscal sponsorship services.

27. One of the goals from your framework is "demonstrated need to increase capacity" if you're a non-profit that works in the city as a whole, how do you show a need to "increase capacity" in the neighborhood your chosen project is in?

If an application is for a project in a specific neighborhood, the applicant should demonstrate how that project will build capacity, even if the organization provides programming city-wide. If funds are requested for a citywide project that is not specific to a neighborhood, the applicant should demonstrate how the goals of that program support the CCG's objectives.

28. Are you only looking for new projects – things that have not been started? The Guidelines mention projects that are not currently funded. Does this mean that the only eligible projects are those that have no funding from any other sources?

Funds can be used to support new projects as well to help existing projects get underway or reach completion if the project has a funding gap that has prevented its completion.

29. Do emerging groups have to bring some money to the project to match this grant?

There is a match requirement for both the Operating and Capital Grants. In-kind services can be included as part of the match. For both grants, not all funds need to be in hand at the time of application. Please review the Matching Funds forms that are included as part of the Operating grant and the Capital Budget templates.

30. If you intend to submit an application for Capital and Operating, is the page requirement for the Project Narrative lengthened if you are applying for both?

There are two different sections for Project Narratives (one for Capital and one for Operating) in the online application. If an applicant is applying for both, different narratives can be submitted for each section, or the applicant can submit the same narrative for both (if applicable). The page requirement does not change if an applicant is applying for both a Capital and Operating grant. If an applicant is concerned that the page length limits will prevent them from fully describing their proposed project, please feel free to write and submit two different narratives for the two projects.

31. If we are submitting for two totally different projects (Operating and Capital), we would submit two totally separate applications, right?

No, the online application allows applicants to submit one application for two different projects (Operating and Capital) at the same time. Question B.1. in the online application allows applicants to indicate if they are submitting an application for both Operating and Capital and if the two applications are for the same or different projects. If an applicant has a personal preference to submit separate applications for each project, they may.

32. If we are submitting for more than one project, we are supposed to rank our priority in the Project Description. Is there a priority or plan by DHCD to only grant one award per organization or one type of award per organization?

Applicants are asked to identify their priority if they submit multiple applications because DHCD suspects that there will be more requests for funds than we will be able to grant. Having the ranking of priority from applicants will help the review committee make decisions about where funding will be most effective and most beneficial to the applicant organization.

33. How do you evaluate projects that include parts of the city that are in Impact Areas and parts that are not?

Bonus points are automatically awarded to projects that are located in Impact Investment Areas whether it is the entire or a partial project.

34. Other than the check mark that confirms what is submitted, is there a way for applicants to view the content that is uploaded?

Applicants can review their uploaded documents at any time to make sure the correct file was uploaded. DHCD encourages applicants to double-check all documents before submitting the application.

35. Could you further define the difference between Emerging and Established organizations?

Emerging organizations may have been recently formed or may be organizations that have a long history of working in a community. Emerging organizations are generally located in neighborhoods that have been excluded from access to funds and investment. Established organizations have the capacity to raise money without large funding gaps. Established

organizations also center their work in neighborhoods which have historically received investment and may have boards of directors that with access to resources and influence. Please refer to page 4 in the Funding Guidelines for more information.

36. If the lead applicant is an emerging organization, can they get bonus points for partnering with an established organization?

Bonus points are only provided if the Established organization is the lead applicant partnering with an Emerging organization.

37. If your project focuses on supporting/growing local businesses, would "business engagement" satisfy the "community engagement" requirement? Or does a project that aims to support local businesses not qualify?

Local businesses are part of the community, and a project that supports local business is not necessarily ineligible. Please review the eligible and ineligible use of funds for both Operating and Capital Grants to make sure the proposed project meets the criteria for eligible uses of funds.

38. Can two established organizations apply together?

Partnerships can occur between two or more organizations, as long as the partnership helps to achieve the goals of the project.

39. Does it help or hinder if one group in a partnership is in an investment impact area and one is not?

DHCD is unable to answer questions regarding the feasibility of specific projects.

40. What was the average grant and how many were funded last year?

In the last round of Operating Grants – 35 organizations were awarded grants with an average grant amount of \$50,000. In the last round of Capital Grants – 25 organizations were awarded grants with an average grant amount of around \$136,000. However, the prior CCG application included different amounts for maximum grant awards.

41. If we have a prior Catalyst grant and have not spent all the money, can we apply for another Catalyst grant for the same project?

Currently funded grantees are eligible to apply for this grant round.

42. I'm in NDCC cooperative academy and were building a new coop in the program would we qualify and would NDCC qualify as our established partner

DHCD is unable to answer questions regarding the feasibility of specific projects. Please review the Funding Guidelines and submit any further clarifying questions to DHCD.CCG@baltimorecity.gov

43. If you apply for operating and capital funds, are your applications scored and funded or declined separately? As in, if one project (capital vs. operating) is stronger than the other, would that one get funded and one get rejected? Or would the entire application get rejected?

Operating and Capital applications are scored and evaluated separately. The entire application will not be rejected based on either the Operating or Capital applications.

44. Is it possible to print off the application before you begin answering the questions?

Yes, after an applicant has begun an application, on the left-hand side of the screen above the list of sections, there is an option to print the application.

45. Can you talk a little about the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion project narrative that is new this round?

The questions for the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion project narrative are intentionally broad and open-ended. The questions to address in the project narrative (and for all of the project narratives) can be seen in the application portal. DHCD wants to encourage applicants to tell their own stories as they relate to diversity, equity, and/or inclusion – recognizing that these are three different things and leaving it up to applicants to describe how the considerations are made within their organizational structures and processes.

46. I am an emerging company and you stated I can partner with another entity, can I partner with another new entity

Partnerships can occur between any type of organizations as long as the partnership helps to achieve the goals of the project. In all cases, organizations must demonstrate the ability to administer a grant. Two organizations can also engage in a fiscal sponsor relationship for an application.

47. You also stated we have to show that we have funds from other sources. Dec 18th will be here soon if I can't show those resources will that disqualify me?

Applications are not disqualified if some of the sources of funds are not committed at the time of submission. The Capital budget template and Evidence of Matching Funds (for Operating applications) documents are set up so applicants can indicate if funds are committed, pending, or TBD/potential. These responses help the review committee understand the organization's approach to acquiring and using funds from other sources.

48. How to get to the application website can you attach link?

The application is the second link on the CCG webpage:

<https://dhcd.baltimorecity.gov/nd/community-catalyst-grants>

Here is a direct link:

<https://portal.neighborlysoftware.com/baltimoremd/Participant>

Questions Specific to Operating Grants

49. Are the grant amounts \$75,000 per year for 2 years for an emerging agency for operating funds? Or is the \$75,000 split over 2 years?

The preset award amounts that can be requested for an Operating Grant are the TOTAL award amounts, not per year. CCG Operating awards must be spent within 24 months of executing a Funding Agreement with the City, but an exact schedule will be determined after an applicant is awarded a grant.

50. In theory, could an organization receive multiple awards within the Operation award category?

CCG grants are very competitive so it is unlikely that one applicant would receive multiple Operating Grant awards.

51. Would property inspection (arch/engineering inspections) and staff time associated with scoping properties be considered as an operating planning cost?

If these costs are part of a Capital Grant project, they could also be considered an eligible use of Operating Grant funds. Please refer to pages 9 and 10 of the Funding Guidelines to determine if proposed costs are a part of eligible uses of funds for an application.

52. The operating grant states it can be used for consultants for capacity building things such as fundraising. Can it be used to hire new development staff instead of consultants?

Hiring development staff or consultants to help build capacity for an applicant's organization is an eligible use of Operating Grant funds.

53. The budget template include 3 years but the grant is for 2 years correct? Does that mean we are requesting 2 years' worth of operating funds?

The original Operating budget template incorrectly included 3 years. The corrected template has been uploaded on the CCG webpage and the online application and includes a two-year limit. We apologize for the oversight.

Applicants are applying for a total grant fund amount that must be spent within 24 months of executing a funding agreement with the city. An applicant should budget the funds in the way that makes the most sense for the project.

54. If an Emerging Organization and an Established Organization partner for this application, what is the total amount that can be requested? Is it one application with \$100,000 for operating or do both organizations submit for a different amount?

The grant fund request is for a total grant award amount for a project including partnerships.

Questions Specific to Capital Grants

55. What is receivership? Is it essentially an auction?

Acquisition of properties through the receivership process is an ineligible use of Capital Grant funds. Receivership is a legal process provided by Code Enforcement in which property changes hands but in which the city does not take title. The process typically takes 12-18 months, but due to the pandemic, the process is delayed.

56. What is meant by Relocation?

For the purposes of the CCG grant, relocation refers to any costs associated with relocating existing residential or commercial tenants for any reason as part of a capital project. Relocation expenses are ineligible use of funds.

57. Can the three properties be in different locations?

The properties for the project do not need to be continuous addresses; however, they must be in the same general vicinity and must be part of the same project with the same goals.

58. How can a project be predetermined? Are we selecting from the Vacant to Values List? What if your property gets sold to someone else before an applicant can complete the deal/purchase?

Applications will be evaluated on how close they are to proceeding, or “shovel ready.”. Predevelopment costs are an eligible use of Capital Grant funds. If a project is not “shovel ready,” applicants may submit an Operating Grant application and request funds for a consultant to assist with planning and feasibility.

59. Do you have to have site control when you submit the application? Can an organization submit an application if properties are still under contract?

Site control is required at the time of submission and can be demonstrated by any of the following documents: a title, a contract of sale, or a land disposition agreement approved with the city. If an applicant has a property that falls into a different category, please submit a separate question through DHCD.CCG@baltimorecity.gov before November 20, 2020.

60. You can't use the funds to acquire city-owned property but you can use the funds to work on properties that you have acquired from the city, correct?

Correct. As long as the applicant owns the property (has title) at the time of submission funds can be requested and used for stabilization.

61. Are commitment letters from contractors required?

Commitment letters from contractors are not required as part of the Capital Grant application.

62. Can the Capital grant be used for to pay for a project manager?

Project managers are an eligible use of Capital funds and can be a staff member or consultant who is required to complete a capital project.

63. Can capital funds be used for small business micro grants?

At this time, business loans and small business microgrants are not considered an eligible use of CCG funds.

64. If organization is recognized by MD DHCD as foreign entity to undertake development activity in Baltimore City, does that qualify for Baltimore City DHCD?

Out of state or foreign entities Baltimore City are eligible to apply for CCG Funds as long as they meet the other applicant criteria outlined in the Funding Guidelines.

65. Can you share some guidance for right-sizing the Capital Grant ask? Knowing that the maximum that could be requested is a third of all funds available. Would asking something closer to that maximum render an application less competitive?

Applicants should request grant funds that are necessary to support their project.

66. In this round, do you anticipate providing partial awards to folks? For example, if someone applies for \$1 million in a Capital grant application, do you anticipate providing a portion of that? A situation like that might cause project delays as we need to seek different financing.

DHCD reserves the right to award funds that are less than what was requested. In the event that the final award is less than the requested amount, DHCD will assist grantees in adjusting the budget and schedule. DHCD understands that the schedules may need to be adjusted to allow grantees time to secure additional funding.

67. Are predevelopment funds an eligible use for new construction?

Predevelopment funds are an eligible use of Capital grant funds.

68. You stated only 55% of the grant will be awarded what happens to the other part of the award?

At least 55% of total available Capital Grant funds will be awarded to Emerging organizations. No more than 45% of total available Capital Grant funds will be awarded to Established organizations. This allocation of funds supports the CCG program's goal to target funds to historically disinvested communities and help Emerging organizations leverage additional funds.

69. Is a feasibility analysis an eligible use of funds (under predevelopment costs)?

Predevelopment costs, including a feasibility analysis, are an eligible use of Capital grant funds.

70. On a homeownership project the 5% developer fee - is that for the total project or only what CCG can fund?

The maximum developer fee applies to a project's total development costs.

71. Is demolition included as part of predevelopment costs?

Demolition is an eligible use of Capital grant funds.

72. Pertaining to Capital Funds, if awarded, are grant funds disbursed as reimbursable funds, for expenses already incurred?

Whether or not Capital grant funds can be provided as reimbursements will be based on the project and the uses of funds.