

COMMUNITY CATALYST GRANTS PROGRAM

Operating Funding

ROUND 4 – NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY & APPLICATION INFORMATION



BALTIMORE CITY
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING &
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Release Date: February 26, 2024

Application Deadline: April 12, 2024, at 5 PM ET

Applications must be submitted through DHCD's online applicant portal.

To access to the applicant portal, register your account, sign in, and submit your application, click here: <https://portal.neighborlysoftware.com/baltimoremd/Participant>

PLEASE READ THESE GUIDELINES CAREFULLY BEFORE COMPLETING YOUR APPLICATION.



Brandon Scott, Mayor • Alice Kennedy, Housing Commissioner

COMMUNITY CATALYST GRANTS PROGRAM OVERVIEW

In 2018, DHCD established the Community Catalyst Grants program (CCG) to provide operating and capital support to assist organizations in historically disinvested communities. These communities are predominantly low-income, minority, have suffered disproportionately from low housing values, high rates of vacancy and abandonment, poverty, crime, and public health problems, and may have received less public and private investment than other communities.

Community Catalyst Grants are intended to:

- **Value neighborhoods.** Support community-based efforts that support residents as they take the lead in their communities' redevelopment plans and projects.
- **Promote equity and community development in long-disinvested neighborhoods.** Funding emerging and established organizations in historically disinvested neighborhoods provides critical financial support to community-based initiatives that need it most.
- **Be flexible.** Applicants will identify their priorities for funds, whether it is increasing staff, retaining consultants, updating equipment, creating cooperative enterprises, or helping to finance a project that achieves a community identified need.

Through this Notice of Funding Availability (the "NOFA"), the Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development ("DHCD") is making up to Five Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$500,000.00) in Operating funding available in the format of ten (10) Fifty Thousand Dollar (\$50,000.00) Operating Awards for projects that are critical to locally-driven community revitalization projects and support DHCD's "Framework for Community Development" which can be found at [Community Development Framework](#).

To be considered for an award of funds, applicants will be required to meet the Threshold Requirements as further specified in this NOFA. Scoring will be based on **Project Readiness, Project Impact, Community Engagement,** and **Achieving Equity.** Applicants may choose to qualify for **Bonus Points.**

Further information and guidance regarding eligible applicants, application requirements and scoring are included in these guidelines. Prospective applicants are encouraged to read this document thoroughly, attend an information session, and to submit questions.

IMPORTANT DATES

Grant Application Available	February 26, 2024
Information Sessions (offered virtually- link can be found on website)	March 5, 2024, at 1:00 PM ET March 6, 2024, at 5:30 PM ET
Deadline for Submission of Written Questions to DHCD Note: No questions will be accepted or answered after the deadline	March 15, 2024
Responses to Written Questions Posted on DHCD'S Website	March 22, 2024
SUBMISSION DEADLINE	April 12, 2024, at 5PM ET
Anticipated Notification of Awards	June/July 2024

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include community development corporations, umbrella organizations, neighborhood revitalization organizations, faith-based organizations, merchant associations and other organizations that have a valid 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(6) status or that have received a temporary determination from the IRS. Organizations that do not have a 501(c)(3) status can apply through an eligible applicant or a fiscal agent. Eligible applicants must provide proof of their business entity's status of good standing with the Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation (SDAT) – proof can be provided as a timestamped screenshot of SDAT's Business Entity entry for the applicant or a scanned copy of the Certificate of Status. DHCD reserves the right to require organizations with annual operating budgets of \$100,000 or less, or who have been operating for 12 or fewer months to identify a fiscal agent or to partner with an eligible applicant. Applicants using a fiscal agent must include information describing their policies, procedures, and fee structure. Both the applicant and the fiscal agent must sign and return the Certification and Authorization to Submit form. In the event funds are awarded, DHCD will require an executed Memorandum of Understanding between the fiscal agent and applicant. For-profit developers may apply for a grant provided they are a co-applicant with an eligible applicant and the eligible applicant is playing a significant role in the project including equity participation and/or other comparable financial benefits.

Emerging and Established Organization Definitions

Due to limited funding, only applicants who qualify as an “Emerging Organization” are eligible for funding. Applicants must submit a narrative justification explaining how they qualify as “Emerging.” DHCD reserves the right to modify an applicant’s self-identified classification during Threshold Review. For the purposes of Community Catalyst Grants, “Emerging” or “Established” organizations are defined by following criteria:

- **EMERGING ORGANIZATIONS:** Organizations headquartered in, or whose work is centered in, communities that have historically been under-funded, may not have established revenue sources and may lack access to capital are, for the purposes of the Community Catalyst Grants, considered to be “Emerging.” This can include nonprofit groups that have a long-term presence in neighborhoods, groups that are active but may not have a 501(c)(3) status, groups that are interested in starting a new initiative, or groups collaborating to achieve larger goals. In some instances, Emerging organizations are raising funding, but, due to the challenging nature of their projects, find themselves with funding gaps. Only applicants who are determined to be “Emerging” are eligible for funding in this NOFA.
- **ESTABLISHED ORGANIZATIONS:** Organizations that work in neighborhoods and communities where ongoing investment has resulted in demonstrated market changes and improvements, have consistent funding sources, professionalized boards, and access to resources are, for the purposes of the Community Catalyst Grants, considered to be “Established.” Applicants who are determined to be “Established” are not eligible for funding in this NOFA.

Applicants may also choose to use existing information to justify their Emerging status:

- Neighborhood Housing Market data provided in the Housing Market Typology or other sources.
- Demographic information as found in the American Community Survey, Baltimore. Neighborhoods Indicators Alliance *Vital Signs*, or other sources.
- Financing including funding streams and access to capital and investment.
- Deferred/underfunded projects.
- Market studies or other information regarding the built environment.
- Board and workforce structure and composition.

No applicant or member of their team may have (within the last five (5) years) any of the following:

- Received a limited denial of participation of from the U.S. Department of Housing and Community Development.

- Unpaid fees, loan arrearages or other obligations due to DHCD on other projects.
- Been listed on the state or federal list of suspended or debarred contractors.
- Declared bankruptcy.
- Defaulted on other government or private sector loans.
- Received a Baltimore City Housing or Property Maintenance Code Violation (Part VII of the Building, Fire, & Related Codes of Baltimore City 2015 Edition) – *This restriction shall not apply to existing Vacant Building Notices transferred as a result of a sale or transfer of property.
- Failure to have registered current rental properties in accordance with Baltimore City Code, Article 13, Subtitle 4-2.
- Found to have acted in violation of the Fair Housing Act, the Civil Rights Act, or any other law prohibiting discrimination, or failed to comply with the terms of any agreement or court order related to any settlement, conciliation, or legal action.

Applicants with two (2) active existing OPERATING Community Catalyst Grant awards are not eligible to apply for Operating Funding in Round 4.

OPERATING COMMUNITY CATALYST GRANTS DESCRIPTION

DHCD will be making up to Five Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$500,000.00) available in Operating Grants for organizational operating costs in the form of **ten (10) Fifty Thousand Dollar (\$50,000.00) grant awards**. All funds from this NOFA will be awarded to Emerging organizations. Applicants may request funds for projects that previously received an award of CCG Funds.

CCG Operating Grants are intended to:

- Support efforts to stabilize and improve housing market conditions, through a combination of organizational growth, technical and financial assistance, partnerships, and collaboration.
- Create and/or formalize organizations.
- Expand programs to increase capacity resulting in visible and quantifiable impacts through increased staff, technical, and financial assistance.
- Community ownership of a project.
- Strengthen the community's understanding of and ability to participate in development initiatives.
- Undertake a deferred project.
- Increase economic opportunities and prosperity for all stakeholders.
- Foster partnerships and collaboration.

Operating Grant Award Amounts and Terms

Applicants may request a grant amount of \$50,000. All applicants who are awarded funds will be required to execute a Grant Agreement with the Department of Housing & Community Development that will be subject to approval by the City's Board of Estimates and to provide quarterly reports and other documentation regarding their project. Depending upon the amount of the grant award, applicants may also be required to meet the following City requirements:

- Minority and Women's Business Participation
- Local Hire
- Employ Baltimore

Upon notification of the award, all required documents must be submitted within 90 days or award may be eligible for termination. **All CCG Operating Grant funds must be spent within 12-months of executing a Funding Agreement with the Board of Estimates.**

Eligible Uses of CCG Operating Grant Funds

Operating Grants can be used to fund a variety of uses:

- Community Organizing.
- Consultants to assist with such activities as operations, accounting, fundraising, program development, and information technology.
- Professional Services.
- Staff to help start a new program or expand an existing program.
- Strategic planning.
- Equipment.

Ineligible Uses of CCG Operating Grant Funds

- Currently funded or duplication of existing programs including but not limited to: Baltimore Children and Youth Fund, Creative Baltimore Fund, Community Arts Grants, Lots Alive, Neighborhood Event Grants, Baltimore Main Streets programs, Community Land Trusts or other programs and/or projects eligible for funding through the [Affordable Housing Trust Fund](#), South Baltimore Gateway Partnership Community Grants, SB7 Community Enhancement Grants, or other sources as determined by DHCD.
- Charter schools.
- Endowments.
- Fundraising campaigns.
- Programs associated with a specific religious or other affiliation or that support political actions, causes, advocacy, or parties.

APPLICATION INFORMATION

Submission Information

Applications must be submitted through DHCD's online applicant portal.

To access to the applicant portal, register your account, sign in, and submit your application, click here:

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

If you experience technical difficulties with the portal, please email dhcd.ccg@baltimorecity.gov for assistance.

A completed application, including all requested documents, must be submitted no later than **April 12, 2024 at 5 PM Eastern Standard Time** in order to be considered.

LATE SUBMISSIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

Threshold Review

After application submissions close, all completed applications will go through Threshold Review to determine which applications are eligible to be scored by a Panel. Threshold review includes ensuring organizational, financial, and compliance-related documentation has been provided and is used to determine whether an application is eligible for review. **Applicants must include all items on the threshold checklist** (see below), or the application will be determined to be ineligible for review.

Threshold Checklist for Applications:

Please make sure your Neighborly application file includes all the following. **FAILURE TO INCLUDE THIS INFORMATION MAY RESULT IN YOUR APPLICATION BEING INCOMPLETE AND DISQUALIFIED FOR CONSIDERATION.** All applicants must complete the electronic application and submit all applicable file attachments.

- **Application Narratives**
 - Justification of organization's classification as EMERGING.
 - Project Readiness (including CCG Operating Budget Template, Scope and Schedule).
 - Project Impact.
 - Community Engagement.
 - Achieving Equity.
 - Consideration of Bonus Points (optional).

- **Financial Information** (must be included for both applicant and Fiscal Agent, if applicable). Please provide documents no older than 2021)
 - Copy of the most recent 990 Tax Return.
 - Financial Statements based on Organization's Annual Budget:
 - Applicants with Annual budget of \$500,000 or more: Most recent Audited Financial Statement.

- Applicants with Annual Budget of more than \$200,000, but less than \$500,000: Most recent Financial Statement as prepared by a certified accounting firm.
- Applicants with Annual Budgets that are less than \$200,000: Most recent annual budget. In the event funds are awarded, the applicant will be required to provide a Reviewed financial statement.
- **Organizational Information** – must be included for *Applicant, Fiscal Agent, and/or Partner Organization(s)*, if applicable.
 - Certification and Authorization to Submit.
 - Letter of Intent.
 - Corporate Resolution/Board of Directors approval.
 - Articles of Incorporation, By-Laws.
 - Current IRS Determination Letter indicating 501© (3) or 501(c)(6) status.
 - Evidence of Good Standing with the State of Maryland.
 - List of Board of Directors, titles, and affiliations.
 - Organizational chart indicating roles and responsibilities.
 - Owned Property Disclosure.
 - Certification of Compliance.
 - If applicable*, copy of fiscal agents’ policies and procedures (including requirement to provide quarterly expenditure reports to grantees) and Letter of Intent signed by all parties.

The Community Catalyst Grants team will review each application meeting threshold requirements and will assign a score for **Project Readiness** and **Bonus Points** eligibility. All other remaining scoring categories (**Project Impact, Community Engagement, Achieving Equity**) will be scored by a Review Panel.

Collaborative or Joint Applications

One or more entities may partner and submit a joint application for a project and/or up to three unrelated projects. In the event funds are awarded, DHCD will require a Memorandum of Understanding or Partnership Agreement between all participants prior to executing a Funding Agreement.

Requests for Multiple Projects

Applicants can request funds for multiple projects but will be asked to rank projects in priority order and will also need to demonstrate the organizational capacity to implement projects. Applicants that request funds for multiple projects in the same community will be required to demonstrate how these projects support a community plan or other strategic revitalization initiatives. Applicants submitting a collaborative request must designate one eligible organization as the lead applicant.

REVIEW PROCESS

DHCD and other City Agency staff will review applications, meet with applicants, and conduct site visits as necessary. Anticipating that there will be more requests than available funds, applicants may be asked to re-submit budgets, plans, drawings, financial information, or other information as part of the review process. **All applications that meet Threshold Review Criteria will receive a Project Readiness score and Bonus Points assessment from the CCG Program staff and will be advanced to a Review Panel for scoring of Project Impact, Community Engagement and Achieving Equity narratives.** The Review Panel will provide their recommendations to the Housing Commissioner who will review the applications for alignment with agency priorities, then make the final determination of awards. All applicants will be notified in writing and awards will be posted on DHCD’s website.

Application Scoring

An applicant will earn a score out of **200 Maximum Points**, before possible bonus points.

Scoring Criteria	Points Available
Project Readiness	50
Project Impact	50
Community Engagement	50
Achieving Equity	50

200 Points

Project Readiness (50 Maximum Points)

DHCD is committed to ensuring that Community Catalyst projects are feasible and able to be completed within the 12-month grant term.

This section enables DHCD to determine whether projects meeting threshold are ready to proceed and that the applicant has the experience, staff, and/or consultants in place to ensure a successful outcome. The requested information **must demonstrate that projects are ready to proceed and can be completed within a 12-month time frame** of executing a Funding Agreement with DHCD.

Applicants are asked to demonstrate that their projects are financially feasible, that the applicant has the capability of leveraging additional public and or private funds and that they have the capability to manage a team with sufficient experience to undertake and complete the proposed project. As part of demonstrating a project’s feasibility, applicants are required to submit a budget utilizing the **CCG Operating Budget Template** and a **Scope and Schedule** with their submissions. Budgets submitted utilizing different formats will not be accepted.

PROJECT READINESS	Points
<p>Applicant Capacity. The project team experience will be reviewed and scored in the application review. The applicant’s classification as an “Emerging” organization will be assessed. Please provide resumes for the project leaders and principal contributors that <u>include background information when applicable for similar projects completed.</u></p>	25 Points
<p>Financial Feasibility. The financial statements, budget, scope, schedule, and other financial background documentation will be evaluated and scored. The score for this section will be based on the projected ability to complete the proposed project effectively within the proposed schedule.</p>	25 Points

Project Impact (50 Maximum Points)

DHCD is committed to ensuring that Community Catalyst projects reflect the priorities of the City's Framework for Community Development and guiding principles.

PROJECT IMPACT	Points
<p>Project Vision and Summary. Please provide a detailed description of the proposed project including the vision, goals, and intended positive impacts on the City and its residents.</p>	25 Points
<p>City's Framework for Community Development. Please provide a detailed explanation of how your proposed project aligns with the DHCD Framework for Community Development in supporting City priorities.</p>	25 Points

Community Engagement and Participation (50 Maximum Points)

DHCD is committed to ensuring that Community Catalyst projects are consistent with and can leverage revitalization plans for the community where the project will be built and provide multiple opportunities for a range of stakeholders to provide input, regardless of their support.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION	Points
<p>Neighborhood participation in project ownership and control. Points will be awarded when neighborhood residents have a role in the ownership and/or control of: (a) the development project, (b) a development entity that must approve major project decisions and may acquire the property, and (c) an entity that provides ongoing stewardship of the development.</p>	25 Points
<p>Community Engagement Plan. Points will be awarded to projects that provide multiple opportunities for a range of stakeholders to provide meaningful input into the project.</p>	25 Points

Achieving Equity (50 Maximum Points)

DHCD is committed to using Community Catalyst funds to reduce the financial, social and economic disparities that have affected many of the City’s neighborhoods and residents over the past several decades.

ACHIEVING EQUITY	Points
<p>Equity in Geographic Areas. Recognizing the importance of equity to development in Baltimore City, points will be awarded to projects that will serve an area facing financial, social and/or economic disparities. Applicants should describe the demographics of the area(s) to be served and describe how their project will address equity gaps.</p>	25 Points
<p>Supports City Equity Priorities. Points will be awarded to projects that reflect City Priorities, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equitable methodology and processes. • Build/stabilize neighborhood market conditions. • Mixed-Income Housing including homeownership. • Blight elimination and asset development. • Crime reduction. • Strengthening neighborhood retail and gateway corridors. • City-sponsored planning initiatives, including but not limited to INSPIRE, Green Network Plan, Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, COVID-19 support, DHCD, or BDC Revitalization area. 	25 Points

Bonus Points

Applicants may choose to apply for up to 30 bonus points from any of the following categories and may be awarded full or partial points in any one category. Applicants should indicate which Bonus Points they wish to be considered for and provide a brief narrative explanation as to how their project qualifies.

- **Impact Investment Area Bonus** (*Up to 10 points*). Ten points will be awarded to projects located in a Baltimore City identified Impact Investment Area. Applicants should include a screenshot from [CodeMap](#) for all impacted addresses for the project showing that they are located in the Impact Investment Areas identified in [The Framework for Community Development](#)
- **Experienced Applicant Partner Bonus** (*Up to 5 points*). Five points will be awarded to projects where an experienced applicant partners with an emerging/new applicant to increase capacity. Applicants should describe how the partnership was established and how the partners will serve to support each other throughout the grant process.
- **Supports & Grows Local Businesses or Community Spaces** (*Up to 5 points*). Applicants are required to demonstrate how their project will support and sustain local businesses and/or community spaces. Responses should specify local vendors who will be used, how efforts will be tracked and monitored and any documentation evidencing agreements to utilize local establishments.
- **Takes Advantage of Apprenticeships and Training Programs** (*Up to 5 points*). Applicants are required to provide a plan for utilizing training and apprenticeship programs and to include a letter of intent from the provider. As a condition for receiving funds, applicants will be required to provide an executed Memorandum of Understandings or comparable agreement with the provider.
- **Collaboration Across Multiple Neighborhoods** (*Up to 5 points*). Applicants are required to provide documentation that their project impacts multiple neighborhoods, how this helps to achieve economies of scale, and how multiple stakeholders are working collaboratively to achieve outcomes.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Issue Date

The issue date of this Grant Application is **February 26, 2024**.

Submission Deadline and Requirements

The deadline for submitting applications and all application materials is **April 12, 2024, at 5 PM ET**

Obtaining the Application and Guidelines

The Community Catalyst Grants Application and Guidelines will be made available electronically on DHCD's website at: <https://dhcd.baltimorecity.gov/nd/community-catalyst-grants>.

Information Session

DHCD will host two online information sessions on **March 5 at 1:00 PM ET** and **March 6 at 5:30 PM ET**. These online information sessions do not require prior registration and are open to the public. More information about the sessions (including the link to join and a phone number to teleconference in) can be found at <https://dhcd.baltimorecity.gov/nd/community-catalyst-grants>.

If special accommodations are required to attend the session, please email dhcd.ccg@baltimorecity.gov at least three business days in advance.

Questions and Inquiries

Interested applicants can submit questions and inquiries in writing only to dhcd.ccg@baltimorecity.gov no later than **March 15, 2024**. DHCD will make best efforts to post responses on its website no later than **March 22, 2024**. DHCD reserves the right to decline questions that are project-specific.

Revisions and Addenda

Should it become necessary to revise any part of this Application and or Guidelines or provide additional information necessary to adequately interpret the provisions and requirements, an addendum shall be posted on DHCD's website. Revisions and Addenda will not be provided on an individual basis, therefore all interested applicants are encouraged to review the Community Catalyst Grant website periodically at:

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

Award Amounts

Final awards decisions are made by the Housing Commissioner. DHCD reserves the right to make an award of funds in an amount other than what is requested in the Grant Application. DHCD reserves the right to determine what funding source is used for the award. All awards are subject to final underwriting by DHCD and approval by the City's Board of Estimates.

Incurring Expenses

Neither the City of Baltimore nor DHCD will be responsible for and will not pay for any cost incurred by any applicant in preparing and submitting an application or requested supplemental information in response to this application.

Compliance with Law

By submitting an application, organizations awarded funds agree that they will comply with all Federal, State and City laws, rules, and regulations and ordinances applicable to its activities and obligations under this program.

Public Information Act Notice

DHCD commits to handling all information regarding financial assets in strictest confidence. Applicants should give specific attention to identifying any portions of their application that they deem to be confidential, proprietary or trade secrets and provide justification why such material should not be disclosed by DHCD under the Maryland Public Information Act SS 1-601 et seq. of the State Government Article, Annotated Code of Maryland upon request by the public.