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**Public Service Grant 2023**

**Q&A Session Summary**

These questions were compiled from two Q&A sessions held on March 22 and 29. Some questions have been edited and combined for clarity. Please be sure to refer to the 2023 Public Service Grant [application page](https://engage.pittsburghpa.gov/2023-public-service-grants) and [subrecipient resources page](https://pittsburghpa.gov/omb/resources-for-subrecipients) for additional information. Email community.development@pittsburghpa.gov for further assistance.

**Organization Edibility**

**Q:** Can a church apply for this funding? Do all organizations have to have a 501(c)(3) nonprofit designation?

**A:** To receive a Public Service Grant, your organization must have a 501(c)(3) status; churches and religious organizations are eligible to apply for this nonprofit status.

**Q:** Can Public Service Grants pay for scholarships to educational programming?
**A:** Yes, these funds can pay for scholarships for income eligible youth or individuals.

**Q:** If my organization does not have a 501c3 designation, can we partner with an organization that has a 501c3 status to apply for funding?

**A:** Our office has been encouraging organizations to obtain their own 501c3 status, but we are allowing fiscal sponsorships or fiscal conduit relationships. Please be sure to include information on the other organization the project description question and include their 501c3 letter as an attachment to your application.

**Q:** If my organization receives another grant funded by CDBG funds, will we be eligible to apply for the Public Service Grant?

**A:** Yes, organizations are able to apply for multiple CDBG funded programs. Anytime an organization receives multiple federally funded grants they must ensure there is not a duplication of benefits, which means the organization is using two different sources of funding for the exact same expense.

**Project Eligibility**

**Q:** Our food pantry serves people who are income eligible and some who are not--can we apply for this funding even if 10% of the people we serve make more than the income limits?

**A:** Yes, Public Service Grants can fund projects as long as at least 51% of the people served are income eligible, but we can only pay for expenses related to the income eligible clients. If your project is not able to separate expenses that apply to income eligible clients, then we can pro-rate your total expenses to only cover the percentage who are income eligible. For example if a food pantry spent $5,000 on food for its clients and 80% were income eligible, the City would only cover up to $4,000 of its food expenses.

**Q:** What is the documentation requirement for income verification?

**A:** There can be a few different options for income verification. Your organization can review income documents such as paystubs, child support payments, and welfare assistance payments to compare with the [current income guidelines](https://apps.pittsburghpa.gov/redtail/images/20839_Beneficiary_Form_09.16.22_%281%29.pdf). Your organization can also ask clients for proof that they receive benefits through another program that requires income verification such as TANF or SNAP. For a project serving students, you can check with Pittsburgh Public Schools if the student is eligible for the free school lunch program.

**Q:** If my project exclusively serves people experiencing homelessness, a presumed benefit category, are we then exempt from income verification?

**A:** Yes, for these populations, we assume they meet income guidelines. Awarded organization would just need to report on the number of people in that population category. Here is a list of the different populations that are presumed benefit: abused children, victims of domestic abuse, severely disabled adults, people experiencing homelessness, illiterate adults, people living with AIDS, migrant farm workers and seniors.

**Q:** My organization is a community group in Council District 7, is my organization limited to only serve people living within my council district or can we serve anyone with the Public Service Grant?

**A:** Funds from this grant must be used for low- and moderate-income City of Pittsburgh residents, but there are no restrictions based on City Council District.

**Q:** Are the funds allowed to support programs overseas?

**A:** This is a City of Pittsburgh grant, meant for City of Pittsburgh residents. This funding should only go toward clients that live in the City of Pittsburgh.

**Q:** Are there any restrictions on what funds can be spent on?

**A:** Yes, this grant cannot pay for stipends, honorariums, one-off events, merchandise with logos or swag. Food is generally not allowed, but there is an exemption for food banks or program where mission is food insecurity. For more information on eligible expenses, watch the subrecipient training on our [resources page](https://pittsburghpa.gov/omb/resources-for-subrecipients).

**Q:** My organization's programs use volunteers or contracted persons; a stipend or honorarium may be given. The organization does not have salaried employees; the Executive Director is under contract. So would stipends or honorariums be acceptable for such an organization?

**A:** If your organization does not have paid employees, but there is someone that provides a specialized service, you can create a contractual agreement with that person so they can invoice your organization for their time. In this case, your organization’s budget would pay this service through a “professional services” or “contracted employee” budget line.

**Q:** Is the restriction on paying food expenses new? The City is eliminating an opportunity for providing food in an after school program.

**A:** This is not a new restriction, the City is following restrictions from HUD. We can fund food banks that are focused on food insecurity. An applicant running an afterschool program that serves food to youth is not restricted from applying for a Public Service Grant. In this case, City cannot pay for food expenses, but we can pay for other expenses such as staff salaries, program supplies and rent.

**Q:** Is there a focus on what kind of project will be awarded a Public Service Grant?

**A:** There is a list of common project types in the application, but no specific focus this year. Next year the 2024 Public Service Grant will focus on: youth programs, senior programs and food insecurity programs.

**Application Submission**

**Q:** The application requires a board resolution approving this grant submission, but my organization’s board meeting does not happen until after the application is due, will I be able to submit an application?

**A:** We prefer the resolution or meeting minutes, but if that is not possible before the application due date please provide a letter from board chair or board president (or board officer) that explains that the board meeting is happening after the deadline date, and that they approve the grant request on behalf of the organization.

**Q:** Do the board meeting minutes need to be signed?

**A:** No, just be sure the board meeting minutes are on your organization’s letterhead.

**Q:** Does the board meeting need to be in-person? Is a Zoom meeting sufficient?

**A:** Yes, board minutes from a virtual meeting is fine.

**Q:** When my organization submits it’s IRS 990 form, do I need to include the audit or financials or is just the form sufficient?

**A:** Your organization can just attach the 990 form and does not need to attach the full audit.

**Q:** Are there limits to our grant request?

**A:** There is a $10,000 minimum request for this grant.

**Q:** What happens if the Public Service funding runs out and some applicants are not awarded funds?

**A:** Not every applicant will receive funding. This year there is $100,000 in the Public Service Grant program, this is a reduction from previous years. City Council has been awarded additional funds to grant to nonprofits. The award process for those additional funds is still being developed. When we find out more details about this other source of funding, the Community Development Division will share details with our email list. We understand this is a significant change from previous years.

**Q:** If there is $100,000 available and all grants approved are for $10,000, this would mean there would only be 10 requests approved, correct?

**A:** Yes, it looks likely that the Public Service Grant program will fund ten applications this year. Our office also manages the Neighborhood Economic Development (NED) program, and that application will come out later in the Spring.

**Q:** Can Public Service Grants fund operating expenses?

**A:** Yes, these grants can pay for operating expenses such as insurance, salaries, utilities and rent. These expenses must support programs that directly benefit low- and moderate-income people.

**Q:** Do all applicants need a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) in order to apply for a Public Service Grant?

**A:** Yes, according to federal regulation 2 CFR 25.300(a), all organizations receiving CDBG funds must obtain a UEI. Since the CDBG program funds Public Service Grants, all awarded organizations must have a UEI from SAM.gov. Be aware that some applicants have had to wait several weeks for their UEI, if you do not have a UEI by the time the Public Service Grant application is due, write “pending” in the space for the UEI. There are resources to help you obtain a UEI on our [application page](https://engage.pittsburghpa.gov/2023-public-service-grants).

**Q:** Can my organization use the Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) for other Federal grants?

**A:** Other Federal grants require a UEI, but they may also have a more involved registration requirements through SAM.gov.

Q: Does the application have a place to submit a project budget?

A: There is not a place to submit a complete project budget, but applicants will need to provide their grant request and select the budget line items your organization is looking to fund such as personnel or professional services.

**Grant Award Details**

**Q:** How is the Public Service Grant paid out? Does the City provide a lump sum upfront or are expenses reimbursed?

**A:** Public Service Grants are reimbursement grants—funded organizations must submit documentation showing that funds were incurred. Since we need to see incurred expenses, an organization can submit an invoice, but it does not need to be a paid invoice.

**Q:** What is the timeframe for spending the Public Service Grant?

**A:** Awarded organizations typically have one year to spend their Public Service Grant, but we can work with an organization that needs more time. This grant can pay for expenses incurred starting January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2023.