



### The Grant Process and How it Works

The Neighborhood Challenge Program makes funds available to groups and organizations to improve public property located within the CDBG target areas (Downtown area, New Auburn & Union St). Each application must consist of a single project with a clearly defined goal, one that has a direct benefit to the neighborhood and its residents.

- a. An organization obtains an application packet from the City of Auburn website at [www.auburnmaine.gov](http://www.auburnmaine.gov), completes and emails or delivers the completed application to [CDBG@auburnmaine.gov](mailto:CDBG@auburnmaine.gov). Applications may also be mailed to Community Development, City of Auburn, Community Development Office, 60 Court Street, Auburn, ME 04210;
- b. Applicants are encouraged to contact the city for assistance in preparing this application;
- c. Applications are reviewed and scored by City Staff & the Citizen Advisory Committee. (NOTE: The applicant should be prepared to make a presentation on their project proposal Review Committee after submission);
- d. If approved, a grant agreement will be awarded to the applicant. The applicant will be required to provide a check for any “matching” cash funds to the City of Auburn. The agreement will then be finalized, and a copy returned to the applicant (along with the reporting forms needed to complete the project);
- e. The Community Development Office staff will oversee projects to ensure compliance with all federal, state and local laws and ordinances;
- f. The City will issue vendor payments as the project progresses or at completion after inspections have been completed.

### Examples of Improvements Considered “Eligible” and “Not Eligible”

#### Eligible projects include (but are not limited to):

- Improvements to government owned property and/or rights of way (such as park equipment, street lighting, sidewalk repair/construction, roadway enhancements and neighborhood entrance improvements and/or identification signs).
- Total replacement and/or rehabilitation of some existing physical improvements might be deemed eligible (this would be based on the individual circumstances and available funding and will be judged on a case- by- case basis). Applicants are encouraged to reach out to appropriate city departments for assistance.

#### Ineligible projects include (but are not limited to):

- Routine maintenance or repair of existing physical improvements in a neighborhood (including, but not limited to: streets, fences, irrigation systems, storm water retention facilities, and entrance signs).
- Funding for ongoing programs or administrative expenses.
- Funding of printed brochures, guides, marketing and promotional materials.

**IMPORTANT: Grantees must submit before & after digital photographs documenting the progress of their project.**

\*\*\*

### **Grant Requirements & Criteria**

Each project will be scored based on the following criteria:

- a. The application must be for a “single project” and will include drawings or photographs;
- b. A budget that is well documented, reasonable, and cost effective. Three (3) quotes must be provided for each item to be purchased or component of the project;
- c. A well-planned project, clearly understood, and ready to be executed;
- d. The project can be completed within the term of the grant agreement;
- e. The amount of matching funds in the form of cash, donated labor from professional contractors, volunteer labor by neighborhood and/or in-kind donations; and
- f. The Association must prove it is able/prepared and committed to address any ongoing maintenance created by the project.

Since funds for projects are limited, awards will be based on a project's competitive status.

### **The Match Specifics**

A match is not required however projects which include a match may score higher. The match may be accomplished with a combination of any one or more of the following: cash, donated materials or services, or volunteer labor. The match must be secured, and ready to be expended.

Volunteer Labor: (a) Credit for “Volunteer labor” will be valued at \$20 per hour. (b) If a professional (such as an electrician or a carpenter) donates “volunteer labor”, you may calculate the value of this labor by using the hourly rate normally paid for this service. (Remember- your volunteer hours will not be accepted by vendors as payment for goods or services. The combined total of your grant and cash match must cover your project’s cash costs).

In-kind donations: Credit for donated professional services, materials or supplies will be at their “reasonable and customary” rates. Professionals who donate their services as part of the match cannot also receive compensation from the award money.

Cash Match: Must be deposited with the City before the project may begin.

- a. The amount and type of match must be appropriate to the needs of the project.
- b. Proposed match must be spent during the implementation/construction of the project, not before or after.
- c. Match must be not only pledged, but also secured. *Secured* means that the donor has specifically valued and described the contribution, and has signed a “Letter of Intent” to confirm the commitment.
- d. Be sure to include fees for any required permits.
- e. Activities that are NOT eligible as a “match” include:
  - Time spent preparing the Matching Grant Application
  - Time spent fund raising
  - Assistance from City staff or funds from other City departments
- f. Applicant will be responsible for keeping track of all volunteer hours donated for your project.
- g. A neighborhood organization, in carrying out a project, must make a good faith effort to ensure they are in compliance with the American Disabilities Act. This Act extends the same civil rights protection to persons with disabilities which have already been granted on the basis of race, color, religion, sex and national origin.

### **Vendor Payment Process**

1. The vendor submits an original invoice to the group representative for review and/or approval.
2. The group representative submits the original vendor invoices to the Community Development Office;
3. The invoice is reviewed and an inspection is scheduled;
4. Person(s) performing the work should be present during the inspection;
5. If approved, a check will be issued directly to each vendor within 14 days of receipt of invoice.

NOTE: Applicants may not contract with City of Auburn employees as vendors on the funded projects.