



WILMINGTON CITY COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SUPPORT FUND POLICY & GUIDELINES



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Wilmington City Council Community Support Fund Policy & Guidelines

Each year, the Wilmington City Council appropriates Community Support Funds to non-profit organizations to assist the local community with initiatives primarily in the following categories:

Youth Development Programs	
Education Programs	
Community Programs	
Economic Development Programs	
Festivals/Parades	
Health Awareness Programs	
Programs for Seniors	

Furthermore, Council appropriates Community Support Funds (College Scholarship Funds) for scholarships each year to students who are pursuing post-secondary education at a 2-year or 4-year college/university, trade school, or graduate school.

Although the primary role of Council is not that of a grant making agency, Council appropriates Community Support Funds (Strategic Grant Funds of \$5,000 or more) to non-profit 501c3 organizations to assist the local community with the top priorities identified during the Strategic Planning Process.

The mission of the City Council of Wilmington, Delaware is to:



- Provide visionary leadership in policymaking on quality of life matters
- Develop well-researched legislation that will enable Wilmington government to provide its residents, visitors and businesses with the highest quality of public services in a fiscally responsible manner through cooperative decision-making, strong ethical leadership, open communications and transparency with its public
- Fulfill the critical responsibility of providing a check on the executive branch of City government both through individual City Council Committees, and legislative measures to enhance transparency, accountability and adherence to stated and collectively agreed upon goals for City operations
- Connect with constituents to identify needs in the community and to devise strategies to address those needs, both through legislation and through collaboration with the executive branch of City government

Transparency

As with all taxpayer funds, the public deserves to know that Community Support Funds are going to organizations with the capacity and integrity to provide quality services. Council has instituted a comprehensive set of measures to ensure transparency and accountability in the use of grant funding including:

- Publishing information on Community Support Funds on City Council's website for public view (www.WilmingtonCityCouncil.com)

Policy & Internal Control

As with any entity, it is imperative that proper policy and internal controls are in place to govern and set standards for the allocation of Community Support Funds. These measures include the following:

- Grant application for funding request of \$5,000 or more
- Community Strategic Grant Fund guidelines
- Legislation pursuant to City Ordinance No. 17-035 regarding the awarding of grant funds of \$5,000 or more requiring Council approval
- Grant agreement for any entity that receive \$3,000 to \$4,999

The guidelines established in this document serves as a foundation for moving Wilmington forward and establishing transparency.



What is Community Support Funding?

Community Support Funding is an appropriated sum of money in Council's annual budget to support grants for local community events, local community programs, local community organizations, community beautification, and trade school/college scholarships. Appropriated budget grant funds of \$5,000 or more will be based upon the Council priorities identified in the the Council Strategic Plan.

Types of Community Support Funding

There are several types of Community Support Funding used by Council as listed below (refer to Exhibit A, page 13):

- I. Council Beautification Fund
- II. College Scholarships Fund
- III. Council Member Discretionary Fund
- IV. Council Community Strategic Grant Fund for funding \$5,000 or more
- V. Council Strategic Community Grant Fund for funding less than \$5,000

I. Council Beautification Fund

Effective July 1, 2025, each Council Member is allocated **\$5,769** in beautification funding that must be specifically used for beautifying the local community, and neighborhoods of Wilmington only. These funds are authorized per FY2026 approved budget ordinance.

Beautification Fund Guidelines:

- Funds are for the purpose of beautifying the Wilmington Community only.
- Funds are made payable to local non-profit, 501c3, 501c4, or non-exempt entity
- Funds are intended to work in conjunction with local civic associations, NPC's, etc.
- Funds are not for beautifying within a 500 feet radius of a Councilperson's residence.

Listed below are sample funding categories:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beautification Planters | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Gardens - Greenery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Murals/Artistry | <input type="checkbox"/> Cleaning Neighborhoods/Supplies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Decorative Lights | <input type="checkbox"/> Community – Umbrella, Hammock, Etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parks | <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood Planning Council |



☐ Signage

☐ Public Art

II. College Scholarships Fund

Every fiscal year, each Council Member is allocated **\$5,000** (amount *subject to change as guided by President*) in scholarship funding that is established by policy that must be specifically used for scholarships for students attending college, trade school, or graduate school only.

College Scholarships Guidelines:

- Can only be used for 2- year college, 4- year college, trade school, or graduate school with a minimum of 6 credits required.
- No one student can receive more than five thousand dollars (\$5,000) in City Council scholarships in any fiscal year.
- Immediate family members of City Council members are ineligible to receive City Council scholarships.
- Scholarship assistance is for City of Wilmington residents only. Proof of residency is required.
- An official award letter is mailed or emailed to the student and disbursed with the check authorizing the scholarship amount approved by the Council Member.
- Prohibit the discrimination against applicants based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age or disability.
- Students must submit information to validate proof of enrollment, which are some of the following items: copy of *current semester billing* or charges on school letterhead, verification of address (i.e. driver's license), student identification number, acceptance letter, and or enrollment verification.

College scholarship request are submitted via college scholarship application link (<https://forms.office.com/g/aXqWY8HG3>) which is listed on the City Council's webpage (www.wilmingtoncitycouncil.com), and or request could be sent directly to Council Members via mail or email. There is not a deadline for submission of scholarship fund request. However, it is highly recommended that scholarship request be submitted at the start of the fiscal year when funding is available. It is also highly preferred for scholarship request to be submitted by application via the weblink. The City's fiscal year starts on July 1st and ends on June 30th. Average college scholarships awards for students are typically within the range of \$200 through \$1,000, per District and At-Large Council Member(s) with no one student exceeding \$5,000 within a fiscal year. Any questions pertaining to scholarships can be submitted to WilmCouncilscholarship@wilmingtonde.gov

III. Council Member Discretionary Fund



Council Member Discretionary Funds are budgeted appropriations set aside for non-profit organizations (501c3, 501c5, non-exempt entities) to assist the local community in some of the primary categories listed below. Each Council Member is allocated **\$28,076** in discretionary/community funds each as authorized in FY26 Budget. Listed below are sample funding categories:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Festivals/Parades |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education Programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Health Awareness Programs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Programs for Seniors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Development Programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Development- Conferences, |

All funding contributions to any organization outside the City must have a direct benefit to City residents, *for exclusively Wilmington*. Contributions will be made payable to nonprofit agencies (501c3, 501c5, non-exempt entities). The non-profit agency must have a valid federal tax identification number, and or proof that set up in State of DE as non-profit. In instances in which the Council Member is providing funds for direct activity support, the funds will be disbursed based upon the City's procurement procedures pursuant to the City code. *Any disbursement for \$3,000 or more, entity must provide proof of receipts for use within 90 days, or funds must be returned and will not be eligible for future funds from City Council.*

Funding request are to be submitted via funding request application link (<https://forms.office.com/g/5fNeUXXMhN>) which is on the Council's website (www.wilmingtoncitycouncil.com), or request can be submitted via email or mail to Council Member. Also, it is also highly preferred for funding request to be submitted by application via the weblink. Any entity receiving \$3,000 to \$4,999 are required to sign a grant agreement, and provide a financial report on use of funds.

No funds will be disbursed to individuals, unless for contractual services that follow the City's procurement procedures, and authorized by President.

Samples of Events and Organization

- ❖ Baseball Little Leagues
- ❖ Football Youth Leagues
- ❖ Neighborhood Planning Councils
- ❖ Sponsorships (promote benefit Community/Wilmington)
- ❖ Civic Association activities
- ❖ Non-profit social service agency activities

If an entity is not set up as a non-profit, 501c3, and or 501c4, please do the following:



Visit the State of DE website <https://corp.delaware.gov/corpformsexemptcorp09/>: and Complete the Certificate of Incorporation for Exempt Corporation form : https://corpfiles.delaware.gov/Inc_Exempt.pdf

Visit the IRS Website: <https://www.irs.gov/charities-and-nonprofits>

- What is the difference between nonprofit and tax-exempt status?
 - Nonprofit status is a state law concept. Nonprofit status may make an organization eligible for certain benefits, such as state sales, property and income tax exemptions. Although most federal tax-exempt organizations are nonprofit organizations, organizing as a nonprofit organization at the state level does not automatically grant the organization exemption from federal income tax. To qualify as exempt from federal income tax, an organization must meet requirements set forth in the Internal Revenue Code. See types of tax-exempt organizations or Publication 557 PDF for more information.
 - How does an organization become tax-exempt?
 - To be recognized as exempt from federal income taxation, most organizations are required to apply for recognition of exemption. For section 501(c)(3) organizations, the law provides only limited exceptions to this requirement. Applying for recognition of exemption results in formal IRS recognition of an organization's status and may be preferable for that reason.

IV. Council Community Strategic Grant Fund, \$5,000 or more

Council Strategic Grant Funding for \$5,000 or more is a budgeted appropriation funding for grant funds that have been approved by the Council via the annual operating budget or by Resolution of Council for non-profit organizations to assist the local community with initiatives as supported by the Council priorities outlined during the Council's Strategic Planning Process (refer to page 3 for priorities). Request are submitted to the Councilperson via email, mail, or the weblink. A grant agreement and award letter is a requirement, in addition to the below:

The City's grant process for \$5,000 or more is mandated pursuant to Wilmington City Code Sec.2-368.

Sec. 2-368. Allocation of grants.

Any grant applicant seeking funding from the city in an amount of \$5,000.00 or more must agree to the following:

- (1) To submit a letter of request outlining the intended uses of the funds.
- (2) To submit adequate proof, as determined by the director of finance, that there are no delinquent fees, taxes or other monies that are owed to the city.



No grant funds shall be disbursed by the city to any grantee until all delinquent fees, taxes or other monies owed to the city by such grantee have been paid in full, unless the applicant has a payment agreement with the city. No applicant shall be eligible for a grant who is delinquent in payments under a current payment agreement with the finance department's revenue enforcement division.

- (3) To identify a contact person of the applicant who can answer questions regarding information submitted on the application.
- (4) To submit to the city auditor any budget or financial statements (audited when available) and all required attachments thereto.
- (5) To return to the city any grant funds remaining as a direct result of the termination of all or part of the program/activity for which the city funding has been provided.
- (6) Not to dispose of any surplus funds without the prior written approval of the city department providing the grant program.
- (7) To submit to the city auditor and the entity overseeing the grant program a report identifying how the program/activity met its goals and objectives and to provide a financial accounting of the grant program funds. Such reports must be submitted during the grant program on an annual basis, unless a determination has been made by the awarding City entity that reporting of a more frequent nature is required for an individual award of funds, and at the conclusion when all funds have been expended.
- (8) For grants meeting the criteria under this section that are awarded by the Office of the Mayor, City Council or the Office of the City Treasurer, approval by resolution of City Council shall be required, as set forth in Section 2-369.
- (9) Grantee shall acknowledge, via signature, its understanding of and intent to comply with the provisions of this section.
- (10) Failure to comply with the provisions of this section may result in revocation of the grant.

The approval of grant awards process for \$5,000 or more is mandated pursuant to Wilmington City Code Sec.2-369.

Sec. 2-369. Approval of grant awards.

For grants awarded by the Office of the Mayor, City Council or the Office of the City Treasurer in the amount of \$5,000 or more, approval by resolution of City Council shall be required, unless such grant awards are included as recipient-specific line items in the adopted annual operating budget. Such a resolution shall be prepared by the entity proposing the award of grant funding, and shall be discussed and heard before the City Council Finance Committee before being brought before the City Council for approval. If a single entity is awarded funds on more than one occasion in a single fiscal year, a resolution shall be required for any



proposed grant funding award which would result in an aggregate funding allocation of \$5,000 or more for that fiscal year.

City Code Sec. 2-370 outlines the written notification process of all grant awards.

Sec. 2-370. Notification of grant awards.

No less frequently than on a quarterly basis, the Office of the Mayor, City Council and the Office of the City Treasurer shall provide written notification to the City Council Finance Committee of all grant awards, excluding scholarships, below \$5,000 unless such grant awards are included as recipient-specific line items in the adopted annual operating budget. Such notification shall contain the following details:

- (1) The name of the individual or organizational recipient(s);
- (2) The amount of funding awarded;
- (3) The stated purpose of the awarded grant; and
- (4) The intended use of the funding.

The City Council Finance Committee shall furnish a template that shall be utilized in reporting grant awards which meet the definition of this Section, and such reports, when filed, shall be made publicly available.



Council Strategic Grant Fund Requirements for \$5,000 or more:

- Must complete grant application
- Must provide formal detailed grant request letter
- Must document program effectiveness by producing tangible performance and outcome measures for the program
- Must provide annual report identifying how program/activity met goals and objectives (with understanding a report could be requested for quarterly)
- Must provide annual financial report by date provided in the grant award letter to City Council on the program with supporting statistics on overall program results inclusive of a budget justifying all expenditures to CouncilGrant@wilmingtonde.gov as well as any other reports that could be requested (with understanding a report could be requested for quarterly). *As reasonable as possible, receipts to be part of report.*
- Funds must be used for the purpose of this grant only
- Any unused funds at the end of the grant period must be returned to the City and or you must have prior authorization to use any remaining funds beyond the allotted grant time frame
- If any of the above requirements are not adhered to, the organization will be ineligible for future grants, and could potentially default the remaining year grant funds
- Grant Recipient breaches this Agreement, the City shall have the right to exercise any and all remedies at law or in equity, including, but not limited to, the right to (a) seek reimbursement from the Grant Recipient of any portion of the Grant previously distributed to the Grant Recipient, (b) suspend future disbursements of the Grant, (c) reduce the amount of the Grant, or (d) terminate this Agreement
- Must adhere to City Code Sec. 2-368 to 2-370 pertaining to any grant applicant seeking funding from the City and to City Code Sec. 2-685 pertaining to City auditing process
- Must be current on all debts obligations to the City of Wilmington
- Must have a valid City of Wilmington Business License
- Must provide copy of W9
- Must provide copy of 501c3 letter or documentation of non-profit status from IRS
- Must sign acknowledge statement pertaining to Ord. # 02-14, Ord. # 17-035 and Ord. # 06-034
- Must provide a disclosure statement identifying any relationships between the entity's board or employees and Council Members.
- City of Wilmington has the right to reject any grant application received that is not either feasible, meets a local need, or serves eligible or intended purpose, and due to limited or no available funds.



V. Council Community Strategic Grant Fund, less than \$5,000 (*This only applies if grant funds are budgeted for this purpose. This does not apply to FY26.*)

Council Strategic Grant Fund for less than \$5,000 is budgeted grant appropriations for funding request that is submitted to Council for non-profit organizations to assist the local community with various programs and activities for community based events and or programs. All funding request must provide a direct benefit and or promote the City of Wilmington, which may be linked to the Council priorities identified during the Council Strategic Planning Process. *Any disbursement for \$3,000 or more, entity must provide proof of receipts for use within 90 days, or funds must be returned and will not be eligible for future funds from City Council.*

- Requests are submitted through a request to Council via weblink, mail, or email. Council Members may submit formal written requests from entities for consideration.
- Requestees are notified via email or phone acknowledging their request has been received and is being reviewed.
- Requests are reviewed in the Fund Review Meeting.
 - Suggestions are provided to the President of City Council based upon the following:
 1. Prior funding allocations
 2. Funding availability
 3. Direct benefit to local community of Wilmington
 4. Supports Council priorities identified during the Council Strategic Planning Process
 5. Based upon permissible use as outline in grant budget fund guidelines
 6. Entity must be non-profit
 - President reviews to make determination for approval or other action
- Requestees are notified via email, phone, or mail of funding decision outcome.

(the above process is used by President for reviewing their fund request)



Average Funding Category Ranges

The ranges listed in the chart below represent the primary funding categories and average funding amounts for funding requests. There is no guarantee of funding range as many factors will be considered as each request is reviewed. Funding decisions are constrained by the availability of funds, volume of funding request received, and number of grant applications received.

Funding Categories	Average Range	High End Range
Festivals/Parades	\$500 - \$1,000	\$1,000 - \$3,000
Ads/local events	\$50 - \$125	\$125- \$300
Tickets (table)	\$50 - \$500	\$500 - \$1,500
Sponsorships	\$250 - \$1,000	\$1,000 - \$5,000
Youth Sports Events	\$200 - \$500	\$500 - \$5,000
Youth Programs	\$200 - \$500	\$500 - \$5,000
Community Programs	\$200 - \$500	\$500 - \$5,000
Civic Assoc./Comm. Assoc.	\$100- \$300	\$300 - \$500
Health Awareness Prog.	\$100 - \$500	\$500 - \$1,000
Promoting City/Economic Development	\$100 - \$500	\$500 - \$5,000

❖ *Note any request for \$5,000 or more requires a grant application.*

Reporting on Community Support Funds

Council's Community Support Fund allocations is shared on the Council's website for public view.

What types of Organizations May Receive Community Support Funds?

Organizations that are non-profit entities may receive funding for amounts less than \$5,000. Organizations that are non-profit/ 501c3 may receive funding for \$5,000 or more.

What types of Organizations May Not Receive Community Support Funds?

Organizations that are for-profit, and religious organizations for a religious purpose may not receive Community Support Funds.

Public Purpose

All public funds, however awarded, must be used for a public purpose. In general, a public purpose is defined as an activity or service that is open to all members of the public, regardless of race, creed, gender, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, disability, etc. and which does not promote a religion.



Conflicts of Interest

To prevent abuse or misuse of Community Support Funds, the following must be adhered to, which will be listed in the budget appropriation form to be signed by each Council Member respectively for each funding request that has been submitted for approval:

- ❖ Council Members are prohibited from using Community Support Funds for an organization which the Member serves as an employee, officer, or board member (except ex-officio).
- ❖ Council Members, nor any member of a Council Member's immediate family, must not be in any way affiliated with the recipient in a paid or volunteer capacity.
- ❖ Council Members, nor any member of a Council Member's immediate family, must not be in any way affiliated with direct impact to the funding request for beautification funds.
- ❖ Council Members must acknowledge there is no known conflict of interest.
- ❖ For grants of \$5,000 or more, the entity must provide a disclosure statement pertaining to any potential conflicts of interest at the time of their application.
- ❖ Council Members must acknowledge that funds given to religious institutions are for secular purposes only; although it is the preference to have funds to go to a community development corporation and not to a church to avoid separation of church and state.

Inappropriate Uses of Funds

- ✓ Campaign literature, signs or campaign material of any kind, or any activities related to a political campaign.
- ✓ Purchase of tickets for community events by individual Council Members (Council President purchases tickets for these events).
- ✓ Emergency housing, clothing, rent, shoes.
- ✓ Awards for Council members.
- ✓ Donations to organizations which the Council Member or a member of their immediate family is a Board Member, or has a personal connection with, such as employment.
- ✓ Advertisements for individual Council Members.
- ✓ Purchase of media time (cable, regular TV, radio or print).
- ✓ Donations to for-profit making organizations.
- ✓ Donations to churches or religious groups/organizations for *religious* purposes.
- ✓ Burial or funeral expenses.



Exhibit A: Community Support Funds:

