

# Neighborhood Initiatives Fund (NIF) - special edition ARP 2021 Grant Program Guidelines

## Statement of Purpose

The Neighborhood Initiatives Fund Program (NIF or the Program), administered by the URA's Business Solutions Unit, is designed to provide grants to:

1. **Help unlock the economic and placemaking potential within AOH neighborhood commercial corridors.**
2. **Support vision-to-action community investment strategies that build a more equitable Pittsburgh; and**
3. **Formalize collaborative partnerships across the City of Pittsburgh (City).**

The Program is intended to assist nonprofit and community-based organizations with neighborhood-scale projects within commercial corridors that improve quality of life and maintain the corridor as a desirable place location for small business. NIF projects include efforts that encourage investment through vacant property reclamation and stewardship, historic preservation, brownfield redevelopment, public infrastructure improvements, and other eligible efforts. Nonprofit organizations with for-profit development partners are also eligible to apply.

It is the intention of this Program to increase NIF Grantees' visibility and accessibility to funding.

**The NIF program may be funded through the City of Pittsburgh, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and other URA funding sources.**

**Please note that if a NIF grant is awarded, funds will be disbursed on a reimbursement basis only. If you are awarded a NIF grant, you CANNOT spend ANY funds on the NIF project until the project contract is signed by both the URA and your organization.**

## Schedule

**June 15, 2021**

*Information Sessions*

**August 31, 2021**

**September 2021**

**October 2021**

**October 2021**

**Funding round opens.**

*Schedule to be announced.*

**Applications are due.**

Review committee meets.

Funding awards announced.

Contracting process begins.

## **Use of Funding**

The Program will fund **up to 10** proposals for non-housing related place-based initiatives and equitable neighborhood-scale projects and programs within Pittsburgh's neighborhood commercial corridors. Funds are awarded on a competitive basis.

**First priority will be given to projects located in an Avenue of Hope commercial corridor. The Avenues of Hope Initiative is a place-based, people-first approach that intervenes across all layers of successful, healthy, and sustainable Main Street development.** For more details about the Avenues of Hope Initiative, and a map of the corridors, look [here](#).

Projects located within other neighborhood commercial corridors will also be considered. You can find a map of City of Pittsburgh commercial corridors [here](#).

Proposals should identify the strategies and tactics associated with the proposed initiative and how the community will benefit from those strategic efforts. Potential tactics include but are not limited to:

1. Conceptual design and engineering.
2. Land remediation.
3. Vacant property activation.
4. Historic preservation.
5. Commercial district revitalization; and/or
6. Public realm improvements.

## **Eligible Grantees**

Nonprofit entities (includes government agencies and those nonprofits with for-profit development partners).

## **Eligible Activities**

Non-housing projects in neighborhood commercial districts that benefit the community and catalyze economic development. Hard and soft costs are typically eligible if they fall into the following categories:

1. Vacant property reclamation and stewardship;
2. Historic preservation;
3. Brownfield development;
4. Construction of public space and neighborhood infrastructure improvements, including, but not limited to:
5. Streetscape improvements;
6. Transit and transportation-related improvements;
7. Parks and open space improvements;
8. Green infrastructure; and/or
9. Public art.
10. Filling development gaps in projects

## **Ineligible Activities and Projects**

1. Projects outside of the City of Pittsburgh

2. Projects that are located outside of City neighborhood commercial corridors
3. Residential dwellings or the residential portions of mixed-use buildings
4. Improvements proposed in the City right-of-way that have not been approved by and/or coordinated with the City
5. Improvements proposed on properties without site control
6. Marketing and promotional expenses
7. Travel expenses or any lodging/hotel expenses
8. Operating, overhead, or ongoing programming costs
9. Maintenance costs
10. Administrative and development fees

### **Parameters of Grant**

**The minimum grant request is \$20,000 and the maximum is \$100,000.**

There are two tiers of NIF grants:

1. Tier 1 – \$20,000 to \$30,000  
No matching requirement.
2. Tier 2 - \$30,000.01 to \$100,000.00  
Matching requirement: For every two dollars (\$2) of Program funds committed to a project, there must be at least one dollar (\$1) of match invested into the NIF project. Matching funds must come from non-URA and non-City sources. Grantees must show proof (in the form of paid invoices) of use of matching funds when the Grantees submit requests for NIF reimbursement.

*Note: NIF is a reimbursement grant; Grantees must front all costs of their NIF projects and demonstrate payment. The URA will only reimburse eligible Program expenditures. If a project ends up costing less than what was outlined in the original budget, the URA will reimburse the grantee for two-thirds of the actual project cost, not the original budgeted amount. For example: A project is originally budgeted at \$90,000, with the grantee providing \$30,000 and the NIF grant providing \$60,000. However, the final cost of the project is only \$60,000. In that case, the grantee will invoice the URA for \$40,000, or two-thirds of the project cost.*

**The Neighborhood Initiatives Fund Program investment in a project will not exceed \$100,000.00. NIF awards are subject to availability of funding.**

**Please note that if a NIF grant is awarded, funds will be disbursed on a reimbursement basis only. If you are awarded a NIF grant, you CANNOT spend ANY funds on the NIF project until the project contract is signed by both the URA and your organization.**

### **Procedures for the Grant**

1. The grantee will work with URA staff to finalize a scope of work and grant agreement for the project. **Please note that if a NIF grant is awarded, funds will be disbursed on a reimbursement basis only. If you are awarded a NIF grant, you CANNOT spend ANY funds on the NIF project until the project contract is signed by both the URA and your organization.**

2. Any costs incurred prior to the execution of the grant agreement will be ineligible for reimbursement.
3. The NIF project must meet all State and Federal statutory mandates (i.e., wage rates, insurance/bonding requirements, competitive bidding). See attached for sample Grant Agreement with related compliance items.
4. If the NIF project involves construction or related tasks, the grantee must account for prevailing wage rates in the project budget.
5. The NIF project must document, when required, the availability of funding match (include grant award letter, grant agreement, or letter of commitment).
6. The URA acknowledges the City of Pittsburgh's goal of 18% minority-owned business enterprise (MBE) and 7% women-owned business enterprise (WBE) participation in projects with total projects costs of \$250,000 or greater. The same Minority-owned and Women-owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) goals apply to professional service contracts of \$75,000.00 or greater. All successful applicants are required to demonstrate and document a good faith effort to obtain MWBE participation in work performed with the use of URA funding for projects or activities that meet or exceed the aforementioned thresholds.
7. Construction activities under NIF are subject to inspections by the URA.
8. The Grantee and the chosen consultants and/or contractors is/are bound by all relevant payment and inspection procedures imposed by the URA.
9. The URA Site Advisor will review the scope of work and conduct an initial inspection of the Project site.
10. The URA will review the scope of work write-up to determine if the cost estimates for the proposed scope are reasonable.
11. Contracts will be subject to a competitive bidding process or subject to the URA review of the consultants' or contractors' proposed costs.
12. The URA Construction Advisor will conduct on-site stage inspections for construction contracts or shall review for consultant contracts at the time the Grantee requests reimbursement for work completed.
13. Payment requests will need to include proof of payment to consultants.
14. At the time Project construction is completed, a final inspection may be conducted by the URA Construction Advisor. A Senior Construction Supervisor or Manager may also inspect the property. If necessary, a City Department of Permits, Licenses, and Inspections (PLI) Advisor may also perform an inspection of the completed work.
15. The project will be assigned a URA project manager, who will be the grantee's primary contact throughout the process and will provide additional technical assistance to the grantee as necessary.
16. **This is a reimbursement grant.** Grantees must request payments on the proper URA form(s), duly signed and approved by the Grantee, for a specified dollar amount. If a match is required, the payment request must document that the Grantee has made matching payment. Final payments will not be released until all required permits or relevant approvals have been documented, if applicable.
17. **Please note that if a NIF grant is awarded, funds will be disbursed on a reimbursement basis only. If you are awarded a NIF grant, you CANNOT spend ANY funds on the NIF project until the project contract is signed by both the URA and your organization.**

18. The final disbursement of NIF funds will not be released until a final grant report has been submitted. The final grant report must document the following:
  - a. How the project fulfilled the goals of the program (improved quality of life and equitable neighborhood investment);
  - b. Measurable positive impacts of the project (job creation, placemaking, expansion of the City's tax base, etc.);
  - c. Construction and permanent job creation, including number of local resident jobs and wage rates, if applicable;
  - d. Funding leveraged as a result of NIF funding; and
  - e. MWBE good faith effort and participation rates if applicable.
19. Recipients will be required to expend all NIF grant funds on the project within 12 months from the date of execution of the NIF grant agreement.

### **Conditions and Criteria for Grants**

1. Proposals must meet the following criteria to be eligible for a NIF grant:
  - a. The project must demonstrate public support (i.e., undertaken by a community-based organization, letters of support from community organizations/council office(s), public meeting minutes, etc.).
  - b. The project must be located within a neighborhood commercial corridor.
  - c. The project must be financially feasible.
  - d. Project match must be committed.
  - e. The project must contribute to neighborhood commercial corridor stability or revitalization.
  - f. The project must be in compliance with a neighborhood comprehensive plan (if one is available).
  - g. The project must include a maintenance plan, if applicable.
  - h. The project must have documented control of the project site.
2. Because there may be insufficient funds to approve all eligible proposals that meet the minimum criteria, proposals for NIF funding will be evaluated based on additional criteria measuring public benefits, including, but not limited to:
  - a. Degree of distress of the neighborhood in which the initiative/project will be located. Priority consideration will be given to projects within:
    - b. Avenues of Hope commercial corridors or
    - c. Corridors within Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) eligible census tracts;
    - d. Impact of initiative/project to be undertaken (priority will be given to applications which identify workforce development opportunities);
    - e. The amount of matching funds secured for the project; and
    - f. The capacity of the applicant organization and the amount of technical assistance needed from the URA to implement the project. Registered Community Organizations (RCOs) are preferred applicants.

### **Design Standards**

1. Projects that propose work in the public right-of-way, (publicly-owned streets and sidewalks), must comply with standards established by the City of Pittsburgh. URA and City staff will review all designs to ensure that they are consistent with the approved City standards. The City's right-of-way procedures policy can be downloaded [here](#).
2. Projects that propose public art on City-owned property or in the City's right-of-way must have the project approved by the City's Art Commission. The Art Commission's procedures can be accessed [here](#).

### **Allocation of Funds**

Grant funds will be prioritized for Avenues of Hope and CDBG eligible areas. A map of Avenues of Hope corridors can be viewed [here](#). A map of CDBG eligible areas can be viewed [here](#). Geographic diversity is a goal of this program.

### **Additional Information**

For additional information, please contact:

Josette Fitzgibbons, [jfitzgibbons@ura.org](mailto:jfitzgibbons@ura.org), or  
Matt Reitzell, [mreitzell@ura.org](mailto:mreitzell@ura.org)

The Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh abides by all applicable laws and regulations regarding nondiscrimination and refrains from discriminating on the basis of age, race, color, religious creed, ancestry, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, political or union affiliation, and/or disability. No person shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination solely on the basis of any of the above factors under the loan and grant programs operated by the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh.