



RICHLAND COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

GUIDELINES FOR CDBG PROPOSALS AND APPLICATIONS | PY 2024-2025

The Richland County Community Development Office is accepting proposals for PY 2024-2025 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding. Local nonprofits, Faith-Based Organizations, and County Departments are invited to submit Public Service, Public Facility, Infrastructure, and Slum and Blight project proposals for consideration.

This is a competitive, two-step grant process with an application request period followed by an invitation-only full application period. The County is seeking Application Request Proposals for projects principally serving U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) designated low-and moderate-income (LMI) residents and areas of *unincorporated* Richland County. Projects must meet HUD eligibility requirements and align with the 2022-2026 Five-Year Consolidated Plan. Applicants must attend one of the CDBG Information Workshops and are strongly encouraged to review all materials available at <http://richlandcountysc.gov/CDBG-NOFA> prior to the submission **deadline of 11:59 PM on Tuesday, March 12, 2024.**

To ensure an eligible and competitive proposal, please review the following **Guidelines for CDBG Application Request Proposals** along with these resources linked on the NOFA webpage: *2022-2026 Five Year Consolidated Plan, Richland County CDBG Policies & Procedures, and the HUD Playing By the Rules Handbook* for CDBG Subrecipients.

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GUIDELINES FOR PY 2024-2025 CDBG APPLICATION REQUEST PROPOSALS

I) BACKGROUND

Richland County released a **Notice of Funding Available (NOFA)** to announce the anticipated availability of funding for the Program Year (PY) October 1, 2024 - September 30, 2025 for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program. The CDBG Program is funded and regulated at the federal level by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and administered locally by the Richland County under the auspices of the Community Development Division of the Grants Department. The CDBG Program is authorized under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. The regulations implementing the CDBG Program are located in the 24 CFR, Part 570.

The County's objectives for this program are in accordance with HUD's National Objectives, which seek the development of a viable community through the implementation of activities principally for the benefit of low-and moderate-income (LMI) persons:

- **Benefiting Low and Moderate Income (LMI) Persons**
 - o LMI – Individual Benefit
 - o LMA – Area Benefit
 - o LMC – Limited Clientele Benefit
 - o LMH – Housing Benefit
 - o LMJ – Creates or Retains Job Benefit
- **Addressing Slum or Blight; or**
- **Meeting a Particular Urgent Community Need**

In addition, the Priority Needs identified in the 2022-2026 Five-Year Consolidated Plan are as follows:

- **Priority Need 1:** There is a need to increase the supply of affordable housing for homeowners and renters, that is decent, safe and sanitary.
- **Priority Need 2:** There is a continuing need for services and housing opportunities for homeless persons and persons/families at-risk of becoming homeless.
- **Priority Need 3:** There is a need to increase housing opportunities, services, and facilities for persons with special needs.
- **Priority Need 4:** There is a continuing need to upgrade and improve community facilities, infrastructure, public services and revitalize socially and economically distressed neighborhoods in the County.
- **Priority Need 5:** There is a need to increase opportunities for economic advancement and self-sufficiency, as well as educational (social/life skills) training and empowerment for all residents of the County.

Richland County invites applications from qualified entities to apply for funding for projects and activities that are consistent with locally developed CDBG Program Priorities and to address the federal/local Consolidated Plan objectives.

II) FUNDING AVAILABLE

As a CDBG Entitlement Community, Richland County is granted a yearly allocation of CDBG funds based on HUD's allocation formula using annual population data. The County should receive the new allocation details by May 2024. For program year (PY) 2024, the County anticipates an award in line with the 2023 award of **\$1,723,394**. In order to receive these funds, the County must prepare a one-year Annual Action Plan for the use of Federal funds. At least 70% of the CDBG funds must benefit low- and moderate-income (LMI) persons living in unincorporated Richland County.

This CDBG NOFA process is part of developing the 2024 Annual Action Plan. Through a competitive grant process, the County intends to allocate a portion of its CDBG funds to non-profits, faith-based organizations, and County Departments for Public Service, Public Facilities Improvement, Infrastructure Improvement, and Slum and Blight Removal activities principally benefitting Low-to-Moderate Income residents and areas of unincorporated Richland County.

Projected funding levels for the following categories include:

- **Public Services | up to 15% of the total 2024 CDBG award** - Allocated for youth programs, services catering to persons with disabilities, senior services, job training, housing counseling, homeless prevention programs, as well as general social and welfare programs designed for low- to moderate-income (LMI) individuals and households.
- **Public Facilities, Infrastructure, and Slum & Blight | up to \$900,000** - Allocated for enhancements to neighborhood and recreation facilities; improvements to streets and sidewalks in CDBG target areas; upgrades to sewer, wastewater, and infrastructure (including broadband) in CDBG target areas; improvements for handicap accessibility and the removal of architectural barriers; and initiatives for slum and blight removal.

The County intends to designate the remaining CDBG funds to Housing Revitalization through minor home repair and rental housing development, and Community Development Planning and Administration.

This NOFA and Application Request Proposal is a one (1) year funding request.

III) **SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:** Please follow these guidelines for the submission of your Application Request Proposal:

- Please review these CDBG Proposal Guidelines before completing the Application Request Proposal form.
- All information for the CDBG NOFA process including CDBG regulations and guidance on eligibility can be found online at <http://richlandcountysc.gov/CDBG-NOFA>.
- This is a competitive, two-step grant process with an application request period (pre-app) followed by an invitation-only full application period. *The Pre-Application period begins Monday, February 26, 2024 with a deadline to submit proposal forms on Tuesday, March 12, 2024 at 11:59PM.*

- **Mandatory Information Workshop:** Community Development staff will lead CDBG Information Workshops during the month of March 2024 to help applicants develop project proposals for CDBG funding. *Pre-registration and attendance are required for all applicants. Organizations that received CDBG funds in PY21, PY22 or PY23 are not required, but are encouraged to attend.* **Register for one of the CDBG application training workshops using links provided at <http://richlandcountysc.gov/CDBG-NOFA>.**
- A Pre-Application Form called an “Application Request Proposal” is available on the County’s CDBG NOFA webpage. Completeness of pre-application will be part of evaluation.
- Please type all information. A digital copy is available to complete electronically and should be emailed to communitydevelopmentinfo@richlandcountysc.gov by 11:59 PM on Tuesday, March 12, 2024 for consideration.
- The Application Request Proposal form should be used for all Public Service, Public Facilities, Infrastructure, and Slum & Blight project proposals.
- County Departments with multiple eligible projects may submit more than one proposal summary for consideration.
- Please submit all responses on the form unless an attachment is specifically requested.
- Please do not revise/delete application format if preparing application from electronic version; your application will be returned to you if altered.
- All proposals are required to be consistent with Federal and local plans for spending. Therefore, it is required that each applicant is familiar with the County’s 2022-2026 Five-Year Consolidated Plan and the current PY23 Annual Action Plan available for reference on the County’s NOFA page.
- This CDBG funding period covers agency programs conducted between October 1, 2024 and September 30, 2025. Subrecipient funding is dependent on HUD’s issuance of the County’s annual CDBG agreement which usually occurs in August.
- **DEADLINE: All proposals must be submitted by 11:59 PM on Tuesday, March 12, 2024 for consideration for funding. Late proposals will not be accepted.**
- Community Development staff will review all proposals for eligibility and “right fit” to address the priorities designated 22-26 Five-Year Consolidated Plan.
- Applicants selected to submit a full application for funding will be notified by March 19, 2024 of next steps. Applicants not invited to the full application period will be notified by March 19, 2024.
- Questions regarding the preparation of the Application Request Proposal should be directed in writing to Sean Taylor, Community Development Coordinator for Richland County at taylor.sean@richlandcountysc.gov or 803-766-5190.

IV) **ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES:** Each applicant should carefully review and follow these guidelines; the County has the right to reject any application proposal that does not adhere to them.

- **Eligible Applicants:**
 - i. Richland County Departments

- ii. Private and Public 501 (c)(3) Non-Profit Organizations
- iii. A member of the Richland County Neighborhood Improvement Program (NIP)
- iv. Faith-Based Organizations - In accordance with the U. S. Department of HUD Rule on Faith-Based Organizations (Faith-Based Initiative), September 30, 2003 (24 CFR Part 92 et al):
 - Faith-Based organizations are able to compete for federal grants for social service programs without having to completely separate their religious tone and mission from the services that:
 - a. Reduce poverty
 - b. Improve opportunities for low-income children/youth/families.
 - c. Revitalize low-income communities
 - d. Empower low-income families and individuals to become self-sufficient
 - e. Help people who are in need.
 - Faith-based organizations are eligible to receive HUD funding on an equal footing with any other organization. Federal funds are not used to support inherently religious activities such as worship, religious instruction, or proselytization. Faith-based organizations are no longer required to form a separate, secular organization 501 (c) (3) to receive funds as was previously required.
 - Faith-based organizations may receive HUD funds to acquire, rehabilitate, or repair buildings and other real property, as long as the funds only pay the percentage of the total cost attributable to the HUD activities. However, HUD funds may not be used to acquire or improve sanctuaries, chapels, and other rooms that a congregation uses as its principal place of worship.
- **Public Service Project Priorities:** Priorities include youth programs, services for persons with disabilities, senior services, job training, housing counseling, homeless prevention programs meeting the following criteria:
 - i. A minimum request of **\$35,000** is required for Public Service proposals.
 - ii. CDBG funds will only be used to support new or expanded public services to residents of unincorporated Richland County. For existing services, applicants must demonstrate a quantifiable increase in the level of service provided.
 - iii. The Community Development team will prioritize organizations and projects with the capacity and structure to manage Federal funds, execute a program, and expend the CDBG award by September 15, 2025.
 - iv. Allowable Costs: CDBG funds are restricted to funding direct program implementation costs that are necessary, reasonable and related to the grant. Please see Section V. for more details on allowable costs for the Public Service project category.
- **Public Facility and Infrastructure Project Priorities:** Improvements to Neighborhood and Recreation Facilities, Street and Sidewalk Improvements in CDBG Target areas, Sewer and Infrastructure Improvements in CDBG Target Areas, Removal of Architectural Barriers, Slum and Blight Removal.

- i. **Requests for improvements to a Public Facility owned and operated by a public entity** (i.e. government agency, nonprofit, faith-based organization, etc.) must meet the following criteria:
 - Facility must be owned by applicant.
 - Facility must be located in *unincorporated* Richland County. Facilities that serve the homeless population of Richland County which are predominantly located in the City of Columbia limits will be considered for funding.
 - In general, the facility must be open to the public during regular business hours (9a-5p) and provide a public service to LMI residents. Special consideration will be given for facilities that provide services outside of regular hours (i.e. afterschool programs, community centers, crisis prevention centers, etc.).
- **Service Area/Location:** Only proposals for projects benefiting *unincorporated* Richland County and its residents are eligible.
 - i. All beneficiaries/participants of proposed public service programs must be residents of unincorporated Richland County and verification records must be available for annual on-site monitoring visit.
 - ii. Proposals for Public Facilities or Infrastructure improvements must be located in and primarily serving LMI residents of the unincorporated County.
 - iii. See next section for more details on allowable costs for the Public Service project category.
- **Low/Moderate Income (LMI) Requirement:** At least 51% of beneficiaries/participants of public services, public facility improvements, or infrastructure investments must be low or moderate-income persons and documentation will be required for the annual on-site monitoring visit.
- **HUD Income Limits** –U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development determines income eligibility for activities funded by the CDBG Program (*See table on Page 7*). It is imperative that applicants anticipate and plan for the methods they will use to determine and document either the incomes of the persons that they serve or that the area being improved is located in a HUD-designated Low-Moderate Area (LMA).
- *Questions on verifying income eligibility of a project should be the directed to Sean Taylor, Community Development Coordinator at taylor.sean@richlandcountysc.gov.*

FEDERAL INCOME GUIDELINES RICHLAND COUNTY FY23

# of persons in household	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
30% LIMITS	\$17,650	\$20,150	\$22,650	\$25,150	\$27,200	\$29,200	\$31,200	\$33,200
VERY LOW	\$29,400	\$33,600	\$37,800	\$41,950	\$45,350	\$48,700	\$52,050	\$55,400
60% LIMITS	\$35,280	\$40,320	\$45,360	\$50,340	\$54,420	\$58,440	\$62,460	\$66,480
LOW INCOME	\$47,000	\$53,700	\$60,400	\$67,100	\$72,500	\$77,850	\$83,250	\$88,600

[Subject to revision upon the release of federal income limits for Fiscal Year 2024.]

- **Match Requirements:** A 25% match is required for all CDBG funded projects. In-kind services are not considered as matching funds.
- **Expending Funds:** CDBG Awards are disbursed as reimbursements. The County is seeking projects that can easily expend funds by September 15, 2025, although facility and infrastructure projects that require 12+ months will still be considered. Final awards may be revised based upon annual funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

v) **ALLOWABLE COSTS FOR CDBG GRANTS**

The Federal regulations and guidance for all CDBG funding is found in the Federal Register 24 CFR, Part 570. Applicants are also encouraged to review the *Playing By the Rules Handbook* for CDBG Subrecipients when development proposals.

Allowable costs for a CDBG grant depend on the type of program being funded. Public Service projects have a separate set of allowable costs than all other CDBG-funded projects.

CDBG PUBLIC SERVICE PROJECTS

- **ALLOWABLE EXPENDITURES**
 - Salaries and wages for staff directly carrying out CDBG activities.
 - Purchases qualifying as supplies - items under \$5,000 per unit that are consumed within one year. (Ex: Computers under \$5,000.)
 - Equipment over \$5,000 per unit with a useful life exceeding one year, when integral to program operation, is eligible for consideration with County approval.
 - *Example: lab equipment for an eye clinic*
 - Rent, mortgage, utilities, security, and related costs for space used by the CDBG program. Shared rent must be allocated fairly.
 - Food integral to program service delivery like youth and preschool or as part of a Food Bank program.
 - Audit fees limited to the prorated CDBG share of the total budget.

- vii. Expenses related to marketing efforts to reach target beneficiary population will be considered.
- **DISALLOWED EXPENDITURES**
 - i. Vehicle purchases and transportation costs, including insurance.
 - ii. Mileage for commuting or travel between home and work sites, mileage for travel by volunteers, and fuel costs/mileage tied to personal vehicle use.
 - iii. Note: Only Mileage and fuel that both exceed \$500 total for staff travel for official business is eligible
 - iv. Insurance reimbursement is not supported for General Liability, Board of Directors Insurance, Motor Vehicles, Equipment, or any specialty insurance, even when program-related. Insurance is the responsibility of the subrecipient for organizational activities.
 - v. Program funding that utilizes volunteers for construction/repair of a structure.
 - vi. Purchasing furnishings, personal property, equipment, fixtures, motor vehicles, or other personal property not an integral structural fixture is ineligible.
 - vii. Administrative costs that are not in direct service to beneficiaries or the execution of services for eligible direct program costs.
 - viii. For departmental applicants within Richland County Government, CDBG funds cannot be utilized for inherently government responsibilities.

NOTE: Non-profit agencies are exempt from paying federal unemployment tax, although State unemployment tax applies. You will not be reimbursed for any federal unemployment taxes you pay.

➤ **CDBG PUBLIC FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

• **ALLOWABLE EXPENDITURES**

- i. Construction Costs:
 - Site Development: Costs associated with the preparation of the project site, including clearing, grading, and utilities.
 - Building Construction: Expenses related to the construction, renovation, or expansion of public facilities such as community centers, libraries, health clinics, and recreational facilities.
- ii. Architectural and Engineering Services:
 - Costs related to hiring professionals for the design and planning of the public facility.
- iii. Accessibility Improvements:
 - Modifications to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards, making public facilities accessible to individuals with disabilities.
- iv. Energy Efficiency Upgrades:
 - Implementation of energy-efficient technologies and improvements in public facilities to reduce environmental impact and operational costs.

- v. Environmental Review Costs:
 - Expenses associated with environmental assessments and reviews required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).
- vi. Equipment and Furnishings:
 - Purchase of equipment, furnishings, and other items necessary for the operation of the public facility.
- vii. Infrastructure Improvements:
 - Construction or improvement of infrastructure related to the public facility, such as roads, sidewalks, and sewer systems.
- **DISALLOWED EXPENDITURES**
 - i. Purchase of equipment not integral to the function of the structure, furnishings, or personal property
 - ii. Improvements to facilities used for exhibitions, spectator events and cultural purposes
 - iii. Operating and maintenance expenses (The maintenance and repair of public facilities and improvements is generally ineligible e.g., filling potholes, repairing cracks in sidewalks, mowing grass at public recreational areas or replacing street light bulbs)
 - iv. Upgrades to facilities housing general government operations, unless changes directly increase handicap accessibility.
 - v. For departmental applicants within Richland County Government, CDBG funds cannot be utilized *for inherently government responsibilities*. This includes street resurfacing or pot hole repair, which is maintenance, not reconstruction. Only milling and repaving with new asphalt is eligible. Sidewalk reconstruction and ADA ramp installation is encouraged where applicable.

VI) PROPOSAL EVALUATION AND SELECTION CRITERIA:

- Only complete Application Request Proposals received by the deadline of 11:59 PM on Tuesday, March 12, 2024 will be reviewed for eligibility and considered for the full application round.
- After the close of the Application Request Period, Community Development staff will review each submitted application for completeness, basic CDBG program eligibility, and alignment with the 22-26 Five-Year Consolidated Plan.
- As the Grantee of Community Development Block Grant funds, programs, services, facilities and infrastructure operated by Richland County are given priority consideration and will be funded according to program needs and in conformance with HUD eligibility requirements and national objective requirements. Allocations to non-profit organizations are an additional benefit to the community when the funds are available in the total CDBG budget. The County has a 2022-2026 Five-Year Consolidated Plan, which guides these investments and requires the most efficient use of the CDBG allocations to accomplish HUD goals.

- All applicants will be notified by March 19, 2024 if they are invited to submit a full application for CDBG funding.
- Applicants selected to submit a full-application will be notified of next steps within a general timeline as follows:
 - i. March 19, 2024 – Applicants notified of selection to move forward.
 - Invited applicants will have 21 days to complete the Full Application. Required application workshops, Technical Assistance from Community Development staff, and access to the full application through Neighborly Software will be provided for a period of 21 days.
 - Application workshops will provide essential knowledge, empowering participants to submit robust and compliant proposals.
 - Final applications will be evaluated and scored by Application Review Committees comprised of both citizens and County staff. Additional details for scoring and evaluation will be provided.
 - ii. Summer 2024
 - June - Community Development staff will submit the final list of recommended projects and funding levels to County Council for consideration, feedback, and approval.
 - June 14, 2024 – A draft of the 2024 Annual Action Plan will be posted on display with the recommended projects for CDBG funding. A 30-day public comment period will begin.
 - July 16, 2024 – Richland County Council will vote on the final draft of the 2024 Annual Action Plan.
 - iii. August 2024 – The County will submit the final plan to HUD for approval.
 - iv. August – September 2024 – Contracting for PY24 CDBG Projects would start.
 - v. October 1, 2024 - PY24 CDBG programming can begin.