



Neighborhood Services Grants Report

The Neighborhood Services grant program is funded through the general fund with an allocation of \$50,000 each year. The program began in 2015.

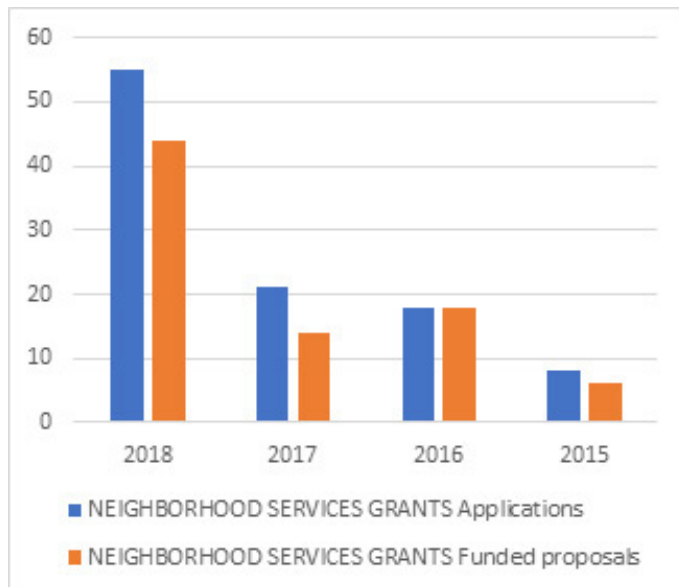
2018



Innovations

In 2018, we experimented with the program to address identified barriers around accessibility and accountability:

- We specified goals for the overall program and asked applicants to align their projects to at least one goal.
- We created a more diverse set of grant opportunities with specific guidelines and applications for each category.
- We changed the distribution model from reimbursement, where expenses had to be funded by residents first, to disbursement, where funds were provided before expenses were incurred.
- Using Arts and Culture grants as a model, we created contract and invoice templates for each grant fund, as well as a report form to ensure implementation and capture results.
- We created Budget forms as part of the application and report processes to help applicants with planning and ensure proper use of funds.
- We conducted outreach through email lists and the Community Newsletter and provided proposal support through trainings, as well as individual consultations with residents.

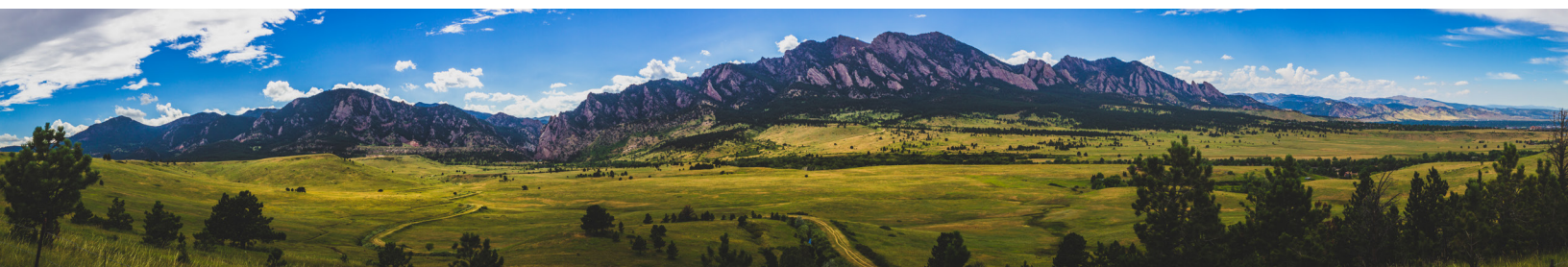


\$45,500 in funds rolled-over to 2018 from previous years

Grant Goals

The re-named **Neighborhood Connection Grants** program funded projects that aligned with one of the three following goals:

- Increase opportunities for neighbors to meet and get to know each other.
- Provide community-building resources to under-resourced neighborhoods.
- Enhance community resilience through personal connections.



Grant Categories

Funds were allocated through six separate categories:

1. National Night Out/Community Cleanup Day reimbursement grants

(non-competitive up to \$300) inspire residents to participate in one or both of these city-wide events by helping to cover some of the expenses.

2. Block Party Fund grants (up to \$700) encourage residents to get their neighbors together to relax and have positive interactions.

3. Spark grants (up to \$2,500) provide resources to get creative with projects/ events designed to build community among neighbors.

4. Enhancement grants (up to \$10,000) fund projects focused on improving the quality of life in a neighborhood by bringing neighbors together.

5. Manufactured Home Community grants (non-competitive up to \$3,000) provide funds specifically for community-building in Boulder's mobile home parks.

6. Creative Neighborhood grants brought professionally facilitated participatory arts workshops and events to various neighborhoods throughout the city through a special contract with an arts organization and neighborhood applications.



A Community Cleanup Day superhero in Elks Park

Results

We received a total of 55 grant applications in 2018, which is more than the three previous years combined. We distributed 44 grants — four times as many as 2017 — providing resources to 38 different neighborhoods. By category:

- We distributed 14 reimbursement grants for Community Cleanup Day and National Night Out for a total of \$3,166.
- We distributed 13 Block Party Grants for a total of \$7,500.
- We distributed six Spark grants for a total of \$10,000.
- We distributed three Enhancement grants for a total of \$19,500. A fourth applicant was offered \$500 to prototype their project idea and declined.
- We distributed three Manufactured Home Park grants for a total of \$8,625.
- We distributed Creative Neighborhoods opportunities through two separate contracts with Mmmwhah! for a total of \$20,600. The first contact supported continuing improvisational/ participatory arts programming in North Boulder and expanding to two additional neighborhoods. The second contract funded facilitation of collaborative "Show-Share-Create" events in different neighborhoods. We received 11 applications from interested neighborhoods and four were selected.



More Results

Grant funds paid for a variety of assets, events and fun:

- A series of seed-saving workshops to honor Rural North Boulder's agricultural heritage and help neighbors connect around food resilience.
- Picnic tables, doggy-waste stations, Free Little Libraries and lawn games to transform unused outdoor common areas into gathering places.
- A Welcome to the Neighborhood BBQ to help integrate CU students into their new home on The Hill.
- A multicultural festival planned by Family Learning Center with the neighborhood children in conjunction with the re-opening of Howard Heuston Park.
- Permanent structures to support the annual Movie Night series in Holiday.
- Bouncy houses, live music, food and table/chair/tent rentals to make block parties fun and easy.

Grant recipients reported success in meeting their stated goals:

- A resident in Wonderland created ChiliFest, bringing neighbors together in a friendly cook-off for the first of what they now plan to make an annual event.
- A gentleman in Orchard Creek, a neighborhood of Gunbarrel, walked and mapped his entire neighborhood of more than 50 houses to meet each neighbor, tell them about the party and get them involved. By hosting a series of driveway coffee chats and evening happy hours, he inspired neighbors to add a morning 5K fun run and afternoon poetry reading to the planned evening block party.
- A member of the Northfield HOA used their block party to gather input about ways residents would like to connect in the future. Neighbors signed up to work on committees to organize a community garden, investigate the Neighborhood Eco-pass and plan summer movie nights. He said their annual meeting is poorly attended, and this was a great way to reach more people.
- The residents of Ponderosa, the manufactured home park now owned by the city, used their block party to celebrate the long journey they have taken to redesign their community. They were able to relax and enjoy each other without the pressures of decision-making or planning for the future. Event organizers also discovered the skills of other potential community leaders who have promised to stay involved.
- Other reported benefits include: new members to neighborhood email list; mixing of renters and owners; mingling with other neighboring HOAs; HOA board members connecting with their community members; inspiring future events; and increased friendliness when neighbors see each other on the street.

Lessons Learned

- We realized it was important to meet people where they are technologically with the online application, report and budget forms. We met with some applicants individually and walked them through the application steps. We also accepted hard-copy applications and reports by drop-off and mail.
- We knew we were asking for more planning and information upfront than in previous years and wanted to provide resources to smooth that path. We found success through the increased outreach and direct proposal consultation. We were able to save the time of both staff and residents by vetting ideas to help find alignment with the stated goals. Training sessions allowed residents to ask questions about what might make their ideas more competitive within the various categories.
- The move to a disbursement model required more strenuous reporting after the completion of the project. We needed to provide more information about reporting requirements and timeline at the point of approval, rather than waiting until later in the year. Now that the reporting system is built out, it should go more smoothly in 2019.
- Although we reduced the maximum Enhancement grant to \$10,000, that number still seems too high. Projects and processes become cumbersome for both staff and neighborhoods at that level, sometimes leading to residents biting off more than they can chew. For 2019, we will experiment with offering a \$5,000 maximum and continue to encourage proposing experiences and place-making instead of the more complicated infrastructure projects that have been inspired by the larger possible funding.
- Fiscal sponsorship continues to be a barrier for some. For neighborhoods without an established HOA it can be difficult to receive funding. Yet those neighborhoods are often where resources are most needed. The city does not disburse funds to individuals and not everyone has access to a nonprofit or small business with whom they can partner. We will continue to brainstorm about solutions for this barrier.

In conclusion, the Neighborhood Connection Grant funding is a valuable asset to our community, inspiring neighbors to meet each other and share positive experiences, which paves the way to neighborhood resilience.

From the event organizers at Ponderosa:

“ This event strengthened ties between neighbors and created new friendships. The diverse community also embraced the many cultures that exist within Ponderosa through generosity, understanding and bilingual activities.

Community members danced together the whole night on the informal gravel and dirt dance floor. Neighborhood children played together, jumping on bounce castles, playing with games provided in the neighborhood block party trailer and filling then destroying a candy piñata!

The party also strengthened ties between the residents and the City of Boulder. Two City Council members attended the celebration and spent time speaking with residents in both Spanish and English. And city staff came with their families to play, dance and enjoy all the great food.

