



2026 Community Programming Fund

Call for Programming





COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING FUND



About

The Community Programming Fund (CPF) is returning for its second year, continuing the City of Bellevue's commitment to supporting activities that help make our outdoor public spaces welcoming, lively, and well-used. The CPF provides grants to organizations, small businesses and individuals organizing activities in plazas, parks and other outdoor areas across the city.

By investing in community-led efforts, the CPF aims to strengthen the experience of visitors, workers, and residents in Bellevue's mixed-use neighborhoods, encouraging people to gather, support local businesses, stay longer, and return more often. The City is looking for ideas that foster community connection, celebrate culture, and create opportunities for people to share experiences in outdoor spaces throughout Bellevue.

The City has authorized a total grant fund of up to \$200,000 that may be awarded under the Community Programming Fund program, including grant awards and limited permit fee coverage. Individual grants range from \$1,000 to \$20,000.

Key Dates and Application Details

- **Application opens:** January 13, 2026
- **Application deadline:** March 2, 2026
- **Award notifications:** April 2026
- **Eligible program dates:**
June 1–December 31, 2026, with priority for programs taking place
June 1–September 30, 2026

How to Apply

Applications are submitted online through SurveyMonkey. You can access the application bellevuewa.gov/cpf.

Program Contact

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Eligible Activities

The Community Programming Fund supports outdoor activities that bring people together and help Bellevue's public spaces feel welcoming, lively, and well-used. Eligible activities may take many forms; examples include live music, cultural celebrations, performances, family or youth-focused activities, fitness and wellness classes, workshops, or hands-on creative experiences. These examples are only a starting point, and we welcome creative ideas of all kinds, as long as they meet the basic eligibility requirements.

Funding Priorities

While the Community Programming Fund welcomes a wide range of ideas, proposals that align with one of the program's three priority areas will receive additional consideration during the evaluation process. These priorities reflect the City's goals of supporting community gathering, increasing foot traffic and retail sales in mixed-use districts, and preparing for increased tourism during the World Cup tournament.



1. Small-Scale Activity Series

Recurring activities help build momentum and give people a reason to return to a space week after week. Because of their ability to create steady foot traffic and familiarity with public spaces, the CPF will prioritize small-scale programming that repeats throughout the season.

Programs in this category typically:

- Attract fewer than 100 people at one time
- Occur three or more times at the same location
- Include wellness classes, live music, performances, workshops, family activities, or similar recurring activities



2. Market Series

Outdoor markets play an important role in creating a sense of place and supporting local vendors. For 2026, the CPF will prioritize market organizers who are building something new—whether expanding to a new location, adding new dates, or reaching new audiences.

Programs in this category typically include:

- Farmers markets, craft or vendor fairs, artisan markets, or night markets
- Markets produced by organizations with a track record of hosting successful events
- Efforts focused on testing new formats, locations, or customer bases



3. Activities Related to the Global Soccer Tournament

Next summer's FIFA World Cup™ soccer tournament is expected to draw significant attention and activity throughout the region. To help Bellevue's public spaces feel welcoming, festive, and community-oriented for visitors, residents, and workers, the



CPF will prioritize proposals that intentionally engage the community around this major event. Activities might directly reference the tournament or simply contribute to the sense of celebration and shared experience it brings.

Programs in this category:

- Take place between June 1–July 19
- May or may not be sports-themed
- Should aim to create a positive atmosphere for residents, workers, and visitors during the tournament season

In the application, applicants will have an opportunity to note whether their proposed program or activation meets one of these funding priorities. Single-day or one-time events are eligible for this program, but unless they align well with one of our funding priorities, they are less likely to receive funding.

Programs Outside These Priority Area

If your program or activity does not closely align with one of these program priorities, you are still welcome to apply, as long as your proposal meets our minimum requirements and can score well on our evaluation criteria.

Programs Not Eligible for Funding

Funding will not be provided for:

- Indoor activities, programs, or events
- Programs, activities, or events with paid tickets
- Private events that are not open to the public
- Large-scale festivals, concerts, or events in parks

Eligible Locations

Because small-scale programs may be suitable for a variety of locations, it is not required to have a location lined up before applying. However:

- All programs must take place in an outdoor public space in Bellevue.
- Grant recipients are responsible for securing all necessary reservations, permissions, and permits for their chosen site.
- Location factors into program feasibility, which is part of our review criteria.

If you are proposing a larger-scale program, like a market or festival, we strongly encourage you have a location identified and start obtaining site approval before applying for the grant.

If you have questions about whether a site is suitable, or would like help understanding what approvals may be required, you are encouraged to contact the CPF team before applying. Staff can offer guidance, but grant recipients are responsible for securing all permissions, reservations, and permits for their chosen location.



CPF-funded programs/activities may take place in any of the following outdoor public spaces:

Plazas

Plazas and outdoor courtyards can be great places for community activities. These spaces are publicly accessible, although many are privately owned. City Hall Plaza is the only City-owned plaza. All others require permission from the property owner.

If your activity is selected for funding, City staff can help connect you with the property manager, and grant recipients will need to follow any procedures that apply to the space.

Examples of possible locations include:

- City Hall Plaza
- Skyline Plaza
- Compass Plaza
- City Center Plaza
- The Eight Plaza
- Spring District Park

Parks

CPF funding is available for small-scale activities in parks that align with existing park use policies. Grant recipients must follow all Park Scheduling Office procedures, and because CPF does not provide priority access, park reservations are subject to normal availability.

Event organizers are responsible for reviewing park policies and confirming that their proposed activity is allowed in the specific park they intend to use.

Large-scale and single-day events proposed in park locations are not eligible for funding through this program.

Examples of possible locations include:

- Ashwood Playfield
- Spiritridge Park
- Robinswood Park
- Highland Park
- Crossroads Park
- Downtown Park

Other Public Spaces

Many outdoor areas beyond parks and plazas—like parking lots and street closures—can be suitable locations for CPF-supported activities.

These spaces must be publicly accessible and able to safely accommodate your proposed activity, and may require permissions or permits depending on ownership and use.

Examples of possible locations include:

- Eastrail
- Temporary street closures
- NE 6th St between 106th and 105th Ave NE
- Parking lots (non-parks)

Grant recipients may host programs and activations in outdoor public spaces not listed here, as long as the site is appropriate for the program and all necessary approvals can be obtained.



What We'll Provide

Grant Funding

Applicants will submit a budget for their proposed program and may request funding at one of the following levels:

- \$1,000
- \$2,500
- \$5,000
- \$7,500
- \$10,000
- \$20,000 (eligible for market series only)

Funding is provided on a reimbursement basis, meaning grant recipients will receive payment after completing the program and submitting required documentation.

Permit Guidance

The City cannot waive or expedite permit requirements, and it cannot provide preferential access to public spaces or parks. Grant recipients will be responsible for securing all necessary permits and approvals, but City staff can provide guidance and support to help navigate the process.

Permit Fee Coverage

In addition to the grant award, we'll cover the application and review fees associated with any permits required through our Development Services team, including right-of-way, fire, and amplified sound permits. We will not award additional funds to cover facility rental fees or fees/charges associated with larger programs permitted through our Special Event Committee process; however, permit fees associated with Special Events and other required permits are eligible expenses for grant reimbursement.

Marketing Support

Grant recipients may receive assistance from the City to help promote their program through City channels, including social media, newsletters, and public event calendars. Grant recipients are required to acknowledge City funding in their promotional materials.



Application Process and Timeline



- Submit application:** Applicants submit a detailed application through SurveyMonkey, outlining the event or program, including the target audience, goals, and logistics.
- City review and scoring:** The City will review applications for completeness, then score proposals based on alignment with program goals, community impact, and feasibility. Additional information may be requested during this review.
- Award notification and contracting:** Applications selected for funding will enter a formal contract with the City. The contract will outline responsibilities, budget, reporting requirements, and reimbursement process.
A Certificate of Insurance is required before a contract can be finalized. This may include general liability, event insurance, and workers' compensation if applicable. Costs for insurance may be covered by your grant.
- Activity/program production:** Grant recipients are responsible for organizing, scheduling, and producing the program, including securing any required permits or approvals. Programs must be executed according to the approved plan.
- Grant Reimbursement:** After completing the program, grant recipients must submit a post-grant report summarizing public benefit and community impact, along with a grant invoice. Reimbursement is issued after the City reviews and approves the documentation and may take up to 30 days from the date the post-event report is submitted.

Application opens January 13, 2026

Application deadline March 2, 2026

Award notification April 2026

Eligible program dates June 1–December 31, 2026, with priority for programs taking place June 1–September 30, 2026.



Eligibility

Who Can Apply:

- Individuals
- Community organizations
- Nonprofits
- Small businesses, if programming meets criteria and is not primarily promotional; partnership with a community organization or nonprofit is encouraged

Minimum Program Requirements:

- Have a target audience which includes residents, employees, visitors, and/or students in Bellevue.
- Take place within an eligible outdoor location
- Take place between June 1 and December 31, 2026.
- Be free and open to the public.
- Obtain any necessary permits and/or property owner permission and comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

Grants will not be awarded to:

- Churches, schools, and/or religious organizations where city funds might be used for religious purposes.
- Groups which discriminate based on age, race, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, disability, or national origin.
- Groups currently in litigation with the city.
- Political campaigns or parties.
- Unions representing city employees.
- Organizations with an ongoing place management contract with the city, unless they can demonstrate that the proposed program or activity is (a) substantially different from contracted activities; (b) also funded by other sources such that the City is not the sole funder; and (c) new or substantially expanded from the organization's prior programming.

Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation process ensures alignment with program goals and prioritizes high-quality, impactful activations

Evaluation criteria:

- **Activate public space:** Programs should activate public space, encouraging people to gather, interact, return, and make the most of the area. Programs will be evaluated on how well they would draw people into the space, create a welcoming atmosphere, drive retail spending, and improve the experience of living in, working in, or visiting Bellevue.
- **Alignment with program priorities:** While many types of programs are eligible to receive funding, programs and activities which best align with our program priorities (small-scale series, markets, and the global soccer tournament) will score more highly.
- **Feasibility and experience:** Proposals should be achievable within logistical, financial, and regulatory constraints. Applicants must demonstrate that they have the necessary experience to successfully produce and execute the program, ensuring it can be planned and delivered within the 2026 calendar year.



Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Do I receive access to City facilities or parks if I apply for this program?

A: No, this program provides funding. It does not provide preferential access to City facilities or parks. Reservation requests must be submitted through our Parks or Facilities teams. We will help point you in the right direction, but you are responsible for obtaining all relevant approvals, reservations, and/or permits.

Q: What happens if I receive funding, but my event doesn't end up happening?

A: Because the grant is reimbursement-based, funds will be awarded upon completion of the program.

Q: What permit fees will you cover?

A: In addition to the grant award, we'll cover the application and review fees associated with any permits required through our Development Services team, including right-of-way, fire, and amplified sound permits. We will not award additional funds to cover facility rental fees or fees/charges associated with larger programs permitted through our Special Event Committee process; however, permit fees associated with Special Events and other required permits are eligible expenses for grant reimbursement.

