

Section I: Introduction

1. History

Historically, City of Cincinnati officials and neighborhood leaders have worked together to improve conditions in Cincinnati's individual neighborhoods. City officials recognize local neighborhood leadership and widespread resident volunteerism are essential elements to the vitality of the City. Over the years, Cincinnati has been enriched by the partnership that developed between City officials and neighborhood groups, including the participation by neighborhoods in the Community Budget Requests and the development of Neighborhood Plans. The Neighborhood Support Program (NSP) enhances this partnership. These programs all facilitate resident involvement in developing and implementing policies and projects that impact the city of Cincinnati, recognizing that self-determination in neighborhood improvement is key to successful outcomes that meet the collective City/Neighborhood challenge: "What can we do together to improve the quality of life in our community?"

The NSP was created as a 3-year experiment in 1981 through the allocation of Community Development Block Grant (CBDG) funds to sponsor the program. The success of the program led to continual refunding. In 1988 the City shifted NSP to general revenue funding. Since 1990, the City's partnership with Community Councils has been reaffirmed through its annual funding commitment to NSP.

The City of Cincinnati currently contracts with a 3rd party agency, Invest in Neighborhoods (IIN), to administer the program

2. Purpose

Goal: to enhance the quality of life in each Cincinnati community

Purpose: to fund resident-controlled projects, improve the leadership capacity of Community Councils, and recruit, train, and increase the productivity of volunteers.

Eligibility: NSP funds are available for projects that are planned, implemented, and evaluated by eligible Community Councils (see **ORD 220-1989** for eligibility requirements)

Each approved project must be designed for successful outcomes that positively impact the neighborhood or community overall. Cincinnati City Council has determined a list of types of activities that are in the best interest of the City and its citizens when carried out by Community Councils.

3. NSP Program Qualifying Criteria

If not on file, or in the individual by-laws of a Community Council, the Community Councils must provide a description of its territorial boundaries to the NSP Director to file with the appropriate City department

All NSP-funded neighborhoods shall operate in accordance with the City of Cincinnati **Ordinance #220-1989**.

The Community Council shall allow full membership and voting rights to any resident 18 years or older; however, non-residents cannot vote or hold office unless Community Council By-Laws or regulations stipulate that "at least once per year, any group of at least five residents may require a special vote at which only residents may vote to determine whether persons other than residents shall have or continue to have voting privileges or be eligible to hold office."

Community Councils may not bar from membership or otherwise discriminate against persons based on ethnicity, race, sex, age, handicap, religion, national origin, or type of housing.

Section II: Eligible Categories, Activities, & Expense Regulations

1. Eligible Categories:

- **Neighborhood Leadership Development Activities** - that strengthen, improve, and develop neighborhoods through *human development* activities
- **Communication Projects** - specific or general activities that seek to inform, educate, and publicize the work of the Community Council, special activities, or events
- **Neighborhood Improvement Activities** - that focus on cleanup and beautification, recreation area development, conservation, capital improvements (not private property), and the acquisition of fixed assets.
- **Educational Activities** - which seek to enhance existing programs or opportunities, inform residents of new neighborhood initiatives such as environmental or development issues, or to create new programming that will fill an education void for youth, teenagers, adults, or senior citizens.
- **Neighborhood Services** - designed to aid law enforcement, develop or enhance recreation opportunities, stimulate economic or commercial development, or manage, study, or promote environmental issues.
- **Problem-Solving Projects** - to investigate problems or conditions in an effort to develop a comprehensive plan to improve or alter situations communities deem a priority.
- **Quality of Life** - projects or activities which will improve the quality of life and serve public needs that are consistent with the NSP Guidelines.
- **Council Business/Administrative/Operations**—costs which are not direct project costs, but necessary for the work of the Community Councils

Example Activities by Category

Categories	Example Activities
Neighborhood Leadership Development Activities (human development– not physical stuff) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase membership • Leadership training • seminar attendance • Youth leadership development • Fund-raising projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundraisers • training and seminar for CC members leadership development • youth councils • membership drives
Communication projects (“branding, marketing & communications”) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inform, educate, publicize CC • inform, educate, publicize events and activities • neighborhood identification elements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • newsletters • website • social media • forums, panels and other public/virtual meetings • signage (NOT gateway) • banners • flags
Neighborhood Improvement Activities (“Neighborhood Development” – physical stuff) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cleanup • beautification • recreation area development • conservation • capital improvements • acquisition of fixed assets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community gardens & urban farms • landscaping/greenspace • business district façade programs • gateway signs • 3rd party neighborhood improvement programs, such as KCB, PWC, Give Back Cincinnati “Paint the Block”, Safe & Clean Grant • Historic Preservation Project • Eliminate Blight (vacant lots/vacant building area clean up) • Parking lot purchase, parking lot maintenance • purchase of other property
Educational Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhance existing programs or opportunities • inform new initiatives or issues • educational programming for youth, teens, adults, seniors 	To educate residents, not just “with school” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • computer literacy • home repair training • Youth programs • Senior programs
Neighborhood Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aid law enforcement • enhance recreation opportunities • stimulate economic or commercial development • manage, study, or promote environmental issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • special event security • safe streets/pedestrian safety/street calming • job programs for locals (actually hiring local residents) • recreational
Planning (“Problem Solving Projects”) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop a comprehensive plan • investigate problems or issues to prioritize 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • business district plan • neighborhood plan • planning related to CBRs
Quality of Life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve quality of life • serve public needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • farmers markets / yard sales • health fairs/health services • Events (of all sizes) • Collaborative activities with local schools, churches, orgs, etc
Council Business / Operations / Admin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs which are not direct project costs

2. NSP Program Expense Regulations

NSP is government (taxpayer) funds which must be spent for public good.

Not Permissible

- All direct social services such as emergency food, housing assistance, and distribution of products or gifts are not permissible
- Direct cash awards to individuals or groups, including gift cards and gift certificates.
- Advertising that appears in NSP-subsidized publications, with the exception of locally owned neighborhood businesses.
- Entertainment, events and activities not for a public purpose
- Payments to Board members, Council Officers, NSP manager, and/or their immediate families, with the exception of minor children participating in group activities
- Activities that duplicate government services which are currently available within the neighborhood.
- Use of NSP funds to endorse or promote political candidates or their activities.
- Use of NSP funds to donate to causes is prohibited.
- Activities that fail to serve any public purpose.
- Legal Fees to contest any City rulings.
- Improvement to Private Property.
- Activities Prohibited by City, County, State and Federal Law.

3. NSP Program Limitations on Expenses

- Routine operating expenses, which are not direct project expenses of the Community Council, such as rent, utilities, phone service, and post office box, annual taxes, building maintenance and repair, and equipment rental, not to exceed **\$1500** per contract year,
- Food expenses limited to **\$2000** per contract year for community/public purposes
- Fundraising in support of NSP-eligible activities is allowed, however, expenditures for prizes **may not exceed \$500** per contract year. Community Council officers and their families may not be recipients of awards or prizes.
- All NSP-funded publications **shall be limited to \$3,000** per contract year unless the Community Council distributes at least one issue to every residence in its neighborhood, in which case the Community Council is eligible for **\$4,000** per contract year.
- Preparation of Annual audits and/or financial reports should **not exceed \$1000** of NSP-funds.
- Capital assets**, equipment, and/or cleanup supplies, tools, etc., **shall be made available to the neighborhood for NSP projects, stored in a publicly accessible location.**

***capital assets = items having a useful life of three years or more where cost exceeds \$1500*

Section III: NSP Review Process and Committee

1. NSP Approval Process

- a. NSP proposals are initially presented during an open Community Council meeting allowing community residents to vote on proposed activities/projects.
- b. After the NSP Director receives the submitted proposal, the content is reviewed for eligibility. Once reviewed the proposal is presented before the NSP Review Committee at the next schedule meeting.
- c. The proposal is presented to the Review Committee for vote and recommendation to the NSP Director for contract
- d. After approval, the proposal is attached to the Council's NSP contract.
- e. Community Councils may not begin incurring expenses until in receipt of the fully executed contract (signed by all parties)

Proposals MAY NOT be submitted for the new fiscal year prior to the submission AND APPROVAL of the previous fiscal year's Final Report

2. The NSP Review Committee

The Review Committee is comprised of nine to ten neighborhood representatives, who are members of Cincinnati Community Councils, to serve as a peer review group for all NSP proposals. **A minimum of five members of the Review Committee shall be present at a meeting to constitute a quorum.** The Review Committee shall meet a minimum of seven times per year for a series of established and publicized scheduled meeting times and deadlines for proposal submissions and amendments for the coming fiscal year.

Community Councils are REQUIRED to participate on the NSP Review Committee according to a pre-set 5-year rotation. Review Committee members must attend a majority of the Committee meetings scheduled during their term for their Community Council to be considered as having fulfilled their obligation to serve. **A Community Council that does not fulfill this requirement will be subject to suspension by the Review Committee from participation in NSP.** The Review Committee will review potential suspensions and recommend reinstatement conditions for each case.

Proposal review

The Review Committee shall review and approve proposals for recommendation of the issuance of a contract if, in its opinion:

- a. The NSP Guidelines have been met
- b. All proposal projects are adequately defined
- c. The proposed budget is reasonable and clearly itemized
- d. There is evidence that the Council submitting the proposal can manage the contract to a successful conclusion

The Review Committee may:

- Approve for recommendation/vote against recommendation of an entire proposal
- Approve portions of any proposal and reject others.
- Approve projects with specific conditions for changes and corrections prior to implementation

A proposal is approved if it receives a majority of votes among those attending that particular meeting. If requested, those voting against a proposal (in whole or in part) shall cite the specific criteria with which the proposal does not comply. The Review Committee may invalidate a specific vote if a pertinent section is not cited.

Amendment Review

The Review Committee will review project amendments (Formal Amendments) which substantially alter the original proposal approved for contract.

3. NSP Manager

It is the eligible Community Councils' responsibility to appoint a volunteer to serve as a liaison between the NSP Director and the Community Council to ensure effective participation in the NSP Program.

Duties of the NSP Manager:

- Facilitate the Community Council's eligibility and participation in NSP
- Work with their Community Council committees to plan projects and budgets that maximize the awarded NSP-funds for each calendar year
- Submit monthly progress reports to the Community Council related to annual contract
- Notify the NSP Director of any concerns, problems, or questions pertaining to the successful implementation of the NSP contract and/or maintaining the neighborhood's eligibility for NSP
- The NSP Manager or any Community Council designee is required to adhere to the following NSP Guidelines to ensure the neighborhood's continued compliance with the Program:
 - Attend NSP Review Committee Meeting(s) to answer questions related to the program proposal
 - Attend any mandatory NSP Financial and Administrative Procedures Training Sessions, unless directed as unnecessary by IIN. A Community Council shall have at least one representative attend the annual NSP Financial and Administrative Procedure Training. **Failure to attend will result in the Community Council's temporary suspension from participation in NSP until training requirements have been met**
 - Submit and/or retain all required NSP documentation and financial support materials by stated deadlines, including interim reports, financial bookkeeping, and volunteer hours' log, and other documentation as required for financial management or listed in the Document Retention Policy