Spark Grant FAQs

What is the intended purpose of Spark Grants?

Spark grants are intended to spark creative positive change, inspire grassroots leadership, and provide a way for you to make your people-powered dream a reality in your community. This program provides a **maximum grant of $1,500.00** to support inspiring, actionable, relevant projects that develop a sense of community.

Who can apply?

This grant program is for individuals: grassroots organizers, go-getters, and connoisseurs of community who have great ideas on how to make their neighborhood a better place.

Can youth apply?

Youth under 18 wishing to apply are welcome to do so, but will need to partner with an adult age 18 or older. The adult should be listed as the primary contact on the application, with the youth as a secondary contact.

Can previous applicants apply again?

If you have previously received a Spark grant and would like to apply again, you may do so but can only be awarded one Spark grant within a 12-month period. We ask that you only submit one idea per application deadline. If you applied for a Spark Grant and were not selected, we invite you to apply again, either with the same idea or with a different idea during a future grant cycle. Be sure to review these guidelines carefully to ensure that your application will be competitive.

Where do I have to live or work to apply?

If you live or work in Pierce County, Washington, and have an awesome idea that will benefit the broader community, build a sense of community, and take place in Pierce County, this grant program is for you. Spark grants only fund projects that occur in Pierce County.

Can non-profits apply?

New, start-up non-profits that are led by volunteers and are kicking off a new idea may be considered for Spark grants. However, well-established non-profits will not be considered and should review our other grant programs to see what might be applicable to them.

What projects will be considered for funding?

A wide variety of projects could fit these parameters, but preference will be given to ideas that:

- Bring diverse people together (how can you bring people together who don't normally interact?)
- Inspire a sense of community by uniting people around a common goal
- Build on community strengths or offer exciting ideas to address community challenges
- Present a realistic and achievable plan to accomplish the project within a six-month time-frame
- Are supported and led by people who are trusted and becoming recognized within their community as connectors and leaders
- Are feasible to accomplish with the $1,500.00 grant OR are supported with matching resources (including donated goods, services, money, or volunteer time) to ensure that the project is attainable
- Are unique efforts to support something that doesn't already exist

Inspire us with interesting and innovative plans!

What won't be considered for funding?

Grant funding is available for the expenses involved in the creation and execution of the proposed project. Spark grant funding needs to benefit the broader community. We will NOT consider funding projects that:

- Compensate you for your community work (i.e. no salary)
- Include purchases or payments for personal use (i.e. no rent money, car payments, laptops, etc.)---occasionally equipment purchases or contract labor may be considered (see below)
- Support the general operating, program, capital, or capacity-building needs of established non-profits
- Do not explain clearly how the funding will be used, how the project will be implemented, and how it will benefit the community and bring it together
- Seek sponsorship for a recurring event or fundraiser
- Seek support for a capital building endeavor
- Seek funding for individual scholarships

Can funding be used for equipment purchases and contract labor?

A Spark grant might be used to fund an **equipment purchase** if:

- The applicant has investigated the availability of the item in the community and has determined that it is not available from a resident or institution in the neighborhood for use in the project.
- The applicant has explored the option of renting the equipment and this is not possible.

If both borrowing and renting are not feasible, the applicant must demonstrate that an equipment purchase would advance the mission of the project and align with Spark grant intent. The applicant must identify a public place where the equipment will be stored and made available to other members of the community.

Spark grants will occasionally fund **contracted labor** if the success of the project requires professional expertise that is not available in the community.

Who retains ownership of the project? Do I need to repay the Foundation for my grant?

A Spark grant is not a loan or investment. The Greater Tacoma Community Foundation will not claim any ownership of the project, nor will we expect repayment of the grant.

What are the expectations of grant recipients?

All grant recipients will be expected to agree to and be responsible for:

- Attending a short orientation meeting to review grant requirements, meet other grantees, and complete necessary paperwork prior to receiving funding
- Signing a contract agreeing to grant requirements and completing a W-9 (Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification) tax form (this is collected in case we have to report the income to the IRS as taxable on a Form 1099 if all grant expenditure requirements are not completed)
- Following through with the project as it was proposed, including spending funds as proposed
- Tracking project expenses and receipts
- Taking a few photos and videos of the project
- Submitting photos/videos, receipts, a report of project expenses (we'll provide a template), and any unspent funds (per IRS requirements) to The Greater Tacoma Community Foundation within six months of the grant notification date (we prefer that the project use all of the funds but if that does not seem likely, please contact Community Foundation staff to discuss the situation)
- Participating in a final interview within six months of the grant notification date to discuss what was achieved, what was learned, and plans for the future
- Allowing the project to be highlighted, publicized, and shared by The Greater Tacoma Community Foundation

Are there mandatory background check for finalists?

The Community Foundation will run background checks on the primary contact names for all Spark grant finalist candidates that have submitted an application and have been interviewed by the Spark Grant Committee. Applicants will be asked to sign a waiver acknowledging that the Community Foundation will be running background checks before making final funding decisions. Names will be run

through the Washington State Patrol background check website and the National Sex Offender public website.

A Spark Grant application will be ineligible if the primary contact falls under any of these categories:

- Has ever been convicted of a sexual offense
- Has been convicted of a drug related offense in the last 5 years
- Has been convicted of a violent crime against a person in the last 5 years
- Has been convicted of a crime against property in the last 5 years
- Has been convicted of harassment in the last 5 years
- Has been convicted of a weapons-related offense in the last 5 years
- Additional criminal history is subject to review

Ineligible grantees will be contacted by Community Foundation staff and informed of the decision.

Why does GTCF support Spark Grants?

The Spark grant program emerged as a product of The Greater Tacoma Community Foundation's Be the Spark movement, which launched in 2010 as a movement to inspire individuals to take action and make a meaningful difference. Be the Spark has engaged diverse communities, energized young people to recognize their potential, and was bolstered by an inspirational event in 2011 that featured Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

In 2012, The Greater Tacoma Community Foundation partnered with One Nation, a philanthropic collaborative founded by George R. Russell, Jr., to create the Spark grants program.

In 2016, Spark grants became additionally powered by South Sound Together, which is a project dedicated to increasing the profile of Pierce County to share why it is a good place to do business and a great place to live.