



RICHMOND THRIVES GRANTS PROGRAM 2026

Applicant Guidelines

United Way-administered priorities:
Children and Families | Economic Mobility

For questions: grants@yourunitedway.org

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Use this page to quickly find key applicant guidance.

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TIP

Start with Program at a Glance, then use the sections you need as you prepare.

PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

Key information applicants should know before beginning an application.

The Richmond Thrives Grants Program supports programs, services, and strategies that advance City priorities and directly benefit City of Richmond residents. United Way Greater Richmond and Petersburg administers the Children and Families and Economic Mobility priority areas.

\$625,000

Available for the Children and Families priority area.

\$1,465,856

Available for the Economic Mobility priority area.

NO MAXIMUM REQUEST

Applicants should request the amount needed to carry out the proposed work and clearly explain the request.

APPLICATION DEADLINE

September 11, 2026 by 11:59 p.m.

WHAT THIS GUIDE COVERS

- Program overview and timeline
- Priority areas and funding
- Eligibility and fiscal sponsors
- Application process and Foundant steps
- Preparing a strong, complete application
- Budget, required documents, review, and award process
- Common issues and submission checklist

START EARLY

Create your account, gather documents, and begin the eligibility screener well before the deadline.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND TIMELINE

A community investment opportunity focused on City of Richmond residents.

PURPOSE

Invest in work that improves outcomes, reduces disparities, and supports thriving families, neighborhoods, and economic opportunity.

FOUR PRIORITY AREAS

Richmond Thrives includes Children and Families, Economic Mobility, Health, and Arts & Culture. These guidelines cover the two priority areas administered by United Way.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Use the United Way application only if your proposed work best fits Children and Families or Economic Mobility.

2026 GRANT TIMELINE

AUG 10	Grant application opens at 12:00 p.m.
AUG 20	Technical assistance session #1
AUG 26	Technical assistance session #2
SEP 11	Application deadline by 11:59 p.m.
OCT 1 - NOV 6	Grant application review window
NOV 16 - 27	Proposed awardees and amounts submitted for City review/approval
DEC 10	United Way Board approval of grant awardees
DEC 14 - 22	Award notices, agreements, and fund disbursement

PLAN BACKWARD

Do not wait until the final day: create your account, gather documents, and start the eligibility screener early.

PRIORITY AREAS

Applicants using the United Way portal should select one priority area and one matching sub-focus/indicator.

UNITED WAY ADMINISTERS

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Supports educational pathways and family well-being.

ECONOMIC MOBILITY

Supports pathways from poverty to stability and wealth building.

OTHER RICHMOND THRIVES PRIORITIES

HEALTH

Administered by Richmond Henrico Public Health Foundation.

ARTS & CULTURE

Administered by CultureWorks.

APPLICATION RULE

Applicants may submit one application to one Richmond Thrives priority area per cycle, unless the fiscal sponsor exception applies.

CHOOSING YOUR PRIORITY AREA

Select the priority area that best matches the proposed work. The application will also ask you to identify the corresponding sub-focus area and explain why the proposed program, project, or activity is a fit.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Work that supports educational pathways and family well-being.

GOALS

- Send children to kindergarten ready to succeed.
- Connect school-age children to high-quality activities beyond the classroom.
- Support postsecondary success for young people ages 14-24.
- Respond to the needs of children and families in crisis.

SUB-FOCUS OPTIONS

- Early Childhood Development
- Out-of-School-Time Programming for ages 3-11 / grades PK-5
- Postsecondary Success for ages 14-24
- Parent/caregiver education and support
- Responding to children and families in crisis

IMPORTANT

Out-of-School-Time programming for grades 6-12 is funded through the Positive Youth Development Fund administered by NextUp. Requests to support OST for grades 6-12 will not be considered in this priority area.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

School-based programming requirements.

SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMMING

School-based programming may be considered for funding only when the proposed program or activity meets all of the following conditions:

- 1** The activity is not a service, responsibility, or core function that Richmond Public Schools is primarily responsible for providing.
- 2** The activity is not duplicative of services, activities, staffing, or supports already funded by Richmond Public Schools, the City of Richmond, or another City-funded program.
- 3** The activity clearly aligns with one of the approved Children and Families sub-focus areas.
- 4** If the activity will take place in an RPS school setting, the applicant must have an RPS partnership agreement, site approval, memorandum of understanding, or other written documentation confirming approval to operate in that setting.
- 5** Applicants may not be RPS employees applying as individuals or on behalf of organizations to enhance, expand, or supplement programming, services, or activities they currently or will provide as part of existing or new initiatives.

ECONOMIC MOBILITY AND FUNDING

Work that supports stability, opportunity, and wealth-building pathways.

ECONOMIC MOBILITY GOALS

- Reduce poverty.
- Connect people to living-wage careers.
- Reduce employment disparities.
- Support residents moving above the ALICE threshold.
- Reduce homelessness and support housing stability.

SUB-FOCUS OPTIONS

- Workforce equity and skills development for adults
- Entrepreneurship support and technical assistance
- Justice-involved residents or those at elevated risk of violence
- Homelessness prevention and services
- Economic opportunity access and barrier removal
- Housing accessibility and housing stability services

HOUSING REQUESTS

Housing-related requests should support access, navigation, or stability services - not brick-and-mortar construction, new-unit construction, or acquisition.

FUNDING AND USE OF FUNDS

\$625,000

Children and Families priority area.

\$1,465,856

Economic Mobility priority area.

NO MAXIMUM

Request the amount needed and clearly explain the request.

Potentially eligible costs include program staff time, direct service delivery, participant supports, outreach, supplies/materials, training or technical assistance, transportation, data/evaluation, partnership coordination, and other approved costs directly tied to the work.

Restricted examples include activities that do not directly benefit Richmond residents, personal expenses, duplicate City-funded activities, activities unrelated to the selected priority area, or costs prohibited by final guidelines or agreement.

WHO MAY APPLY AND FISCAL SPONSORS

Confirm your applicant structure before you begin.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

501(c)(3) organizations, including faith-based organizations, are eligible to apply. Each organization may apply to only one priority area per cycle and may submit only one application to that priority area.

FISCAL SPONSOR POLICY

A nonprofit fiscal sponsor may apply on behalf of another nonprofit organization. The fiscal sponsor must be the primary applicant and independently meet all eligibility requirements.

FISCAL SPONSOR RESPONSIBILITY

If funded, United Way will contract solely with the fiscal sponsor. The fiscal sponsor assumes legal, financial, reporting, compliance, and programmatic responsibility for the project.

FISCAL SPONSOR EXCEPTION

An organization serving as fiscal sponsor may submit a second application on behalf of a sponsored project, provided the funds go entirely to the sponsored project except allowed administrative fees.

BEFORE YOU START

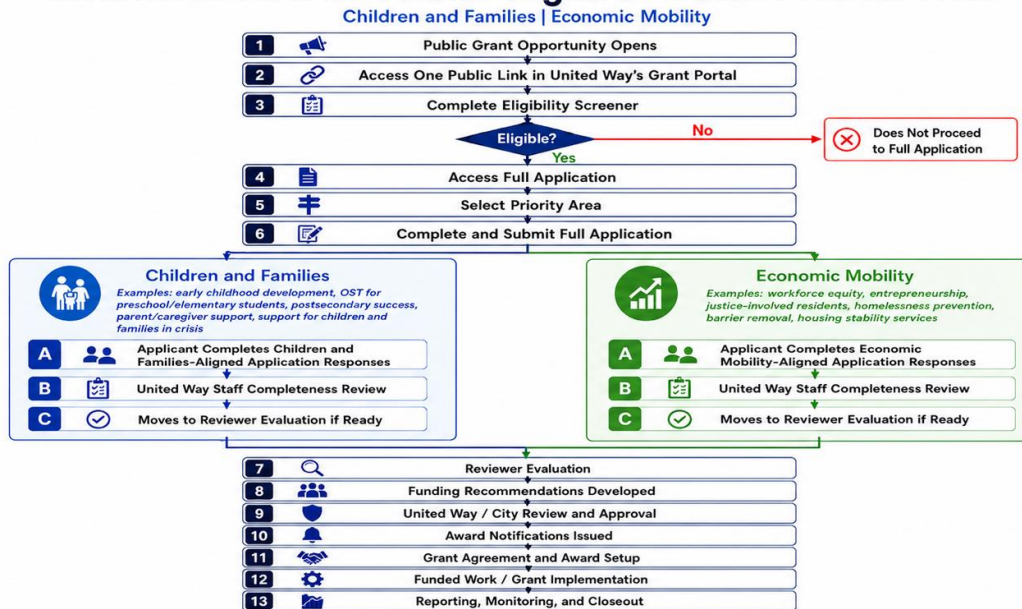
- Confirm that your organization is eligible to apply.
- Confirm which Richmond Thrives priority area best fits the proposed work.
- If using a fiscal sponsor, confirm the applicant structure and responsibilities before beginning the application.
- Use an email address that will be monitored throughout the application and award process.

HOW THE APPLICATION PROCESS WORKS

One public link, eligibility screener, full application, review, and decisions.

The process begins with the public grant opportunity and eligibility screener. Eligible applicants gain access to the full application, select the applicable priority area, and submit the full application for staff completeness review and reviewer evaluation.

Richmond Thrives Grant Program – Grant Process Flow



IMPORTANT

Passing the eligibility screener allows access to the full application but does not guarantee funding. Complete applications remain subject to staff review, reviewer evaluation, required approval, and availability of funds.

FOUNDANT APPLICATION STEPS

Use the United Way grant portal link posted on the grants website.

STEP 1 - CREATE OR ACCESS YOUR ACCOUNT

- Start from the Richmond Thrives Grants Program page on the United Way website and use the public grant portal link.
- Existing users: log in with your email/username and password. Use Forgot Your Password? if needed.
- New users: select Create New Account and complete user and organization registration information.
- Verify your email and return to Apply so you can receive system communications.
- Avoid duplicate organization records. If someone else at your organization already has an account, contact United Way for help connecting your user account.

Information often requested at registration includes organization name, EIN/Tax ID, website, telephone, organization email, address, applicant name, title, email/username, phone, and executive officer information.

FOUNDANT APPLICATION STEPS

Eligibility screener and full application.

STEP 2 - COMPLETE THE ELIGIBILITY SCREENER

- After logging in, click Apply, then select Check Eligibility.
- Complete all required questions. Required questions are marked with an asterisk.
- Save and return if needed, then submit the eligibility form when responses are complete.
- Eligible opportunities will appear on the Apply page. Click Apply to begin the full application.

The screener confirms applicant type, City of Richmond resident benefit, ability to track residents served, priority area fit, budget/reporting/documentation readiness, and certification of accuracy.

ELIGIBILITY QUESTION

If the screener says you are not eligible and you believe you answered in error, contact grants@yourunitedway.org before the deadline.

STEP 3 - COMPLETE THE FULL APPLICATION

The full application asks for organization/background information, priority area and sub-focus fit, the proposed work, community need and resident benefit, equity/accessibility/community voice, staffing and partnerships, expected outputs and outcomes, data collection, budget, budget narrative, and required documents.

Save as you go. Watch character limits. Once submitted, the application cannot be edited. Confirm that the application was submitted successfully.

PREPARE BEFORE YOU START

Gather key information and documents before entering the portal.

PROGRAM DETAILS

Project/program name, requested amount, total project budget, start/end dates, project status, activities, implementation lead, staff/volunteers/consultants, and partners.

RESIDENT BENEFIT

Estimated number of City residents served, neighborhoods/ZIP codes/schools/communities, and the tracking method you will use.

NEED AND RESULTS

Need/gap/barrier, community voice or data that shaped the work, priority-area indicators, targets, and tracking methods.

DOCUMENTS

Organization budget, program/project budget, IRS determination letter or proof of status, financial statement, audit/review, and fiscal sponsor documentation if applicable.

BUDGET / BUDGET NARRATIVE

Be ready to explain how requested funds will be used and why the amount is reasonable for the scope, residents served, and expected outcomes.

INTERNAL APPROVALS

Make sure the correct organizational contact is authorized to submit and certify application information.

CITY OF RICHMOND RESIDENT BENEFIT

This is a core eligibility and scoring consideration.

Applications should clearly explain who will benefit, where they are located, and how City of Richmond resident participation will be tracked.

DESCRIBE WHO WILL BE SERVED

Residents, communities, neighborhoods, ZIP codes, schools, voting districts, or populations.

ESTIMATE RESIDENTS SERVED

Provide a realistic number of City residents expected to benefit during the grant period.

EXPLAIN THE TRACKING METHOD

Use intake, registration, address/ZIP, attendance records, referral source, service location, self-attestation, or another practical method.

STRONG RESPONSE

Connect the proposed activities, location, target population, and tracking method. For outreach-based or low-barrier services, describe the practical method you will use to confirm or reasonably estimate Richmond resident benefit.

BUDGET AND BUDGET NARRATIVE

Show how the requested funds directly support the proposed work.

AMOUNT REQUESTED

The amount requested from the Richmond Thrives Grants Program.

TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET

The full cost of the proposed work, including this grant and all other funding/resources.

PROJECT BUDGET UPLOAD

The detailed budget document that explains costs by category.

- The budget should match the activities described in the application.
- Do not duplicate expenses already funded by another City grant or City program.
- Explain assumptions, especially for personnel, contractors, participant supports, supplies, transportation, and evaluation.
- If using a fiscal sponsor, clearly identify fiscal sponsor fees and which funds go to the sponsored project.
- The total in the budget form should align with the amount requested in the application.

REVIEWER LENS

Is the budget clear, reasonable, connected to the work, and appropriate for the scope and residents served?

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS AND UPLOADS

Make sure files are complete, current, and readable.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

- Organization budget
- Program or project budget for the proposed work, using the provided Budget Form Template
- IRS determination letter or proof of nonprofit/public status
- Most recent financial statement
- Most recent formal audit or financial review
- Fiscal sponsor documentation, if applicable
- Additional documents needed for compliance or grant agreement purposes

UPLOAD TIPS

- Use clear file names.
- Upload the correct document in the correct field.
- Confirm that files open before submitting.
- Submit before the deadline.
- Keep copies for your records.

FOUNDANT FILE UPLOADS

Foundant file upload questions usually accept one file per upload field. Combine pages into one file when needed.

REVIEW AND SCORING

Applications move through eligibility, staff review, and reviewer evaluation.

ELIGIBILITY SCREENER	Confirms whether the applicant and request meet basic eligibility requirements before accessing the full application.
STAFF COMPLETENESS REVIEW	United Way staff confirm objective items such as completeness, uploads, City resident benefit, fiscal sponsor documents, and certifications.
REVIEWER EVALUATION	Applications that pass staff review are scored by reviewers using the approved criteria and rubric.

SEVEN REVIEW AREAS

- Strategic fit
- Target population / geographic benefit
- Community need / equity / access
- Design / feasibility
- Results / measurement
- Budget / stewardship
- Organizational capacity / readiness

DECISION PROCESS	Reviewer scores and comments inform funding recommendations. Final decisions are subject to required approval and available funding.
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AWARD PROCESS AND POST-AWARD EXPECTATIONS

What happens after review.

1. FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

United Way develops proposed awardee selections and funding amounts through the review process.

2. REQUIRED REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Proposed awardees and supporting justification are submitted for required review and approval.

3. AWARD NOTIFICATION

Applicants are notified by email only after required approvals are complete.

4. GRANT AGREEMENT AND SETUP

Awardees complete grant agreement steps before funds are released.

SELECTED GRANTEES SHOULD EXPECT TO

- Submit reports and expenditure documentation.
- Track City residents served.
- Report outcomes and implementation updates.
- Maintain financial records.
- Participate in check-ins, monitoring meetings, or site visits if requested.

FUNDING IS NOT GUARANTEED

Submitting an application and passing the eligibility screener do not guarantee funding.

KEEP YOUR APPLICATION RECORDS

Keep copies of the materials you submit. If selected, the application, budget, resident tracking approach, and proposed results will inform grant setup, reporting, monitoring, and closeout expectations.

COMMON ISSUES TO AVOID

Use this page as a final review before submitting.

FIT AND ELIGIBILITY

- Choosing the wrong priority area
- Describing work that does not directly benefit City residents
- Using the United Way portal for Health or Arts & Culture applications
- Applying to multiple Richmond Thrives priority areas when rules prohibit it

APPLICATION QUALITY

- Vague project summary
- Weak explanation of need
- No clear target population
- Activities, budget, and outcomes not aligned

DOCUMENTS AND SUBMISSION

- Missing required uploads
- Incorrect budget form
- Unreadable files
- Waiting until the deadline
- Not watching for submission confirmation

STRONG APPLICATIONS

Stronger applications are clear, complete, realistic, and aligned. They do not need to be long; they need to be specific.

FINAL SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

Complete this final review before submitting your application.

- 1 Confirm that the proposed work is aligned with Children and Families or Economic Mobility.
- 2 Confirm that the work directly benefits City of Richmond residents and explain how that benefit will be tracked.
- 3 Complete the eligibility screener and access the full application.
- 4 Gather and upload all required documents.
- 5 Confirm that the requested amount, project budget, budget upload, activities, and outcomes tell the same story.
- 6 Check character limits and confirm that uploaded files are readable.
- 7 Submit before September 11, 2026 at 11:59 p.m.
- 8 Watch for confirmation that the application was submitted successfully.

QUESTIONS

Contact grants@yourunitedway.org.