



This Frequently Asked Questions document explains the recent changes in Neighborhood Allies' grants process. We'd love to talk with you if you have more questions. Call us at 412.471.3727 or email grants@neighborhoodallies.org and Let's Be Allies!

What happened to the Small & Simple Grants and Catalytic Grants programs?

In early 2017, we replaced them with one grantmaking program for nonprofits, community-based organizations, and collaboratives. There's now one simple [online Idea Paper](#) that serves as an intake for grant requests. You can also use the Idea Paper to start a conversation about loans and other financing through our partnership with Local Initiatives Support Corporation.

Why make the change?

We implemented the Catalytic Grants and Small & Simple Grants programs in 2013 during the transition between the launch of Neighborhood Allies and the close of its predecessor, Pittsburgh Partnership for Neighborhood. Our board meant for the programs to be interim solutions until we had a better understanding of how we could best use our limited financial resources.

In late 2015, our board asked staff to re-assess our grant programs to better ensure that they:

- Fill a useful niche in a region full of large foundations active in improving our neighborhoods,
- Effectively build on the assets and talents you – our community allies – bring to the table, and
- Don't lose the entrepreneurial, flexible, bold spirit in which our organization was launched.

How did you decide on the changes?

Staff discussed feedback we received at grant application meetings and through an online survey of our allies. We also discussed feedback our board members had received from nonprofits and other funders. A consultant experienced in grantmaking and community development facilitated meetings with members of our staff, board, and Investment Advisory Committee. In those, we discussed how our grants could fill a more distinctive role within the mix of funders. The common themes that emerged were:

- Increase flexibility by moving away from formal grant rounds to an ongoing process
- Increase the ongoing dialogue with organizations about their ideas for grants, spending more time honing ideas and connecting them to other help,
- Reduce the work organizations need to put into a proposal until we're sure there's a close fit with our goals and the board's priorities,
- Make more grants for system change and policy work, collaboration, multi-neighborhood problem-solving, and equity issues – purposes that typically receive less money from other funders; and
- Be willing to take more risk than foundations and banks typically would.

What will feel different in the new grants program?

We want to spend more time building a relationship with you to discuss and hone the connection between your goals and capacity and our goals and capacity. We have much to learn from each other!

Instead of focusing your and our efforts on specific grant rounds, we're accepting Idea Papers and inviting proposals on an ongoing basis. This creates less pressure to meet specific deadlines and allows for more fluid development of ideas and proposals.

- *Requests of \$10,000 or less* – We'll make decisions each month, with your online Idea Paper serving also serving as your proposal. We'll call to clarify any information we need. If we approve a grant, we'll cut one check for the full amount and ask for a short report at the end. (We eliminated a formal grant agreement).
- *Requests of more than \$10,000* – Your Idea Paper will start a conversation with one of our staff members. If you've been talking with us already, we'll skip asking for a formal Idea Paper. We'll have a few structured questions about your organization or partnership, your proposed idea or project, and the human, financial, social, and intellectual capital you're leveraging. (We'll explain that idea during our conversation). We'll only invite a proposal when we know there's a great fit between your goals and ours. Our board will make decisions on grants every other month, though we'll have some flexibility in between meeting to make grants under \$25,000 for capacity building and other targeted, short-term needs. If the board approves a grant, we'll cut two checks – 90% up-front with your grant agreement and 10% at receipt of a final report. In lieu of an interim grant report, we'll schedule a site visit sometime in the interim.