



FY2021 Community Grants

Department of Housing and Community Development

City of Takoma Park
Department of Housing and Community Development
FY21 Community “Quality of Life” Grants Program

Program Overview:

The City of Takoma Park’s Community “Quality of Life” Grants Program provides up to **\$10,000** for programs, projects, and events that improve the quality of life for City residents by providing greater access and opportunities for participation in the **arts and sciences** for predominantly low-and-moderate-income residents.

- **Now in its sixth funding cycle, the program was established by Council action in 2014.**
- **From FY15 to FY16 (2 funding cycles) twenty-seven Community Grants totaling \$297,570 were awarded to 19 organizations.**
- **In 2016, the program was redefined and rebranded as the Community “Quality of Life” Grant; program guidelines were updated at that time and remain in place.**
- **From FY17 to FY20 (4 funding cycles) a total of 33 grants were awarded for \$232,132.**
- **The program is administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development and staffed by the City’s Grants Coordinator.**
- **Funding recommendations are forwarded to the City Council following review and deliberations by the Grants Review Committee.**

For FY21, the City Council **approved \$80,000** to be awarded to eligible projects of non-profit organizations and business associations as determined by the City’s Grant Review Committee (GRC). The Committee’s recommendations are presented herein. If adopted, the City will provide funding to ten (10) organizations serving residents of all ages.

Funding Priorities

Race Equity in all Decision Making

In FY21, the Grants Review Committee continued its commitment to race equity in all decision making. The Committee again provided all applicants with the City’s resolution committing itself to systematically and deliberately applying a race equity lens in all decision-making. The Committee also required that every applicant or funding explain how their project addresses racial equity.

Starting in FY20, the GRC identified a committee member to serve as Committee lead on the Council’s priority of racial equity in all decision making. This member completed the City-funded “What’s My Bias?” training program and presented to the GRC on race equity in decision making. Additionally in FY20, as part of the new online application, each applicant was provided a link to the Mayor’s statement on race equity and the Council Priorities and was specifically asked to address race equity in the proposed projects.

In FY21, in acknowledgment of the need for workforce development among residents of low-and-moderate-income, the Committee encouraged all grant applicants to highlight in their proposals any elements of their arts and sciences programs that also promote job-readiness for low-and-moderate-income Takoma Park residents, many of whom are people of color. While not a requirement for funding, gathering this information allowed the GRC to see the potential impact of the proposed programs in a new light. Of the programs recommended for funding in FY 21, two of these programs have prominent work-force development features and three other programs cultivate STEM skills and training for youth that can lead to better employment opportunities in the future.

In FY21, as in FY20, all decisions made by the Grants Review Committee prioritized race equity. The resulting slate of FY21 grantee recommendations reflects the Council’s race equity priorities and the needs of residents. Therefore, the GRC is confident that by adopting the FY21 funding recommendations the Council will improve access to science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM) opportunities for people of color, including immigrants and refugees.

Public Safety - Community Programs in the Age of COVID-19

The FY21 Community Grants application closed on March 12. For that reason, none of the proposals submitted for consideration addressed the COVID-19 health crisis. On March 25, the City's Grants Coordinator contacted all applicants to invite them to provide an optional COVID-19 update.

On May 21, the GRC met to consider funding recommendations after completing all individual review work, evaluating all applications and required documentation. During the May 21 meeting, programs that were deemed viable in a mostly virtual environment were selected for further consideration.

On May 25, the Grants Coordinator sent selected applicants a supplemental application form to solicit additional up-to-date information about their COVID-19 response. The GRC requested this information to ensure the safety of all residents who participate in these programs; that if selected for funding an organization was capable of delivering programming in a virtual environment and was technologically prepared to continue programming online for as long as needed to ensure public safety; and that the programs were aware of technology barriers among their beneficiaries and had meaningful plans to address any access barriers that might arise.

Following a review of the COVID-19 information provided by select applicants, The GRC selected ten (10) programs to recommend for funding. The GRC is confident that the programs they selected:

- Meet all program requirements;
- Thoughtfully address the COVID-19 health crisis and prioritize public health and safety;
- Are well-positioned to be successful in a virtual environment;
- Are responsive to the needs of low-and-moderate-income people of color and provide meaningful opportunities for residents.

Program Impact

Investment: A Multiplying Effect

The dollar-for-dollar match requirement of the Community Grant Program is met (and often exceeded) by every City grantee. For this reason, the program's value to the City is much larger than the City's investment/cost.

If the GRC's FY21 funding recommendations are adopted, the **City's initial investment of \$80,000** will be leveraged by grantees to concentrate an additional **\$240,534** in funding and resources. This results in a total combined program value to the City of more than **\$320,534**.

Impact: A more livable community for all

The projects recommended for funding will serve a combined **2,850 beneficiaries**. As a requirement of funding, 75 percent will be Takoma Park residents, and at least 51 percent will be residents with low-to-moderate incomes.

New and Returning Partnerships

By bringing new partners and new programming to the residents of Takoma Park, the Community "Quality of Life" Grants Program continues to provide new and innovative programming to address the needs of residents from low-and-moderate-income households.

Throughout the open application period, City staff conducted intensive one-on-one outreach efforts to promote the program to new applicants. Of the **twenty-two (22)** applicants that submitted proposals in FY21, fully one-third or **seven (7) organizations had never previously applied** to this grant program. Of these seven applicants, three **(3) first-time applicants were selected** by the GRC for funding recommendations.

Seven (7) returning grantees with demonstrated track-records of success were also selected for funding, deepening the City's already strong, multi-faceted relationship with high-performing grantees.

Selection Process

Experts Next Door: Thoughtful Decision-Making by Residents

The Grant Review Committee is comprised of Takoma Park residents with demonstrated expertise in community development, grants management, public arts, or related areas of interest. Committee members evaluate grant applications based on established program priorities, guidelines, and available funding and forward their funding recommendations to the City Council for consideration.

FY21 Grant Review Committee: Nadine Bloch (Ward 3), Rachel Branaman (Ward 6), Nicole Ferraiolo (Ward 1) *, Jay Keller (Ward 3), Susan Rosenblum (Ward 3).

*New GRC Member

Application Timeline

December 2019 – City Staff completed application updates and testing in the online grants portal, now in its second year.

January 15, 2020 – Application opened to the public. Throughout the open period, City staff provided technical assistance to applicants.

January – March 2020 – Staff met with potential applicants and provided one-on-one training on how to apply for a Community Grant, promoted the grant program via social media, newsletters, and email outreach.

March 12, 2020 – Application closed. City staff reviewed submissions for completeness and eligibility.

March 25, 2020 – City staff invited applicants to provide optional COVID-19 Update.

May 20, 2020 – GRC met to discuss funding recommendations following completion of their individual review of applications. GRC determined viable programs and instructed the Grants Coordinator to solicit additional information from those applicants.

May 25, 2020 - City staff reached out to select organizations and provided them with a supplemental application and instructions. The city staff provided all updates to the GRC.

June 11, 2020 – The GRC met to develop funding recommendations.

Review Process

Quantitative – Individual reviewers scored each application based on eight questions on a 1-5 point scale. These scores were then averaged across all applicants as well as totaled to create ranked lists of applicants based on their combined scores and averaged scores.

Qualitative Review – Using the scores as a starting point, the reviewers then met as a group to discuss all applicants and make funding recommendations based on community needs, program requirements, council priorities, and their knowledge of the community.

Recommendations

What follows is a summary of the programs the GRC is recommending for funding in FY21. These recommendations come at the conclusion of a rigorous application process that began in January 2020 and a multi-stage review process that included individually ranked scoring of all applications, a supplemental COVID-19 survey for select programs, and group deliberation.

City of Takoma Park
Department of Housing and Community Development
FY20 Community Grants Program

By the Numbers

Total Program Value	\$320,534	Each \$1.00 of City investment yields \$3.00 in programming
Beneficiaries	2,850	At least 75% Takoma Park residents and at least 51% low-to-moderate-income residents

Grants Review Committee FY21 Funding Recommendations

Organization	Total Project Budget	Requested Amount	Recommended Grant Amount
Carpe Diem Arts	\$20,042.00	\$10,000	\$8,000
Community Bridges, Inc.	\$67,152.50	\$5,000	\$5,000
CREATE Arts Center	\$20,000.00	\$10,000	\$8,000
Cyberninjaz Global Inc.	\$21,460.00	\$10,000	\$7,500
Dance Exchange	\$67,160.00	\$10,000	\$7,000
Docs In Progress	\$15,775.00	\$7,700	\$7,500
Ethiopian Community Center Inc.	\$22,000.00	\$10,000	\$10,000
Gandhi Brigade Youth Media	\$14,000.00	\$7,000	\$7,000
Historic Takoma, Inc.	\$52,950.00	\$10,000	\$10,000
Upwardly Global	\$20,000.00	\$10,000	\$10,000
Total	\$320,539.50	\$89,700	\$80,000

Grants Review Committee

Projects Recommended for Funding

Organization: Carpe Diem Arts
Executive Director: Busy Graham

Website: www.carpediemarts.org

Project: Healthy Families: Healthy Communities
Project III
Beneficiaries: 85

Total Project Budget: \$20,042
Grant Request: \$10,000
Recommended Amount: \$8,000



Project Summary: Carpe Diem Arts will deliver a variety of support and creative arts programs to residents at Essex House, Parkview, and Maplevue Apartments and families in nearby single-family homes. Programming will focus on cross-cultural connection and cultural exchange. This expanded program will build upon previous City-funded work to deepen and strengthen connections, mutual support, and school and community engagement.

Programming will deliver a variety of creative arts and positive engagement programs to the residents at Essex House Apartments, 7777 Maple Ave. Other participants include residents from Park View, Maple View, 7610 Apts. Due to ongoing COVID-19 concerns, all project components will be delivered online to ensure public safety. These programs include the Parent Support Group; Strong Girls workshops; dance classes for cross-cultural engagement and exercise; a quilting bee to share creative art expression and anchor the parents' group; healthy eating for sustainable meals; house concerts, and the creation of a mural. The planned Community Mural will be developed via sharing platforms through digital community gatherings. Any materials will be delivered digitally or with safe packing and delivery practices.

Organization: Community Bridges, Inc.
Executive Director: Shannon Babe-Thomas

Website: www.communitybridges-md.org

Project: Community Bridges Girls Program
Beneficiaries: 50

Total Project Budget: \$67,152.50
Grant Request: \$5,000
Recommended Amount: \$5,000



Project Summary: Community Bridges empowers girls from diverse backgrounds to become exceptional students, positive leaders, and healthy young women, by addressing the developmental needs of immigrant and minority girls in their families living at or below the federal poverty level in Montgomery County, Maryland. Their programs support the holistic development of our community's young women by actively engaging girls, families, school, and community.

The Community Bridges Girls Program in the City of Takoma Park will run for 35-weeks beginning in October 2020 through the end of the school year and a 4-week summer program. Facilitation of the program focuses on areas that support academic excellence, positive leadership, personal health, and team building. Due to COVID-19, activities normally held at school will now be delivered online.

Community Bridges is already successfully delivering online services. This grant will support the development, delivery, and the use of literary, performing, visual and culinary arts within the Community Bridges Girls Program. This grant will also allow Community Bridges to utilize community partners to expand current lesson plans through art and enhance their annual end of year showcase, Our True Colors.

Organization: CREATE Arts Center
Executive Director: Linda Marson

Website: www.createartscenter.org



Project: smARTkids Program at Takoma Park Elementary School
Beneficiaries: 52

Total Project Budget: \$20,000
Grant Request: \$10,000
Recommended Amount: \$8,000

Project Summary: smARTkids helps strengthen language and literacy skills, problem-solving, creativity, and appreciation for the arts, along with increasing self-esteem and positive social skills. For the past two years, with City funding through the Community Grants Program, CREATE Arts Center has worked directly with school counselors at Takoma Park Elementary School (TPES) to identify students most likely to benefit from smARTkids' specialized art education programming.

TPES smARTkids are from low-income households, often English learners who qualify for Free and Reduced Meals (FARM). smARTkids levels the playing field for these young children who otherwise may not have access to the many benefits of quality arts programs, by eliminating access/cost as a barrier to participation. Early intervention is critical to student success and the visual arts are integrated into projects and tasks that build critical thinking skills, resilience, language and literacy skills, peer-to-peer skills, and confidence. smARTkids teachers are specially trained in art-based education and principles of art therapy to address the needs of students who struggle, particularly, with language, literacy, and social skills.

smARTkids provides a safe, inclusive space for children after school, and also provides individualized intervention with benefits that extend beyond the classroom to benefit families and the community. This organization is prepared to continue to offer this programming online and is already providing similar programs virtually.

Organization: Cyberninjaz Global
Executive Director: Piankhi Zimmerman

Website: www.cyberninjaz.org

Project: Cyberninjaz STEAM Summer Program
Beneficiaries: 30

Total Project Budget: \$21,460
Grant Request: \$10,000
Recommended Amount: \$7,500



Project Summary: Cyberninjaz Global Inc. is a STEAM Education nonprofit whose mission is to close the digital divide by providing STEAM education especially to underrepresented youth. They strive to provide the opportunity for youth to be better educated, disciplined, and well-rounded individuals.

If funded, this program will provide STEAM Summer camp experiences for under-represented low-and-moderate income Takoma Park students. In order to close the digital divide, STEAM education is essential as it directly influences job-readiness. The skills Cyberninjaz teaches are the skills of 21st-century employment.

Cyberninjaz teaches students from beginners to advanced, to build their own web browser, 3D art, 2D animation, special effects videos, websites, video games, programs, and more. Cyberninjaz helps demystify the skills necessary for entering the tech world, helping to turn low-income students into high-income adults who love what they do.

Organization: Dance Exchange
Executive Director: Cassie Meador

celebrating 20 years at home in Takoma Park, Maryland!



Website: www.danceexchange.org

Project: Dance Exchange Creative Aging and Intergenerational Exchange programming
Beneficiaries: 200

Total Project Budget: \$67,160
Grant Request: \$10,000
Recommended Amount: \$7,000

Project Summary: Fueled by generosity and curiosity, Dance Exchange expands who gets to dance, where dance happens, what dance is about, and why dance matters. Founded in 1976 by Liz Lerman and under the artistic direction of Cassie Meador since 2011, Dance Exchange harnesses the power of creativity and inquiry through dance to connect communities, to deepen understanding, and foster a more embodied, resilient and just world.

Dance Exchange collaborates across generations, disciplines, and communities. Since its founding, Dance Exchange has championed the integration of the arts into meaningful aging. Building on their 44-year history and the FY20 City of Takoma Park-funded pilot year of activities, Dance Exchange will partner with the City of Takoma Park again in FY21 to further develop the Creative Aging Program.

The program's second year is also supported through an NEA grant and provides free weekly and monthly workshops for older adults that use movement, dance making, and storytelling to encourage physical activity and health, individual and community expression, and community building. This newly-virtual program will culminate in a Creative Aging Festival that celebrates and surfaces best practices from creative aging work at Dance Exchange and its national and international network of partners and peers in the fields of performing arts and aging sectors.

With funding from the City of Takoma Park, this project will continue to provide opportunities for the arts to be integrated into the fabric of community life. This program seeks to continue building an intergenerational community of care through ongoing movement workshops and a Creative Aging Advisory Committee that includes leaders from organizations and members of leading service and health organizations for older adults.

Organization: Docs In Progress
Executive Director: Barbara Valentino



Website: www.docsinprogress.org

Project: Documentary Dialogues Takoma
Beneficiaries: 48

Total Project Budget: \$15,775
Grant Request: \$ 7,700
Recommended Amount: \$7,500

Project Summary: Docs in Progress supports emerging documentary filmmakers by teaching the skills and providing the tools they need to shape their stories. Docs in Progress offers an array of educational classes, public programs including screenings and camps, and artist services aimed at aspiring and experienced documentary filmmakers and the broader community. By developing, encouraging, and celebrating new and diverse voices via documentary film, Docs in Progress also seeks to lessen the racial divide in storytelling.

Documentary Dialogues Takoma is a multi-year program that uses video as a vehicle for reflection, self-expression, and empowerment by engaging Takoma Park residents through hands-on video production activities and film screenings. This project educates, inspires, and transforms people's interaction with documentary film. Activities will include filmmaking camps for youth and elders and *The Community Stories* film festival, a free festival which showcases short documentaries about local topics followed by Q&As with the filmmakers. All events will take place virtually.

Docs in Progress will provide young participants with the equipment needed for filming and editing their documentaries. Each teen will also receive a \$100 gift card upon completion of the program and return of the gear. This incentive honors the professional skills that the students will develop through the camp and reinforces the concept that there is value in their work as filmmakers.

Organization: Ethiopian Community Center Inc.
Executive Director: Hermela Kebede

Website: www.ethiopiancommunitydc.org

Project: Bilingual Career and Service Navigator Program
Beneficiaries: 100

Total Project Budget: \$22,000
Grant Request: \$10,000
Recommended Amount: \$10,000



Project Summary: The mission of the Ethiopian Community Center (ECC) is to equip African immigrant communities in the Washington Metropolitan Area with the tools and resources they need to become economically self-sufficient and civically engaged citizens who can meaningfully contribute and thrive in the communities they live in.

The Career and Service Navigator Program will increase skills and employment outcomes for 100 low-skilled and low-income Takoma Park residents with limited English proficiency. While Takoma Park's significantly large African immigrant residents make substantial contributions to the local economy, they are disproportionately concentrated in low-wage jobs, due to cultural and linguistic barriers. The proposed program eliminates these barriers by providing individualized culturally/linguistically appropriate career counseling, language arts skills, on-going case management, linkage to social services, and monthly peer support.

Requested funds will be used to engage a part-time bilingual Navigator who will provide remote individualized counseling and coordinate support for residents. The program will primarily target English language learners enrolled in ECC's vocational ESL program offered weekly to residents of the Maple Ave Corridor, although services will be provided to all eligible Takoma Park residents virtually.

Organization: Gandhi Brigade Youth Media
Executive Director: Anna Danielson

Website: www.gandhibrigade.org

Project: The Promoters Program
Beneficiaries: 70



Total Project Budget: \$14,000
Grant Request: \$7,000
Recommended Amount: \$7,000

Project Summary: Gandhi Brigade Youth Media creates learning labs where young people identify community issues, build confidence to speak up, and use media skills to take action.

The Promoters Program, GBYM's core program, is an afterschool media production program normally held at GBYM headquarters, middle schools, community centers, and several Montgomery County libraries for two hours each week for 12-14 weeks. This program will now be delivered virtually, accessing previously enrolled students as well as newly enrolled youth.

All programs will include live-streamed classes and virtual clubs. GBYM will add in-person activities if deemed safe and if allowed by law. GBYM will host additional sessions of all classes to allow for each class to have 10 or fewer participants including teachers and guest speakers.

In this project, GBYM will help make sure that all interested families have the necessary internet and equipment to participate, which includes loaning laptops and cameras. GBYM will be either teaching from home (if required) or live-streaming from their studio in Silver Spring. Their partner organizations on the frontlines will be involved in all of their virtual programs, to help make sure that all families enrolled have regular access to essential services. GBYM virtual clubs and online classes will be a vital way to stay connected with young people in unstable circumstances or experiencing fear and depression as a result of this crisis.

Starting this summer all programs will have Spanish-bilingual teachers and teaching assistants participating. Program forms are available in Spanish and will be provided in Mandarin, French, and Amharic if needed. This program is an opportunity for youth to support other youth, for peer-to-peer collaboration. Any potential barrier to participation will be thoughtfully addressed.

Organization: Historic Takoma, Inc.
President: Diana Kohn

Website: www.historictakoma.org

Project: Stories from Takoma Park's African American Community
Beneficiaries: 2,200



Total Project Budget: \$52,950
Grant Request: \$10,000
Recommended Amount: \$10,000

Project Summary: Historic Takoma, Inc. is a volunteer, 501(c)3 non-profit, founded in 1979 to preserve the history and heritage of Takoma Park, Maryland, and the Takoma Park neighborhood of DC through educational activities and the preservation of historic landmarks and artifacts, including documentary archives.

Many Takoma Park residents are unaware of the lives and stories of the black men, women, and children who came from the South beginning in the 1920s, building a close and vibrant African-American community in the face of racial discrimination and limited economic resources during segregation and the decades that followed.

A year ago, with help from the City of Takoma Park, Historic Takoma convened members of the African-American community in Takoma Park to discuss the possibility of conducting oral histories while there were still elders in the community. Historic Takoma then launched an initiative to document the history of the African-American community through oral histories and elevate these stories through film, a publication, an exhibit, and public programs. A grant from the City has made it possible to conduct, film, and transcribe 15 interviews with longtime community members.

The focus for FY21 will be the creation of five, 5-minute thematic films edited from these interviews and the development of curricula that can be accessed online and used by teachers to help teach this history. The project will also result in a book of edited oral histories. Online and print audiences alike will be able to learn directly from the people who lived it of the challenges and resilience of the African-American community in our city.

Organization: Upwardly Global
President & CEO: Jina Krause-Vilmar

Website: www.upwardlyglobal.org

Project: Building a Vibrant Takoma Park Through Immigrant Workforce Integration

Beneficiaries: 15

Total Project Budget: \$20,000

Grant Request: \$10,000

Recommended Amount: \$10,000



Project Summary: Upwardly Global's (UpGlo) mission is to eliminate employment barriers for skilled immigrants and refugees, and integrate this population into the professional United States workforce. They are the first and longest-serving organization focused on the economic advancement of newcomers, supporting their attainment of gainful, thriving-wage employment. They are helping to build a nation where everyone can fully contribute and thrive socially, culturally, and economically. The people they serve are under-employed foreign-born professionals and skilled immigrants who are rarely the subject of mainstream workforce development or career pathways programs.

With City support, UpGlo will help vulnerable immigrants, refugees, and asylees in Takoma Park transition from unemployment and underemployment to thriving-wage professional roles that pave the way towards self-sufficiency and integration. This work is squarely aligned with the City's unwavering commitment to welcoming immigrants and building inclusive communities.

UpGlo, a national nonprofit organization, serves roughly 280 newcomers throughout DMV annually. Funding will enable UpGlo to reach the City's community of skilled immigrants through increased outreach and relationship-cultivation with local community-based partners.

This program will establish an applicant pipeline, resulting in fifteen (15) Takoma Park-based immigrant job seekers served over a 12-month period. 50%+ of job seekers served will be in high-demand STEM fields and will gain access to UpGlo's robust pool of volunteer professionals, reskilling/upskilling training opportunities, and employer partners – supporting their attainment of gainful employment in competitive, 21st-century roles.

Grantees must provide matching financial or in-kind support from other organizations. Below is a partial list of additional funders and partners that will support the work of our FY21 grantees:

Partners

A Wider Circle	Maryland Traditions
Accenture	Meltzer Employee Giving Fund
Advanced Nursing & Home Support	MentorPrize
Alexandria's Workforce Development Center (WDC)	Montgomery College
American University	Montgomery College Workforce Development and Continuing Education
Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County (AHC MC)	Montgomery County Media
Arts for the Aging	Montgomery County Public Libraries
Arts on the Block	Montgomery County Public Schools
Brass Ring Company	Montgomery Housing Development
Charles W. Gilchrist Immigrant Resource Center	Montgomery Housing Partnership
Community Bridges	Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation
Community Foundation of Montgomery County	Piney Branch Elementary School
CREATE Arts Center	Parent Teacher Association - Piney Branch Elementary School
Crossroads Community Food Network	Parent Teacher Association - Takoma Park Elementary School
Dance Exchange	Quicksilver Senior Improv Dance Company
Diversity Dimensions LLC	Round House Theater
Documentary Center at George Washington University	Silver Spring Civic Center
Enterprise Homes	Blair High School - Social Studies Department
Essex House Apartments Tenants Association	Takoma Foundation
Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC)	Takoma Radio (WOWD 94.3)
Gandhi Brigade Youth Media	The Foley Hoag Foundation
Hebrew Immigration Aid Society (HIAS)	The Intergenerational School
Housing Opportunities Commission	The Village of Takoma Park
Impact Silver Spring	The University of Maryland
Maryland Humanities Council	Victory Towers
Maryland State Arts Council	Washington Adventist University Faculty
	Weinberg Foundation
	Women in Film and Video