



**City of Takoma Park**  
**COMMUNITY QUALITY OF LIFE GRANTS**  
**FY23 Funding Recommendations**

**City of Takoma Park**  
**Department of Housing and Community Development**  
**FY23 Community Quality of Life Grant 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.

The program is administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development, overseen by the Housing Manager, and staffed by the City's Grants Coordinator. A Grants Review Committee comprising residents appointed by the City Council review all completed applications and develop funding recommendations annually. Funding recommendations are forwarded to the City Council following review and deliberations by the Grants Review Committee.

Now in its 8th funding cycle, the program was established by Council action in 2014.

- FY15 to FY16 (2 funding cycles), 27 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 and remain in place today.
- From FY17 to FY21 (5 funding cycles), 43 grants were awarded, totaling \$312,132.
- Total amount granted in FY20 & FY21 equaled \$160,000; however, with the required program match, total program value to the City equaled \$571,385.
- In FY22, the amount funded was increased from \$80,000 by an additional \$25,000 of reallocated workforce development funds for a total of \$105,000;
- In FY23, the City Council allocated \$110,000 for this program.

The Grants Review Committee's recommendations are presented herein. If adopted, the City will provide funding to thirteen organizations serving residents of all ages.

**FY23 Funding Priorities**

## **Race Equity in all Decision Making**

In FY23, the Grants Review Committee (GRC) continued and deepened its commitment to race equity in all decision-making. For the last four years, the Committee has 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, again for the fourth year, required that every applicant for funding explain how their proposed project incorporates racial equity.

For the third year, the GRC built on this previous work by requiring all applicants to address inclusion and representation within their leadership, specifically as it relates to the communities served by the applicant organization. As such, the GRC required all applicants to discuss within their application how their board-level leadership and staff reflect specific populations served by the organization (i.e., the disability community, LGBTQ+ community, Black, Indigenous, People of Color, and immigrant communities).

During the GRC deliberations, the answers to the Race Equity and the Representation in Leadership questions, along with the board of directors and leadership makeup, were heavily weighted in the decision-making process.

## **Workforce Development & Race Equity**

Starting in FY21 through to FY23, in acknowledgment of the need for workforce development among residents of low-and-moderate-income, the Committee encouraged applicants to highlight any elements of their arts and sciences programs that promote career exploration and job-readiness for low-and-moderate-income residents.

While not a requirement for funding, this information allowed the GRC to see the potential impact of the proposed programs. Of the thirteen programs recommended for funding in FY23, five have prominent workforce development components for adults. An additional three programs cultivate STEM skills and training for youth, which can lead to better employment opportunities in the future. All programs, regardless of any workforce development features, must fall into one of three categories: Arts & Humanities (A&H), Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM), or Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM).

In FY23, as in FY20, FY21, and FY22, all decisions made by the Grants Review Committee prioritized race equity. The resulting slate of FY23 grantee recommendations reflects the Council's race equity priorities and the needs of residents. Therefore, the GRC is confident that by adopting the FY23 funding recommendations, the Council will improve access to science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM) and workforce development opportunities for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) residents, including immigrants and refugees.

## **Program Impact**

### **Investment: A Multiplying Effect**

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

If the GRC's FY23 funding recommendations are adopted, the **City's initial investment of \$110,000** will be leveraged by grantees to concentrate an additional **\$644,975** in funding and resources. This means that **every 1.00 dollar of City funding delivers \$5.86 of programming value.**

### **Impact: A more livable community for all**

The projects recommended for funding will serve a combined **700 direct beneficiaries and thousands of indirect beneficiaries.** As a requirement of funding, 75 percent of all direct beneficiaries will be Takoma Park residents, and at least 51 percent will be residents from low-to-moderate income households.

### **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 enable new and innovative programming to address the needs of residents from low-and-moderate-income households.

Throughout the open application period, City staff conducted outreach to promote the program to new applicants, including one-on-one meetings with potential applicants. Ten returning grantees with demonstrated track records of success were selected for continued funding, deepening the City's already robust and multifaceted relationship with high-performing grantees. Three new programs were also selected for funding recommendations.

### **Application Timeline**

**December 2021** – City Staff completed application updates and testing in the online grants portal, now in its fourth year.

**January 19, 2022** – Application opened to the public. Throughout the open period, City staff provided technical assistance to applicants.

**January – March 2022** – Staff met with potential applicants and provided one-on-one training on how to apply for a Community Grant, and promoted the grant program via social media, newsletters, and email outreach.

**March 11, 2022** – Application closed. City staff reviewed submissions for completeness and eligibility.

**March 15, 2022** – Applications forwarded to GRC members for individual review and scoring.

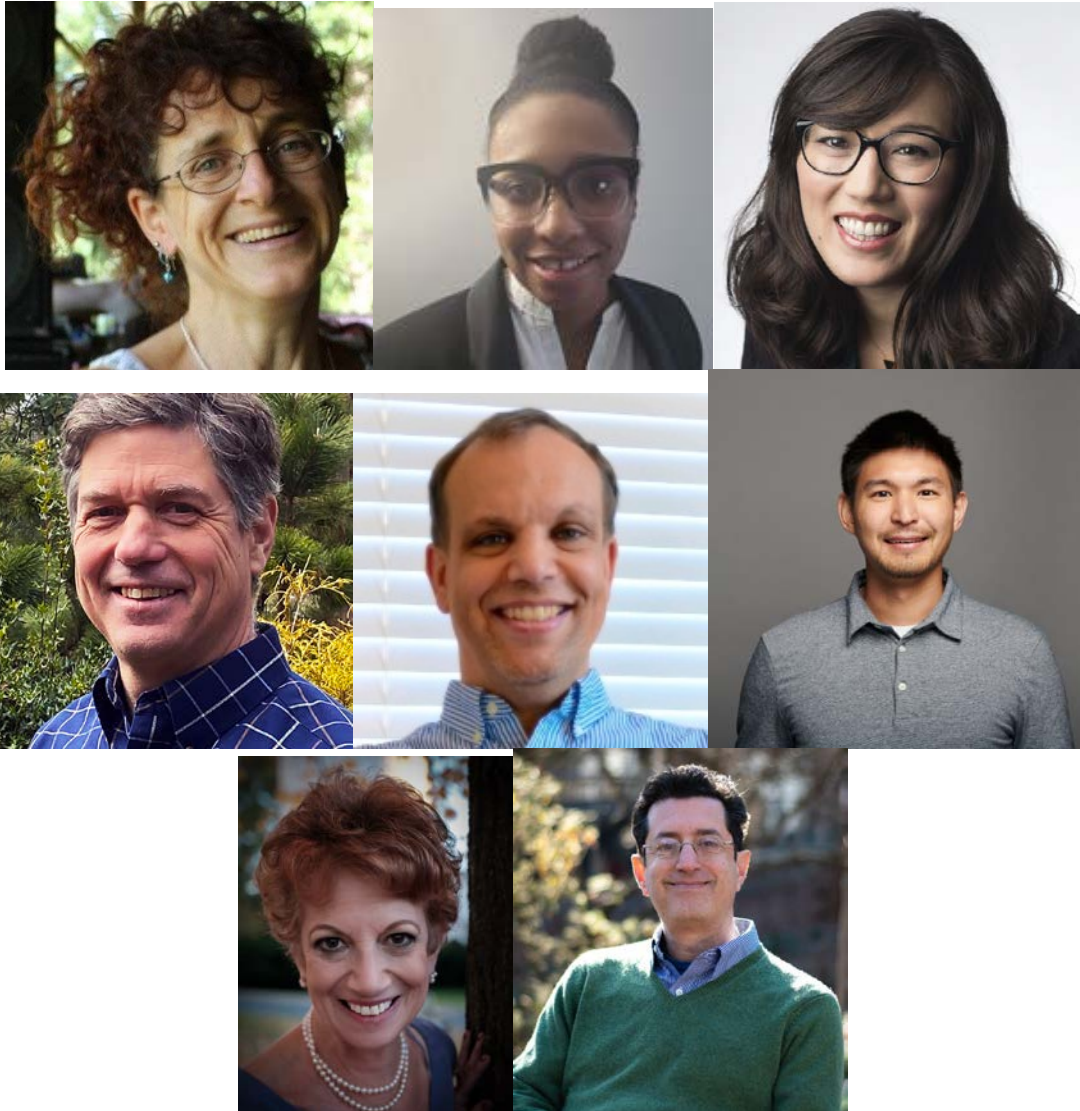
**April 5, 2022** – GRC met to discuss funding recommendations after completing their individual review of applications. GRC selected finalists and instructed the Grants Coordinator to solicit additional information from applicants as needed.

**April 8, 2022** - City staff reached out to finalists and provided them with additional questions the GRC had about their projects or applications. The City staff then provided all updates to the GRC.

**April 20, 2022** – The GRC met to develop funding recommendations.

## Experts Next Door: Thoughtful Decision-Making by Residents

The Grant Review Committee comprises 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.



### Grant Review Committee:

Top row: Nadine Bloch (Ward 3), Keli Cochran (Ward 6), Nicole Ferraiolo (Ward 1),  
Middle row: James Sebastian\* (Ward 3), Michael Schoeneke\* (Ward 1), Derek Shiau\* (Ward 5),  
Bottom: Susan Rosenblum (Ward 3), Mark Swartz (Ward 1). Not shown: Lucy Moore\* (Ward 3).

\*New GRC Member

### Review Process

**Quantitative** – Individual reviewers scored each application based on eleven 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 GRC 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 Grants Review Committee is recommending for funding in FY23. These recommendations come at the conclusion of a rigorous application process that began in January 2022 and a multi-stage review process that included individually ranked scoring of all applications, follow-up questions for select programs, and group deliberation.

## By the Numbers

<b>Total Program Value</b>	<b>\$754,975</b>	Each \$1.00 of City investment equals \$5.86 in programming value
<b>Direct Beneficiaries</b>	<b>700</b>	At least 75% Takoma Park residents and at least 51% low-to-moderate-income residents

### Grants Review Committee FY23 Funding Recommendations

Organization	Total Project Budget	Requested Amount	Recommended Grant Amount
Carpe Diem Arts	\$21,366	\$10,000	\$10,000.00
Community Bridges, Inc.	\$66,973	\$10,000	\$9,000.00
CREATE Arts Center	\$16,000	\$8,000	\$8,000.00
Dance Exchange	\$60,000	\$10,000	\$8,000.00
Elite Soccer Youth Development Academy	\$47,950	\$10,000	\$8,000.00
Emma's Torch*	\$250,000	\$10,000	\$8,000.00
Enterprise Community Development*	\$71,736	\$10,000	\$7,500.00
Ethiopian Community Center Inc	\$23,738	\$10,000	\$9,000.00
GB Youth Media	\$20,000	\$10,000	\$9,000.00
Montgomery Community Media	\$22,500	\$10,000	\$9,000.00
Per Scholas Inc.	\$85,458	\$10,000	\$8,500.00
So What Else*	\$49,254	\$10,000	\$7,500.00
Upwardly Global	\$20,000	\$10,000	\$8,500.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$754,975</b>	<b>\$128,000</b>	<b>\$110,000</b>

\*New program



**Grants Review Committee  
Projects Recommended for Funding**

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**Organization:** Carpe Diem Arts  
**Executive Director:** Busy Graham  
**Website:** [www.carpediemarts.org](http://www.carpediemarts.org)  
**Project:** Healthy Families | Healthy Communities (HF|HC)  
**Beneficiaries:** 146



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

**Project Summary:** HF|HC will deliver creative arts and community engagement and support programs to residents at Essex House and other local apartments and tenant groups, including 7610 Maple Ave & Hampshire Towers. Programming will extend Carpe Diem Arts' reach across Takoma Park for cross-cultural connection and exchange.

This program will continue Carpe Diem's previous grant-funded work to engage the community in meaningful and impactful ways, deepen and strengthen connections, build agency, and promote increased participation in school and civic activities.

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**Organization:** Community Bridges, Inc.  
**Executive Director:** Shannon Babe-Thomas  
**Website:** [www.communitybridges-md.org](http://www.communitybridges-md.org)  
**Project:** Community Bridges Girls Program  
**Beneficiaries:** 50



**Total Project Budget:** \$66,973  
**Grant Request:** \$10,000  
**Recommended Amount:** \$9,000

**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, schools, and the community.

The program focuses on academic excellence, positive leadership, personal health, and team building by involving all participants in planned and monitored activities at school and in the community. A grant investment from the City of Takoma Park will support the development, delivery, and use of literary, performing, visual, and culinary arts within the Community Bridges Girls Program.

**Organization:** CREATE Arts Center  
**Executive Director:** Linda Marson  
**Website:** [www.createartscenter.org](http://www.createartscenter.org)  
**Project:** smARTkids at Takoma Park Elementary School  
**Beneficiaries:** 40



**Total Project Budget:** \$16,000  
**Grant Request:** \$8,000  
**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 four years, with funding through the Community Quality of Life Grant, CREATE Arts Center has worked directly with school counselors at Takoma Park Elementary School to identify students most likely to benefit from smARTkids' specialized art education programming. smARTkids provides a safe, inclusive space for children after school and provides individualized intervention with benefits beyond the classroom. smARTkids teachers are specially trained in art-based education and art therapy to address the needs of students who struggle, particularly with language, literacy, and social skills.

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**Organization:** Dance Exchange  
**Executive Director:** Cassie Meador  
**Website:** [www.danceexchange.org](http://www.danceexchange.org)  
**Project:** Dance Exchange Dance On Cohort  
**Beneficiaries:** 5

*celebrating 20 years at home in Takoma Park, Maryland!*



**Total Project Budget:** \$60,000  
**Grant Request:** \$10,000  
**Recommended Amount:** \$8,000

**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, deepen understanding, and foster a more embodied, resilient, and just world.

Since FY21, with funding from the Quality of Life Grant program, Dance Exchange has expanded its programming to include the Dance On Cohort, an intergenerational creative workforce development program. In FY23, with funding from the City of Takoma Park, Dance Exchange will support its third cohort of artists. These artists will receive vital training and networking opportunities, facilitate classes and workshops at Dance Exchange, and ultimately grow their creative tools out into communities.

**Organization:** Elite Soccer Youth Development Academy

**Executive Director:** Agbegnigan AMouzou

**Website:** [www.esyda.org](http://www.esyda.org)

**Project:** ESYDA Entrepreneurial and Leadership Plus Program

**Beneficiaries:** 72

**Total Project Budget:** \$30,000

**Grant Request:** \$ 10,000

**Recommended Amount:** \$8,000



**Project Summary:** Elite Soccer Youth Development Academy (ESYDA) is more than just soccer. ESYDA offers both recreational and academic programs to regional youth. With funding from the Quality of Life grant, ESYDA will deliver a socioemotional and values approach program that develops skills as well as healthy relationships within the STEAM fields.

ESYDA's FY22 program focused on website development, coding, and job readiness. This year, ESYDA's Kicking Life into Gear Program is designed to improve a resident's ability to have healthy relationships, sustain economic stability, work experience through financial literacy and internships, and attain academic achievement. The merging of two strong programs provides a holistic approach to preparing adults and youth beyond just the typical STEM courses to include strategies to ensure their emotional, physical, and financial health can sustain their likelihood to remain in the field.

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**Organization:** Emma's Torch

**Executive Director:** Kerry Brodie

**Website:** [www.emmastorch.org](http://www.emmastorch.org)

**Project:** Emma's Torch Pilot Program

**Beneficiaries:** 10

**Total Project Budget:** \$250,000

**Grant Request:** \$ 10,000

**Recommended Amount:** \$8,000



**EMMA'S TORCH**

**Project Summary:** Emma's Torch trains refugees, asylees, and survivors of human trafficking in the culinary arts and empowers them to build meaningful careers. Students participate in a full-time, paid, culinary training program in preparation for job placement.

After a successful five years in New York City, Emma's Torch is excited to have the opportunity to expand to the D.C. Metropolitan area. In their initial pilot phase, they will enroll two groups of students in successive cohorts. The program is 10 weeks long and includes 400 hours of paid training. Students learn fundamental culinary skills, as well as generalized job readiness and English language skills. During the program, students develop their professional skills including resume writing, English language classes, and conversational English. Upon graduation, Emma's Torch helps students with their initial job placement and continuously supports their graduates with ongoing career development, retention, and advancement services.

**Organization:** Enterprise Community Development

**Executive Director:** Brian McLaughlin  
**Website:** [www.enterprisecommunity.org](http://www.enterprisecommunity.org)  
**Project:** After-school Arts Enrichment, Academic Support, and Services  
**Beneficiaries:** 25



**Total Project Budget:** \$71,736  
**Grant Request:** \$10,000  
**Recommended Amount:** \$7,500

**Project Summary:** Enterprise Community Development's (ECD) mission is to make home and community places of pride, power, and belonging, and platforms for resilience and upward mobility for all. Their Community Impact Strategies program delivers services, classes, and workshops that help residents connect to opportunities and resources that might not otherwise be available in their community. As a means of strengthening the immigrant community, ECD's program will provide after-school programming and wraparound support for African immigrant families at and near Essex House. The program will support students' success in school by providing comprehensive programming for up to 25 students (grades 1-5), two hours a day, four days a week during the school year (September 2022 through June 2023) for a total of 120 days of programming. The program will offer homework assistance and academic support in areas where students are struggling. The program will engage parents through workshops, one-on-one assistance, and referrals to support families in accessing local government and community resources leading to greater economic security and mobility.

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**Organization:** Ethiopian Community Center Inc.  
**Executive Director:** Hermela Kebede  
**Website:** [www.ethiopiancommunitydc.org](http://www.ethiopiancommunitydc.org)  
**Project:** Bilingual Career & Service Navigator Program  
**Beneficiaries:** 100



**Total Project Budget:** \$23,738  
**Grant Request:** \$10,000  
**Recommended Amount:** \$9,000

**Project Summary:** The Ethiopian Community Center's (ECC) mission 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.

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. The program will primarily target English language learners enrolled in ECC's vocational ESL program offered weekly to residents of the Maple Ave Corridor. However, services will be provided to all eligible Takoma Park residents.

**Organization:** GB Youth Media  
**Executive Director:** Anna Danielson  
**Website:** [www.youthmediamd.org](http://www.youthmediamd.org)  
**Project:** GBYM SSL Media Arts Program  
**Beneficiaries:** 15



**Total Project Budget:** \$22,500  
**Grant Request:** \$10,000  
**Recommended Amount:** \$9,000

**Project Summary:** GBYM creates communities where young people build the confidence and media skills to express themselves and to promote community building, multicultural understanding, and the common good.

During the SSL Media Arts (Afterschool) Program, students attend weekly meetings to learn media arts skills, filmmaking, creative expression, and social justice advocacy. They earn Student Service Learning (SSL) hours and will have completed films and graphic designs to publish and send to local leaders. Students receive a free laptop and headphones if they don't have them at home (funding permitting). GB Youth Media recruits activists, artists, and professionals across many career fields to meet our student volunteer, talk with them and record an interview. This builds the youth volunteers' skills and experience, builds their network for the future, and expands the guests' knowledge of youth voices.

**Organization:** Montgomery Community Media  
**Chief Executive:** Nannette Onley Hobson  
**Website:** [www.mymcmmedia.org](http://www.mymcmmedia.org)  
**Project:** MCM Youth Media Academy  
**Beneficiaries:** 20



MONTGOMERY COMMUNITY MEDIA

**Total Project Budget:** \$22,500  
**Grant Request:** \$10,000  
**Recommended Amount:** \$9,000

**Project Summary:** Montgomery Community Media (MCM) is the only independent, nonprofit organization providing access to public media (public access television and broadband media) directly to Montgomery County's over one million residents as well as the resident non-profit organizations, associations, and businesses. To provide equitable access to learning opportunities, MCM offers free, low-cost media education programs to best serve our youth and their families.

In FY23, MC Media will expand its Youth Media Academy (YMA) program to serve 20 low-to-moderate-income BIPOC youth (ages 13-17) in the City of Takoma Park. Taught by leading media professionals, youth meet weekly after-school to receive tailored training for their age group. Students engage in skill-building sessions on editing, shooting, producing, and story development, collaborating in teams to produce a final product, such as a youth-produced show and/or podcast series. The program culminates in a final showcase for students to share their work with family and friends.

**Organization:** Per Scholas  
**President and CEO:** Plinio Ayala





**Website:** [www.perscholas.org](http://www.perscholas.org)

**Project:** Per Scholas NCR IT Job Training

**Beneficiaries:** 10

**Total Project Budget:** \$20,000

**Grant Request:** \$10,000

**Recommended Amount:** \$8,500

**Project Summary:** At Per Scholas, a thriving workforce starts with equitable access to education. By providing skills training and access to employer networks to individuals often excluded from tech careers, Per Scholas envisions a technology workforce as diverse as the customers it serves. Over 11,000 graduates have launched successful careers in tech to date through our no-cost technical training. Per Scholas advances economic equity through rigorous training for tech careers and connects skilled talent to leading businesses.

With support from the Quality of Life grant program, Per Scholas NCR will offer Takoma Park learners full-time, tuition-free training in IT Support, leading to CompTIA A+ and Google IT Support certifications and entry-level tech careers. In addition, Per Scholas will collaborate with employers to provide Per Scholas learners with the opportunity to participate in mock interviews, resume reviews, and other activities with industry insiders.

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**Organization:** So What Else

**Co-Founder & Executive Director:** Dave Silbert

**Website:** [www.sowhatelse.org](http://www.sowhatelse.org)

**Project:** So What Else: Takoma Park

**Beneficiaries:** 195

**Total Project Budget:** \$49,254

**Grant Request:** \$10,000

**Recommended Amount:** \$7,500

**Project Summary:** So What Else's mission is to improve the lives of children & families living in underserved communities by providing food security, access to basic necessities, and high-quality out-of-school time programs in literacy, athletics, and the visual & performing arts while inspiring young people to give back to the community by creating volunteer opportunities for citizens of all ages.

With funding from the FY23 Quality of Life program, So What Else will offer instructive, holistic, and 100% free after-school programs, healthy nourishment, and volunteer opportunities for 195 children ages 5-18 throughout Takoma Park. This project is designed to meet the basic needs of food security and physically safe spaces while fostering academic achievement, inspiring community engagement, teaching teamwork & empathy, nurturing a healthy lifestyle, and engendering a sense of well-being & self-efficacy.



**Organization:** Upwardly Global  
**President & CEO:** Jina Krause-Vilmar  
**Website:** [www.upwardlyglobal.org](http://www.upwardlyglobal.org)  
**Project:** Building a Vibrant Takoma Park  
Through Immigrant Workforce Integration  
**Beneficiaries:** 12



**Total Project Budget:** \$20,000  
**Grant Request:** \$10,000  
**Recommended Amount:** \$8,500

**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. UpGlo, a national nonprofit organization, serves roughly 280 newcomers throughout DMV annually.

Funding in FY23 will enable UpGlo to continue outreach to the City's skilled immigrants and build upon the Upwardly Global/Takoma Park FY21 partnership, which laid the groundwork for an ongoing participant pipeline. The FY23 program will result in twelve Takoma Park-based immigrant job seekers served over 12 months. More than 50 percent of these job seekers will be in high-demand STEM fields. They will gain access to UpGlo's robust pool of volunteer professionals, reskilling/upskilling training opportunities, and employer partners to support their attainment of gainful employment in competitive, 21st-century roles.