

2026

Forward for Fun Initiative Application

A Grant program to support new community events





Forward for Fun Initiative

What is the Forward for Fun Initiative?

The Forward for Fun Initiative is a grant program designed to support community-based events in all 14 wards of the City of Rockford. Through direction and participation of each Ward Alderperson, who helps identify and guide projects that bring neighbors together.

Why Was This Program Created?

The program was developed in response to increased social isolation and loneliness following the pandemic and has proven to be a program supported by the community and Council in the activation and support of events throughout the community. Many which would not take place without these funds. Its goals include:

- Strengthening community connections by supporting ward-based events.
- Creating opportunities for residents to meet, engage, and explore their neighborhoods and other parts of the city.
- Supporting local economic development through the use of locally owned businesses.
- Elevating small businesses and entrepreneurs through participation as vendors (e.g., food trucks, artists, musicians, restaurants, independent retailers).
- Encouraging fun, creative, and innovative uses of public and private spaces.
- Inspiring new events that can grow into beloved annual traditions.

Program Framework

To participate, applicants must meet the following guidelines:

- Each application must list a Responsible Party (organizer) capable of receiving and spending grant funds (e.g., nonprofit status, organizational bank account, funds cannot be given to an individual)
- **Funded events may not promote political or partisan positions or religious beliefs.**
- City of Rockford special event rules apply (e.g., liquor licensing, sales tax requirements, traffic control), with an expedited approval process for participants.
- City staff and elected officials may not benefit financially from this program.

Program Goals

Events funded through the Forward for Fun Initiative should:

- Be open and welcoming to all, and take place during 2026.
- Be free to attend whenever possible (ticketed events are permitted).
- Encourage partnerships and collaborations between organizations, neighborhoods, and wards.
- Focus on creating new events or enhancing existing ones—not subsidizing ongoing activities.
- Favor outdoor activities when feasible.
- Utilize grant funding of up to **\$10,000 per ward** (based on \$140,000 total available funding).
- Support multiple events per ward, as long as the total does not exceed the ward's maximum allocation.

Regulations

Program regulations are as follows:

- All events must receive written approval from the Alderperson of the ward in which the event is taking place. If you are requesting funding from an additional ward, it is the responsibility of the event coordinator to contact that ward's Alderperson for written approval.
- Event applications submitted **less than 30 days before the event date** will be considered **late** and **subject to a late fee, and forfeiture of permit fees being waived for the event**. These fees must be paid prior to the release of any program funds.
- Final determination will be made by the Forward for Fun Advisory Panel for any and all approvals. The Advisory Panel will determine if all the program guidelines have been followed.
- All events will be required to submit a post event follow-up. This will be emailed out to the Event Coordinator after the event.



City of Rockford, Illinois
Public Works Department
City Hall, 6th Floor
425 East State Street, Rockford, IL 61104
Phone: 779-348-7174 Fax: (815) 967-7058
www.rockfordil.gov



GENERAL EVENT INFORMATION

**PLEASE COMPLETE THE ENTIRE APPLICATION AND TYPE OR PRINT LEGIBLY.
INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE PROCESSED.**

Name of Event: _____

Location of Event: _____ Ward where event will take place: _____

Date(s) of Event: _____ Hours of Event: _____

Is this a New Event Existing Event If existing, how many years? _____

Has this event been approved by the Alderman? Yes No Amount of funding requested \$ _____

Alderman Signature: _____ Or, emailed approval attached Yes No

Name of Sponsoring Organization, Neighborhood Organization, or Supporting Business(es):

Event Coordinator Name: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Intended age groups: _____ Anticipated # of Participants: _____ Staff/Volunteers: _____

How will this program help, expand, or improve your event?

Do you intend to involve community partners and/or any local businesses? (if so, please list):

What is the estimated cost for this event, and what ways will the grant be spent?

If this event creates a profit, what is the intended use of those funds?

Describe your event, and how this event achieves this program's goals



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Please answer these questions about your event to the best of your ability (more info may be required)

| | | |
|--|-----|----|
| Does your event require road closures? | Yes | No |
| Does your event require you to rent a generator for electricity? | Yes | No |
| Will you be using any food trucks for your event? | Yes | No |
| Will you be using any tents larger than a 10'x10' pop-up tent? | Yes | No |
| Will your event be serving alcohol? | Yes | No |

Budget Analysis

Example:

\$900 - Traffic Control/Road Closures
\$500 - Per food truck/vendor
\$800 - 2-20'x40' tents/canopies
\$500 - 1 day Special Event Insurance Policy
\$250 - Misc. permits (electrical, tent, banner)
\$500 - Table/chair rental
\$500 - Marketing/Promotion
\$3,950 Total

\$ _____ - _____

\$ _____ - _____

\$ _____ - _____

\$ _____ - _____

\$ _____ - _____

\$ _____ - _____

\$ _____ - _____

\$ _____ - _____

\$ _____ **Total**