



# **City of Laredo**

## **Community Development Department**

### **Third-Party Funding and Volunteer Program**

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## **Third-Party Funding Application Program**

### **General Fund Use Guidelines**

General Fund revenues, derived from property taxes, licenses and permits, local taxes, service charges, and other sources, support non-profit organizations that provide services aligned with the City's objectives in education, economic development, and promoting a health and welfare environment.

### **Eligible Program Areas**

#### **1. Economic Development:**

Activities that foster economic growth, job creation, workforce development, or community revitalization efforts, contributing to the City's economic progress.

#### **2. Health & Welfare Environment:**

Programs promoting physical, mental, and social well-being, and addressing needs of underserved populations (e.g., health education, mental health support, substance abuse prevention).

#### **3. Education:**

Programs supporting teaching, learning, and skills development, such as academic enrichment, literacy, cultural education, and lifelong learning initiatives.

### **Allowable Expenses for Reimbursement**

Eligible expenses must directly relate to program delivery and include:

- Salaries/Benefits of up to 25% for employees involved in qualifying programs.
- Equipment necessary for program execution.
- Insurance costs tied to program delivery (restrictions apply).
- Utilities associated with program facilities.
- Transportation costs essential for program activities (restrictions apply).
- Program supplies, such as food, trophies, medication, vouchers.

### **Hotel/Motel Use Guidelines**

The City of Laredo collects a **Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT)** from hotels, motels, and bed & breakfasts and inns. Under state law, the revenue from the Hotel Occupancy Tax may be used only to directly promote tourism and the convention and hotel industry. **Chapter 351 of the Tax Code states that the use of HOT funds is limited to:**

- i) Convention Centers and Visitor Information Centers: the acquisition of sites for and the construction, improvement, enlarging, equipping, repairing operation and maintenance of convention center facilities or visitor information centers, or both;

- ii) Registration of Convention Delegates: the furnishing of facilities, personnel, and materials for the registration of convention delegates or registrants;
- iii) Advertising, Solicitations and Promotions that Directly Promote Tourism and the Hotel and Convention Industry: advertising and conducting solicitations and promotional programs to attract tourists and convention delegates or registrants to the municipality or its vicinity;
- iv) Promotions of the Arts that Directly Promote Tourism and the Hotel and Convention Industry: that the encouragement, promotion, improvement, and application of the arts, including instrumental and vocal music, dance, drama, folk art, creative writing, architecture, design and allied fields, painting, sculpture photography, graphic and craft arts, motion picture, radio, television, tape and sound recording, and other arts related to the presentation, performance, execution, and exhibition of these major art forms, and
- v) Historical Restoration and Preservation Activities that Directly Promote Tourism and the Hotel and Convention Industry: historical restoration and preservation projects or activities or advertising and conducting solicitation and promotional programs to encourage tourists and convention delegates to visit preserved historic sites or museums.
- vi) Sporting Event Expenses that Substantially Increase Economic Activity at Hotels: Expenses including promotional expenses, directly related to a sporting event in which the majority of participants are tourists who substantially increase economic activity at hotels and motels within the city or its vicinity.

**Eligibility and Priority for Hotel Tax Funds:** Priority will be given to those events and entities based on their ability to generate overnight visitors to Laredo. The amount that is being requested should not exceed more than 25 percent of the gross amount of hotel night revenue that is being predicted that will be created or sustained by this event

If an event will not generate any meaningful hotel night activity, it is not eligible for receipt of hotel occupancy tax funds. Events can prove this potential to generate overnight visitors by:

- a) historic information on the number of room nights used during previous years of the same events;
- b) current information on the size of a room block that has been reserved at area hotels to accommodate anticipated overnight guests attending the event requesting hotel tax funds;
- c) historical information on the number of guests at hotel or other lodging facilities that attended the funded event; and/or
- d) examples of marketing of the programs and activities that are likely to generate and encourage overnight visitors to local lodging properties.

## **Funding Criteria**

### **General Fund - Funding Limitation**

- Nonprofit organizations may receive Third Party Funding for a period not exceeding three (3) consecutive years
- after this period, organizations must wait for a minimum of one (1) year before reapplying for funding.
- **Reasoning:** These limitations are in place to manage the availability of City funds and to allow the City to assist a broader range of nonprofits. This policy helps distribute funding equitably across the nonprofit sector, encouraging diversity and innovation within the community.

### **General Fund Use Guidelines:**

- The City intends to provide funding to as many nonprofits organizations as possible to maximize community impact and engagement.
- The maximum amount of funding available to any single nonprofit organization will be \$25,000 per year.

### **Reimbursement Process, Reports and Budget:**

#### **General Fund & Hotel/Motel Fund**

- Nonprofits must submit the request quarterly or before the quarter as long as it's within the quarterly months.
- Request for Reimbursement must include the following:
  - Request for Reimbursement Form (Exhibit 3) with correct calculations
  - Detailed Quarterly Expense Report (Exhibit 3)
  - Copy of invoices/receipts ONLY for expenses to be reimbursed (cannot accept original)
  - Copy of check for each receipt
  - Time cards for salaries MUST be clear and include an explanation of calculations to expedite the reimbursement process
  - Bank Statements/Proof of cashed checks
  - Active Insurance must be submitted with each request
  - Credit Card expenses will not be reimbursed until the agency has sent payment to the CC Company.
  - All request for reimbursements MUST include a quarterly performance report.
  - Match Hour Document
- A mid-year report must be submitted with the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter request and a final year report with the 4<sup>th</sup> report.
- Any increase or decrease to the estimated approved line items must be submitted via email or letter to Nonprofit office. No later than the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter.
- Awarded funds not used at the end of the fiscal year no not roll over to the following fiscal year.

- Changes in the approved scope of services or an increase to the approved budget will required a contact amendment and council approval.

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## **Laredo Civic Engagement Rewards Program**

### **Overview of the Program**

The **Laredo Civic Engagement Rewards Program** encourages non-profits to actively participate in community service by earning credits through volunteer activities that can be applied toward waivers or reductions of City fees and services. It also serves as a key criterion for third-party funding eligibility.

### **Program Participation Requirements**

#### **1. Eligibility:**

- Only non-profit organizations registered with the City of Laredo and in good standing can participate.

#### **2. Application Process:**

- Organizations must complete a "Civic Engagement Rewards Program Application" and receive approval from the City Volunteer Coordinator.

#### **3. Volunteer Hour Contribution:**

- Organizations are required to contribute volunteer hours to City-approved activities directly benefiting the community. Hours are valued at \$25 each and can be applied toward waivers or reductions of specific City fees.

#### **4. Link to Third-Party Funding:**

- Participation in the program and fulfillment of volunteer hour requirements is mandatory for organizations seeking third-party funding from the City. This ensures that funding recipients are actively engaged in community service and contributing to Laredo's overall well-being.

### **Community Service Contribution Requirement**

#### **Match Hour Requirement:**

- Organizations receiving General Fund monies must meet the **Community Service Contribution** requirement by providing volunteer hours based on the funding amount. For every \$1,000 in funding, the organization must contribute **10 volunteer hours** (valued at \$25 per hour).

#### **Reporting and Accountability**

- Organizations must submit detailed quarterly reports on expense use, program delivery, and volunteer hour contributions, subject to review by the Community Development Nonprofit Division and the Legal Department.
- Hours should be submitted with every reimbursement request equivalent to the amount being requested.

#### **Performance-Based Funding**

Continued eligibility and funding levels may be adjusted based on the organization's performance, compliance with guidelines, and demonstrated community impact.



## **Laredo Civic Engagement Reward Program Guidelines**

### **Overview**

The City of Laredo proposes the creation of the "Laredo Civic Engagement Rewards Program," a dynamic initiative aimed at fostering a stronger partnership between the City and its non-profit organizations. This program will incentivize non-profits to participate actively in City activities by offering credits for volunteer service, which can be applied toward waivers or reductions of fees for City facilities, services, and other forms of support. Additionally, this proposal links third-party funding eligibility to measurable community engagement, ensuring that the benefits of City resources are equitably shared among all residents.

### **Purpose and Goals**

The primary goals of the Laredo Civic Engagement Rewards Program are to:

1. **Encourage Community Involvement:** By rewarding volunteer service, the program seeks to deepen the relationship between the City, non-profits, and residents, promoting a culture of active civic engagement.
2. **Support Non-Profit Organizations:** The program will provide financial incentives to non-profits, enabling them to allocate more of their resources to their core missions.
3. **Ensure Accountable Use of City Resources:** Tying financial support to demonstrated volunteer service guarantees that City funds and resources are used effectively and transparently, benefiting the broader community.

### **Program Guidelines**

#### **Eligibility:**

- Only non-profit organizations registered with the City of Laredo and in good standing are eligible to participate in the program.
- Organizations must complete a "Civic Engagement Rewards Program Application" and receive approval from the City Volunteer Coordinator.

#### **Application Process:**

- Non-profits must submit a completed application to the City Volunteer Coordinator to participate in the program.
- Members of participating organizations must also complete the City of Laredo's volunteer application, indicating which non-profit they are supporting, and be approved as volunteers.
- Any member of the nonprofit that is over the age of 18 must provide a background check from the Laredo Police Department and Sheriff's Department to the City Volunteer Coordinator.

#### **Volunteer Hour Contribution:**

- An individual volunteer may donate hours to a participating organization of their choice. Once hours are donated to an organization, they cannot be reclaimed by the individual.
- Volunteer hours must be directly related to City-approved activities and events that benefit the City of Laredo (e.g., assisting City staff at events, supporting City-sponsored programs, environmental clean-ups on City property).

#### **Approval and Tracking of Volunteer Hours:**

- Hours must be tracked on the "City of Laredo Volunteer Hours Log" form and verified by a designated City staff member overseeing the activity. The form must have two signatures: one from the volunteer and the other from the City staff.

#### **Evaluation of Volunteer Hours:**

- Each approved volunteer hour will be credited at \$25 toward the waiver or reduction of fees for City services, facilities, or other support. This rate reflects the adjusted value of volunteer time for the Laredo area.

#### **Use of Volunteer Hours for Fee Waivers:**

- Volunteer hours may be applied toward the waiver or reduction of specific City fees, such as facility rental fees, equipment use fees, and other related expenses. However, hours cannot be applied toward:
  - City staff costs (if necessary),
  - Janitorial or cleaning fees (if necessary),
  - Damage or cleaning deposits (if required).

#### **Tying Volunteer Service to Third-Party Funding:**

- To be eligible for third-party funding from the City, non-profits must participate in the "Laredo Civic Engagement Rewards Program" and demonstrate a commitment to community service.
- For every \$1,000 of City funding requested, non-profits must provide a minimum of 10 volunteer hours valued at \$25 per hour.

#### **Reporting and Verification:**

- Non-profits are responsible for ensuring all volunteer hours are accurately logged, documented, and submitted to the City Volunteer Coordinator with every request for reimbursement.
- All hours must be verified by City staff present at the activity.

#### **Expiration and Use of Credits:**

- Volunteer hours must be used within **12 months** of the fiscal year that the nonprofit gets awarded.
- Credits cannot be transferred to another organization or individual and cannot be

converted into cash.

### **Recognition of Contributions:**

- The City of Laredo will publicly recognize non-profits contributing substantial volunteer hours in their reported on their last report, on the City website, and at City events.
- Organizations exceeding **200 volunteer hours** in a fiscal year will receive a certificate of appreciation and be honored at a City Council meeting.

### **Responsibilities of Participants:**

- The City Volunteer Coordinator is responsible for approving activities, maintaining accurate records, and verifying compliance with program guidelines.
- Participating organizations must ensure that all volunteers are properly registered, hours are logged accurately, and all necessary forms are submitted in a timely manner.

### **Compliance and Review**

- Non-profits found non-compliant with this policy may be removed from the program and forfeit accrued service credits.
- The policy will be reviewed annually by the City Manager's office to ensure it remains aligned with the City's goals and objectives.

### **Anticipated Benefits for the Community**

Implementing the Laredo Civic Engagement Rewards Program offers several benefits:

- **Increased Volunteerism:** Encouraging non-profits to volunteer directly with the City will boost overall community involvement and strengthen civic bonds.
- **Cost Efficiency:** By allowing non-profits to reduce their costs through volunteer service, the City maximizes the impact of its resources.
- **Greater Transparency:** The program will create a more transparent system for distributing City resources, linking funding to tangible volunteer contributions.
- **Enhanced Community Services:** Additional volunteer support will enable the City to provide higher-quality services and organize more events and programs that benefit residents.

### **Conclusion and Next Steps**

The City of Laredo invites stakeholders to consider the implementation of the Laredo Civic Engagement Rewards Program as a strategic initiative to promote active civic engagement and strengthen partnerships with local non-profits. Feedback will be solicited from the community

and non-profit organizations to refine the program guidelines. The proposal will then be presented to the City Council for final approval and implementation.

By investing in this program, the City of Laredo aims to create a vibrant, engaged community where non-profits are recognized, supported, and empowered to contribute meaningfully to the City's growth and well-being.

## **General Community Volunteer Hours**

### **Overview**

The City of Laredo proposes the establishment of the "Volunteer Program," a dynamic initiative designed to encourage community members to engage with the City. This program will motivate local residents and students to actively participate in City activities by offering credits for volunteer service, and other forms of support.

### **Purpose and Goals**

The primary goals of the Volunteer Program are to:

1. **Encourage Community Involvement:** By rewarding volunteer service, the program seeks to deepen the relationship between the City, and residents, promoting a culture of active volunteerism.
2. **Support Members of the Community:** The program will provide community service hours to those students or residence in need.

### **Program Guidelines**

#### **Eligibility:**

- Community members and students must be registered in the City of Laredo Volunteer Program and in good standing to be eligible to participate.
- Members interested in volunteering must complete a "Volunteer Application" and receive approval from the City Volunteer Coordinator.
- Students and members of the community participate in events and activities offered by the City for both experiential and educational purposes.

#### **Application Process:**

- Members of the community must submit a completed application to the City Volunteer Coordinator to participate in the volunteer program.
- Any community member over the age of 18 must submit the original copies of a background check from both the Laredo Police Department and the Sheriff's Department to the City Volunteer Coordinator.

#### **Volunteer Hour Contribution:**

- Any volunteer from the community may donate hours to a participating organization of their choice. If they decide not to donate the hours, they will receive a certificate for the hours earned. Once hours are donated to an organization, they cannot be reclaimed by the individual.
- Volunteer hours must be directly related to City-approved activities and events that benefit the City of Laredo (e.g., assisting City staff at events, supporting City-sponsored programs, environmental clean-ups on City property).

#### **Approval and Tracking of Volunteer Hours:**

- Hours must be tracked on the "City of Laredo Volunteer Hours Log" form and verified by a designated City staff member overseeing the activity. The form must have two signatures: one from the volunteer and the other from the person hosting the event/festival. If the volunteer chooses to select a department the coordinator in charge of the volunteers must sign the volunteer hour log.

#### **Evaluation of Volunteer Hours:**

- Volunteers from the community and students will earn hour per hour.

#### **Expiration and Use of Credits:**

- Volunteer hours must request their hours within **12 months** of the fiscal year.
- Credits cannot be transferred to another organization or individual and cannot be converted into cash.

#### **Recognition of Contributions:**

- Volunteers exceeding **200 volunteer hours** in a fiscal year will receive a certificate of appreciation and be honored at a City Council meeting.

#### **Responsibilities of Participants:**

- The City Volunteer Coordinator is responsible for approving activities, maintaining accurate records, and verifying compliance with program guidelines.

## **Application and Permit Requirements for Waivers**

### **Application Requirement:**

- Nonprofits seeking a waiver of City expenses must complete and submit all relevant applications and permits for City services, such as police presence, fire safety inspections, park rentals, and waste management. The waiver does not eliminate the application process but specifies that the City will cover or pay for the approved costs associated with these services on behalf of the nonprofit.

### **Waiver Coverage:**

- The waiver indicates that the City will directly pay for the costs of approved City services, which may include public safety services, facility rentals, equipment use, or utility expenses, depending on what the waiver specifies.

### **Scope of Coverage:**

- While the City will pay for costs covered by the waiver, any additional or unexpected expenses beyond the waiver's scope remain the responsibility of the nonprofit. For example, if the event requires services beyond what was initially anticipated or approved, those costs must be covered by the nonprofit.

### **Monitoring and Compliance:**

- The City may require proof of the nonprofit's compliance with the waiver conditions, such as documentation of the event's public benefit or financial records, to ensure transparency and proper use of City funds. This report might be requested after the event has been finalized.

## **Rewards and Incentives**

### **Tiered Reward System:**

- Organizations are categorized into tiers (e.g., Bronze, Silver, Gold) based on the number of volunteer hours contributed, diversity of services provided, and community impact. Higher-tier organizations receive additional benefits such as priority access to City facilities, enhanced publicity, or eligibility for matching grants.

### **Public Recognition and Capacity Building:**

- Participating organizations are publicly recognized for their contributions and can access capacity-building workshops, training sessions, and resources to strengthen their volunteer management, fundraising, and outreach efforts.

## **Reporting and Monitoring:**

### **Documentation and Verification:**

- Organizations must maintain accurate records of volunteer hours, including logs signed by both the volunteer and supervising City staff, and submit these records for verification. All credits are subject to review and approval by the City Volunteer Coordinator to ensure compliance with program guidelines.

### **Regular Program Review:**

- The City will conduct an annual review of the program to assess its effectiveness, gather feedback, and make necessary adjustments to align with community needs and City objectives.

## **Process for Non-Profit Organizations Seeking a Waiver of City Expenses Without Third-Party Funding**

### **Overview**

Non-profit organizations that did not receive third-party funding from the City of Laredo but wish to obtain a waiver of City expenses for an event or activity can still benefit by participating in the Laredo Civic Engagement Rewards Program.

### **How to Utilize the Program**

#### **Eligibility to Participate:**

- Non-profit organizations not receiving third-party funding but registered with the City of Laredo in good standing are eligible to participate.

#### **Application to the Program:**

- Eligible non-profits must complete the Civic Engagement Rewards Program Application to outline their intent to participate and describe planned volunteer activities.

#### **Contribution of Volunteer Hours:**

- Organizations must contribute volunteer hours to City-approved activities that benefit the community. Hours are valued at \$25 per hour and can be used to earn credits.

#### **Applying Volunteer Credits for Waivers:**

- Organizations may apply their earned credits toward waivers or reductions of City expenses for events or activities, following all application and permit requirements as detailed above.

### **Conclusion**

By participating in the Laredo Civic Engagement Rewards Program, non-profits can access City resources and support while ensuring compliance, accountability, and community engagement, fostering a collaborative environment that benefits all residents.

The nonprofits requesting a waiver must submit the hours prior to the event.

### **Effective Date**

This policy is effective as of [Insert Date] and will remain in effect until amended or rescinded by the City of Laredo.