



REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Resource: Guide to Applying for RDA Community Grants

RDA supports a wide range of community development projects. Each year, our local Board of Directors reviews applications and looks for the projects that have the greatest potential to make a meaningful difference in our community.

Because the need is so great we typically **receive two to three times more funding requests than we have dollars available**. This means not every strong project can be funded, and careful consideration is given to each application.

What Does the Grant Application Ask For? At its core, the application focuses on three simple questions:

1. What is the challenge or opportunity?
2. What is your plan to address it?
3. What difference will your work make?

Every proposal tells its own story and is reviewed alongside other applications submitted during the same cycle.

What Helps an Application Stand Out? Strong applications must include:

- Clear details about how funds will be used
- A plan for long-term sustainability
- Evidence of support or funding from other sources

We encourage all applicants to carefully review the guidelines available on the RDA website before applying.

How RDA Prioritizes Funding: To help guide decisions, RDA has identified key **focus areas** that reflect current community priorities.

Our focus include **seven community sectors**:

- Affordable housing
- Child care
- Mental health
- Economic development
- Life skills
- Safety net services
- Violence prevention

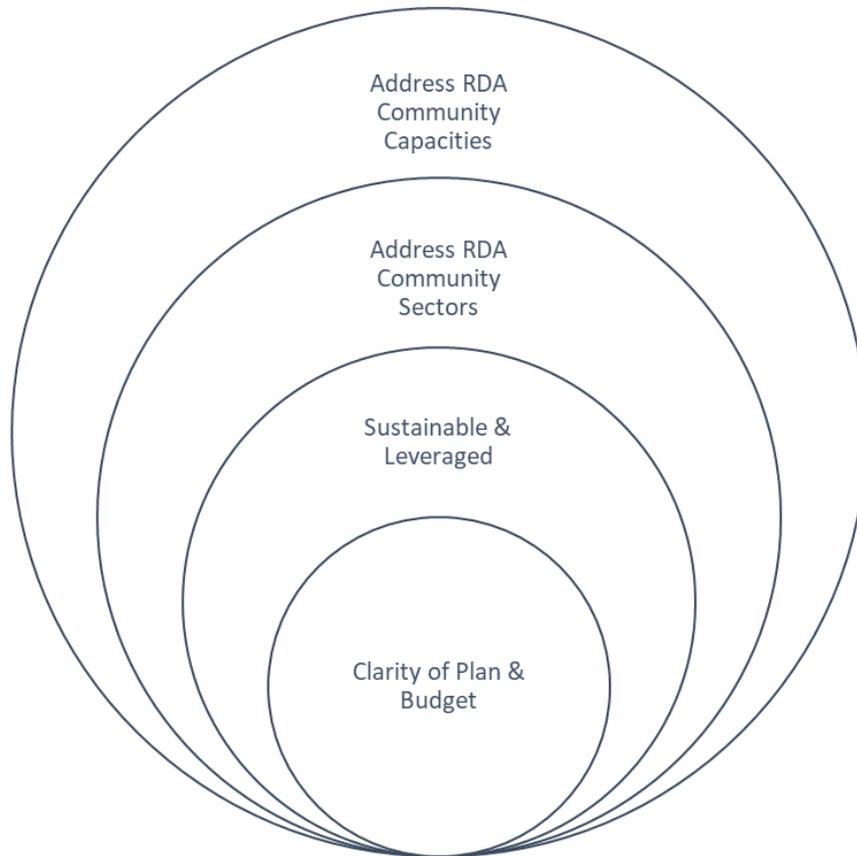
In addition, we look at **four community capacities**, which focus on broader, systems-level change:

- Collaboration
- Regional planning
- Grassroots engagement
- Root-cause thinking

These focus areas are defined in detail within the posted guideline documents. While projects are not limited to these categories, they help us make thoughtful funding decisions when resources are limited. For example, sustained focus on affordable housing allows us to support multiple strategies that create long-term progress.



RDA Grants – Competitive Factors: When the Board reviews and scores grant applications, multiple factors are considered. In general, applications with clear plans and budgets can stand on their own and are not required to address every factor. However, those that align with multiple factors are likely to receive higher scores and stronger funding consideration.



Granting Options: Eligible organizations¹ may apply for three types of grants. Each grant type is described on our website.

- **General Community Grants:** This grant type is offered twice per year (spring and fall) for a broad range of needs. Follows the guidelines listed above.
- **Transformational Grants:** A larger grant option that is offered one time per year (fall). This opportunity is limited to requests aligned with RDA’s Strategic Field.
- **Emergency/Discretionary Grants:** These “between-cycle” grants are limited to requests that cannot be met during a regular grant cycle timeline. This includes some emergency situations and opportunities that were not known. An example of the latter includes national grants that require a local match and have deadlines that do not align with RDA’s awards cycle.

¹ Applications accepted from nonprofits (501c3 and 501c19), public school districts, and local city/county governmental departments (e.g., fire departments, libraries, etc.)



Focus Area Descriptions

Community Sector Priorities

- **Access to affordable/stable housing:** Preference to use QC Housing Council's six strategic pillars.
- **Access to evidence-based mental health** care services, use of best practices, alignment of resources.
- **Access to child care,** child care workforce capacity, and emphasis on quality.
- **Economic development:** Process of improving economic and social wellbeing of a community through programs, policies, and activities.
- **Access to safety net resources:** A backstop to safeguard against hardships or adversity. Assuming we all run into challenges along the way (e.g., food bank, rent relief, utility relief).
- **Violence prevention:** Practice of reducing the occurrence or perpetration of violence by addressing the underlying causes, including changing behaviors, environments, organizations, and norms
- **Life skills** development: Community systems that help individuals navigate basic life tasks, overcome normal challenges, develop financial literacy, seek employment, learn about nutrition, etc.

Community Capacity Priorities

Collaboration: Formal/informal coalitions to convene stakeholders, align resources and efforts.

- Collaboration between different organizations can lead to increased productivity, improved problem-solving abilities, boosted creativity, better access to resources, enhanced innovation, stronger relationships, a more diverse perspective, and a positive impact on the overall industry by sharing knowledge and expertise across different entities; essentially allowing organizations to tackle complex challenges more effectively than working alone.

Regional Plans: Unified master plan to address regional challenges, align stakeholders, and clarify goals/metrics.

- Regional planning offers several benefits including: improved coordination between local governments, more efficient use of resources, better management of regional issues like transportation and land use, economic development opportunities, environmental protection, and the ability to address social disparities across a wider area, all by facilitating collaboration between different stakeholders within a region.

Grassroots Volunteerism: Efforts to engage volunteer time/resources to address community challenges.

- Grassroots Volunteerism provides several levels of benefits. At the individual level, volunteering can provide new skills and work experience and help develop a support system and build community connections. At the community level, volunteering can help people feel connected to their community and to other volunteers, solve community problems, and help reduce social isolation, which is a risk factor for depression. Finally, at the organizational level, volunteering can reduce operating expenses by not needing to pay employee salaries and benefits and help attract and retain talent.

Root Causes Approach: Identify basic causes of challenges and use data to direct resources to achieve desired outcomes.

- Root cause thinking offers several key benefits, including: preventing recurring problems by addressing the underlying causes rather than just symptoms, improving decision-making by providing a deeper understanding of issues, fostering continuous improvement through systemic analysis, enhancing team collaboration, and developing critical thinking skills within individuals and teams by encouraging them to explore complex situations and identify contributing factors.