

## Bay Area News Group Share the Spirit Grant Program Overview

### **PURPOSE:**

The Share the Spirit campaign's purpose is to 1) illuminate the needs of residents in our community; 2) generate interest in and awareness of nonprofit service agencies and encourage civic philanthropy; 3) provide funding for programs that serve East Bay children, individuals and families.

### **GRANT PROGRAM OVERVIEW:**

The Share the Spirit program has been helping people and organizations in our community for nearly three decades. Beginning by Thanksgiving Day and continuing through early January each year, the Bay Area News Group publishes a series of Share the Spirit stories illustrating specific community needs and offering East Bay Times readers a direct opportunity to make donations.

Readers' donations allow Share the Spirit to grant funds to support many varying community needs like providing veterans with financial and job assistance programs, offering sleeping bags and showers for people who are unsheltered, distributing holiday gifts for children in foster care, and much more in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties.

Organizations eligible for grant funding are 501(C)(3) nonprofits, schools, and other public entities located in or serving the communities in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties.

To be considered, grantees must meet the following requirements:

- Grantees will complete the grant report by June 3, 2024.
- Grantees must provide story topics (see below for suggestions) for use in developing stories for Bay Area News Group media outlets. If selected for a story, grantees must cooperate with News Group personnel and communicate in a prompt and collaborative manner. Most **stories will be created during October** even though they may not be published immediately. Organizations that are not responsive to reporters and photographers will be ineligible for funding in the subsequent year.
- Share the Spirit grantees will be required to articulate a significant positive program impact for Alameda and/or Contra Costa Counties. (Note: Services must be provided and funding expended in one or both counties regardless of agency location.)
- Share the Spirit grantees will represent a wide diversity of programs, populations, and geographic areas.
- Any nonprofit applicant must be a 501(c)(3) organization in good standing (EIN, IRS letter or equivalent for a public entity). An active GuideStar/Charity Navigator profile is strongly recommended.
- Grantees must have capacity to manage the grant and the receipts/accounting required.
- For repeat applicants to be eligible, applicants must have met all previous year due dates for returned forms and all grant requirements.

## STORY TOPIC AND PUBLICATION:

Applications must contain one or more specific topics for a feature story for publication in the East Bay Times for the Share the Spirit campaign. A story in the East Bay Times (which may be re-published in other Bay Area News Group media) about your organization is an additional and extremely valuable benefit of being selected as a Share the Spirit grant recipient. This publicity can do much to raise awareness of your organization and the community needs you seek to meet.

*Not all grant recipients will be selected for a story due to resource limitations, but all applicants must be willing and able to provide story topics.*

### Additional guidelines:

- Cooperation with Bay Area News Group reporters is essential. If you are selected for a story, the representative from your organization provided in your application will be contacted and a prompt professional response is necessary. Time is required to coordinate for the interviewee, reporter, and photographer to meet the publication date, so a delayed response can result in the News Group selecting a different organization to be profiled.
- Most activity for stories - reporter contact, interviews of clients, photography, etc. - will take place in **late September, October, and early November**, even though a story may be published as late as December. Grantees must have an organization contact available throughout the month of October to coordinate with journalists. If your organization is selected for a story about a *date specific event*, the story may be created in October, with a photo taken later at the event.
- Stories with personal interviews of a current or past program participant/beneficiary/client are helpful in bringing social issues to light and appealing to readers. Please secure consent from such an interview subject or subjects prior to applying. Ensure that your selected interviewee/client understands a) that their name and image will be in the paper and online and b) what sort of aid they received from your organization and c) in cases of nonprofit applications, that the grant will go to the NPO and not to the individual. We understand that some beneficiaries may not be willing to share personal stories and have a photograph in the newspaper for privacy or other concerns. *However, the strongest consideration will be given to applications with willing interview subject(s).*
- Applicants should summarize their story topics in the space provided on the application. Applicants should not use external links to expanded content *except* in the field provided for links.
- One application per organization is advised. The application has space for at least 2 story topics.
- Select a quality story topic. A good story needs to be compelling, unique, emotional and relatable. For samples of previous stories visit story archives: <http://www.sharethespiriteastbay.org/stories/>.
- The best topics are timely and relevant. For 2023, Share the Spirit will consider all submissions and is looking for stories that touch on current issues and events, including *but not limited to*: immediate needs: housing/shelter; food insecurity; youth, families, seniors, veterans issues; improving inclusiveness and equity; public safety; community voices - adding to advocacy; education; collaboration; health; climate change.

### STORY TOPIC AND PUBLICATION (cont'd):

- Selecting the interview subject: There are many factors to consider when choosing one of your program participants or graduates or volunteers for an interview. The reporter will coordinate with your organization to make sure that the person feels comfortable and that the story covers suitable subject matter.
  - As mentioned above, it is strongly preferred to have **an interviewee who is willing to share their story, and their image and identity**. This makes the topic more real and relatable. You can trust that the reporters will be compassionate and professional. We understand that some organizations may have strong considerations around confidentiality, and perhaps this grant is not a fit in those circumstances.
  - It is important to have a **good photo opportunity**. Typically, this will be scheduled at the same time as the interview opportunity, but not always. A good photo includes many elements. It is helpful to have an **action-based photo versus a static composition**. In other words, a photo of a person completing a task or at play is more interesting than a posed, seated photo. The best photos will depict activities related directly to the wish, or core purpose of the organization. A professional photojournalist will be taking the photo, but preparation can help the photo be more evocative.
  - Assess your interviewee's capacity to participate. They should have some time to allot to the interview and ability to articulate how your program or assistance has helped them personally. There should also be thought given to the safety and security of the location and people in attendance.
  - Ensure that your selected interviewee/client understands a) that their name and image will be in the paper and online and b) what sort of aid they received from your organization and c) in cases of nonprofit applications, that the grant will go to the NPO and not the individual.

### ADDITIONAL/EXTENDED MEDIA:

- The overall reach of the individual stories and overarching campaign can spread lasting impressions of nonprofit work and community needs. Grantees can share all the East Bay Times stories with their networks, while tagging the East Bay Times to amplify the reach.
- Sample posts, tweets, and emails are available in the media kit provided on the Share the Spirit website.
- Citation matters - please attribute work, articles and names appropriately.
- Permission matters - confirm client consent to social media posts prior to use.
- Please view the Share the Spirit MEDIA KIT and other information at <https://www.sharethespiriteastbay.org/grant-info/>.

## **ADMINISTRATION:**

Share the Spirit is administered by the Bay Area News Group and its 501(c)3, The Mercury News Wish Book Fund. As the program administrator, the News Group manages the application/proposal process, distribution of grant funds, and reporting forms for recipient agencies. The Bay Area News Group maintains the website for the program, and provides donor pledge processing, reporting and receipt accounting for all donations. The News Group has a Community Projects Director to serve as a bridge between nonprofit agencies and the Bay Area News Group in developing effective story content.

## **FUNDING:**

- Project funding is raised by donations from readers in response to articles in the Bay Area News Group member media outlets. Funds raised each year are distributed to grantees at completion of the campaign.
- Approximately 20-25 grantees will be selected for a feature story. Provided reader response is similar to past years, wish amounts of approximately \$5,000 - \$35,000 each could be granted. Grantees should still feel comfortable submitting requests of the amount their actual need will cost, even if it does not fit this range. Historically, most grant requests have been in or around this range.
- Grants will be awarded to nonprofit organizations providing services in Alameda and Contra Costa counties and no other counties.
- Application or program questions can be submitted through the Share the Spirit website <https://www.sharethespiriteastbay.org/questions/>. Additional FAQ's are posted on the site <https://www.sharethespiriteastbay.org/answers-to-questions/>

## **IMPORTANT DATES:**

See annual calendar posted on Share the Spirit website

(<https://www.sharethespiriteastbay.org/grant-info/>). We recommend using the website for current information throughout the year.

**July 1 or sooner** - Grant application materials posted. *Applicants should review parameters and overview thoroughly before applying.*

**July 31, 8 a.m.** - Grant application form opens.

**Aug. 14** - Grant application form closes. (Please **note:** There is a cap of 100 accepted applications. Application form may close sooner if capacity reached before Aug. 14)

**September to October** - Grantees selected for story publication. Those selected will be contacted by Bay Area News Group staff. ALL grantees must have an organization contact available throughout the month of October to coordinate with journalists.

**November 2023 to January 2024** - Wish Book stories published in The Mercury News

**March 2024** - Funds distributed to grantees

**June 3, 2024** - Final grant reports, which are to be completed online, are due.

### **PROGRAM HISTORY:**

The Share the Spirit Program has been assisting East Bay residents for more than 30 years. Started by the Dean and Margaret Leshner family and the Contra Costa Times in 1989, Share the Spirit has deep roots in the community. The scope of the program was expanded by the News Group and Volunteer Center of the East Bay in recent years, and from 2016 to 2020 underwent more upgrades and expansion, including a dedicated website and digital application process, by the News Group and the former administrative partner, the Contra Costa Crisis Center. Beginning in 2021, the Bay Area News Group added managing the program in tandem with its South Bay sister program at The Mercury News, Wish Book, which has been supporting Bay Area communities since 1983.

### **INFO & LINKS:**

If after visiting the Grant Application page, including the FAQs from applicant section, on the Share the Spirit website and reading the grant overview, grant parameters and media guidelines ([www.sharethespiriteastbay.org](http://www.sharethespiriteastbay.org)), if you have questions, you may submit them to the project coordinator via the website ( <https://www.sharethespiriteastbay.org/questions/> ) or email [sharethespirit@bayareanewsgroup.com](mailto:sharethespirit@bayareanewsgroup.com) . We will post answers to questions on the website for all applicants to view.

Thank you for your interest!

**Good tips for writing a story that helps our readers to understand how your organization will be able to help more clients/constituents with funds can be found at this link from the Grantsmanship Center:**

[Be Clear About What the Grant Is For](#)