

Bridge Bread Advocates Fund Awards Process

To ensure the Advocates Fund is managed ethically, consistently, and without compromising the hard-won trust established by the volunteers, the process must be highly structured and prioritize **confidentiality and objectivity**.

The following is the four-phase process for the Bridge Bread Advocates group to evaluate and award emergency funds. It intentionally uses an **Advocates Leader** to shield the lay volunteers from confidential, identifying information and potential boundary issues.

The Advocates Fund Grant Review Process

This process is designed to be completed within a 48-hour period to address genuine emergencies quickly.

Phase 1: Intake and Staff Verification (The Gatekeeper Role)

The initial request is *never* handled by the volunteer Advocate directly. A designated **Advocates Leader** acts as the Gatekeeper.

Step	Action	Rationale
1. Request Received	The Baker submits an emergency request form (or speaks to their Advocate).	Ensures the request is formally documented and addresses an emergency, not an ongoing need.
2. Staff Vetting	The Advocates Leader verifies the need, obtains all necessary documentation (invoices, landlord letters, mechanic quotes, etc.), and confirms the amount needed.	Protects the Fund from fraud and prevents volunteers from needing to handle sensitive financial/personal documents.
3. Anonymization	The Advocates Leader assigns a temporary Case ID (e.g., "Crisis 007") and removes <i>all</i> personally	Confidentiality: The volunteer Advocates

Step	Action	Rationale
	identifying information (names, specific addresses, etc.) from the documentation.	Group never knows the identity of the recipient.
4. Case Summary Draft	The Advocates Leader drafts a one-page Case Summary for the Advocates Group, including: Case ID , Crisis Category (e.g., Eviction Prevention, Health Emergency, Job Stability), Verified Cost , and Grant History (Has this Baker received a grant before?).	Prepares the case for objective review by the volunteer committee.

Phase 2: Evaluation and Prioritization (The Scoring Matrix)

The volunteer Advocates Group (the committee) reviews the anonymous Case Summary and scores it based on three objective criteria. This scoring matrix ensures fairness and transparency in prioritization.

A. Scoring Criteria (Scale of 1 to 5, where 5 is Highest Impact)

Criterion	Question to Ask	Score Value (1-5)
1. Urgency & Severity	How immediate is the threat? Is this crisis life-threatening or threatening their housing/job <i>within 7 days</i> ?	5: Immediate threat (e.g., "Must pay rent by tomorrow"); 1: Non-critical expense (e.g., "Savings for future expense").
2. Leverage & Impact	How effectively does this small grant solve the <i>entire</i> problem? Does this amount create long-term stability?	5: Grant solves the crisis entirely and preserves employment/housing; 1: Grant only provides temporary, partial relief.

Criterion	Question to Ask	Score Value (1-5)
3. Alignment with Bridge Goals	Does this funding directly protect the Baker's ability to participate in the program (maintain job and housing)?	5: Essential to maintaining employment and stability; 1: Primarily for a personal item or non-critical comfort.

B. Total Score Use

The maximum score is **15**. Cases scoring **12 or higher** are immediately prioritized for funding. Cases scoring below 8 may require additional follow-up or referral to other community resources.

Phase 3: Decision and Award (The Group Meeting)

The Advocates Group meets (or conducts a rapid virtual vote) to review the top-priority cases.

1. **Staff Presentation:** The Advocates Leader briefly presents the anonymous **Case Summary** and the **Total Score** for each request.
2. **Open Discussion:** The volunteer advocates discuss the case, focusing *only* on the criteria: "Do we have enough information?" and "Does the score accurately reflect the crisis's threat to stability?"
3. **Motion to Fund:** A volunteer advocate moves to approve funding for the Case ID at the verified cost.
4. **Voting:** The committee votes. A **simple majority** is required for approval.
5. **Documentation:** The Advocates Leader documents the vote and final decision, including any condition of the award (e.g., "Approved, contingent upon providing the final receipt.").

Crucial Rule: If a volunteer recognizes any identifying details about the client during the discussion, they must immediately declare a **Conflict of Interest** and abstain from the vote to protect client confidentiality and the integrity of the process.

Phase 4: Disbursement and Follow-Up

The goal of this phase is to ensure the funds are used for the intended purpose and to maintain strong boundaries.

1. **Vendor-Direct Payment:** The approved grant amount is **never** given directly to the Baker. The Advocates Leader pays the vendor (e.g., Landlord, mechanic, utility company) directly on the Baker's behalf.
2. **Baker Notification:** The Advocates Leader informs the Baker of the approval, the amount, and that payment has been made directly to the vendor. The Baker receives a copy of the paid invoice for their records.
3. **Fund Tracking:** The Advocates Leader records the approved Case ID, the amount, the crisis category, and the vendor paid in the Advocates Fund ledger for reporting purposes.
4. **Advocates Report:** A brief, anonymized summary of the funding decisions (e.g., "Three grants totaling \$1,800 were approved this month to resolve two housing crises and one transportation issue") is shared with the Advocates Group to show the impact of their decisions. This helps motivate and connect the volunteers to the fund's success.