

City of Boston Block Party FAQs



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Play Street Closing Permit:

Does the Play Street Closing Permit allow me to serve food during my block party? Or do I need additional permits?

It depends. Residents can serve food at Potluck gatherings without obtaining permits from the Inspectional Services Health Division (ISD Health). Potluck events are informal gatherings where neighbors share food for social purposes only. Food sales are not allowed at Potluck-style events. For further details, please refer to [this document](#). Therefore, if local businesses or food trucks are invited to sell food during your block party, you will need to obtain permits from ISD Health.

What is the timeline for permit approvals?

The approval process for the Play Street Closing permit typically takes about 4 weeks.



Who should I contact to inquire about the Play Street Closing permit?

Please contact the Boston Transportation Department at btdpermitbranch@boston.gov.

What is the process for getting the street blocked off, and will the city provide barricades or do we need to arrange that?

Unfortunately, the City does not provide barricades. You may block off the street using caution tape, traffic cones, or other easily removable devices. Please note that vehicles cannot be used to close off streets, as the Boston Fire Department and Boston Emergency Medical Services require a twenty-foot (20') aisle to remain clear along the entire block at all times to allow emergency vehicles access. Please keep in mind that the Play Street Closing Permit does not remove parked cars. If you would prefer the street to be free of parked vehicles, we recommend communicating with your neighbors and guests in advance so they can plan accordingly.

What should I do if I need to cancel or postpone my event?

If you need to postpone your event: Contact the Boston Transportation Department at btdpermitbranch@boston.gov or 617-635-4680 for next steps. You may be asked to submit a new Play Street Closing Permit application. If you have already applied for or received a grant, please also notify the Mayor's Office of Civic Organizing at civicorganizing@boston.gov or 617-635-3485 with your new date, time, and updated PSC number. You do not need to resubmit your grant application or create a new Vendor ID unless instructed.

If you need to cancel your event: Contact the **Boston Transportation Department** to cancel your PSC permit, and also notify the **Mayor's Office of Civic Organizing** to withdraw your grant application or return funds if you have already been awarded.



Vendor ID:

How can I apply for a Vendor ID?

You can apply for a vendor ID on boston.gov/procurement. To apply, please follow this [step-by-step guide](#).

Who should I contact regarding the Vendor ID?

Please contact Procurement at vendor.questions@boston.gov.

Block Party Grant:

How can I access the Block Party Grant Application?

To apply for this year's Block Party Grant, you must first apply for a [Play Street Closing Permit](#) and [Boston Vendor ID](#). Once you have applied for your Play Street Closing Permit, you will be able to access the grant application form through the same portal.

Do I need to notify my neighbors before applying?

Yes. You **must** contact and collaborate with residents of the street you plan to close, as complaints or concerns from residents may result in the denial or revocation of a permit or grant. On your application, you will be asked to describe your connection to the street and confirm that residents are aware of and support the event.

Priority will be given to applicants who live on the street being closed, or to applications that demonstrate strong neighborhood involvement.

I already applied for a Play Street Closing Permit before applying for the Block Party Application. Can I still apply for the grant?

Please contact the Office of Civic Organizing at civicorganizing@boston.gov and add your Play Street Closing Permit number to the email address.



Will the Block Party Grant be subject to taxation?

No, the Block Party Grant money should not be taxed. If you are granted the money and later receive a 1099 or W-2, please contact the Office of Civic Organizing at civicorganizing@boston.gov.

Can I use the Block Party Grant money to host an event in a park or on private property?

No. To be eligible for the Block Party grant, the main event must take place on a street. Your private property or a public park may serve as extensions to your Block Party, but not as the primary venue. Additionally, be aware that events held in public parks might require additional permits.

Can I charge an entry fee for my block party?

No, all events awarded a Block Party grant must be free and open to the public.

My block party is happening soon and I haven't received notice if I was awarded the grant. What should I do?

Applying for the Block Party grant does not guarantee that you will receive funding. The Block Party Grant Committee reserves the right to deny applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria for the grant. If your block party is approaching and you have not yet received a notification regarding your grant application, please contact the Office of Civic Organizing at civicorganizing@boston.gov. Should your application still be under review, you may choose to proceed with your event, but please be aware that there is a possibility you may not receive the grant funds.

How much money will I be granted?

You can receive up to \$750 through the Summer Block Party Grant (though the actual amount awarded may vary) and \$300 through the Spooky Streets Grant. The committee



will assess the grant amount based on several factors, including but not limited to: the expected attendance at your block party, the intended use of the funds, previous grant amounts awarded to you, the number of Block Party grants distributed within your neighborhood, and the availability of funds.

I have been approved for the grant. When can I expect to receive the funds?

Congratulations on being awarded a Block Party Grant. You should expect to receive the funds within 2-3 weeks following the issuance of your award letter. Please note that if you opted for payment via check rather than direct deposit, the processing time may be extended. Should you not receive your funds within this timeframe, please reach out to the Office of Civic Organizing at civicorganizing@boston.gov for assistance.

My Block Party is approaching, and I haven't received approval yet. What should I do?

Please contact our office at civicorganizing@boston.gov and we will be able to assist you with that.

Can my event receive more than one Block Party Grant per event?

No, the Block Party Grant is limited to one grant per street/event per funding season. Duplicate applications associated with the same Play Street Closing Permit, street or Vendor ID will be automatically denied.

What happens if it rains on the day of my block party?

Play Street Closing Permits are valid rain or shine. If your event is postponed due to weather, you can reschedule it within the eligible grant window. Grant funds may still be used for your rescheduled event as long as it takes place within that timeframe. Please refer to **'What should I do if I need to cancel or postpone my event?'** for next steps.



Can I apply for a Block Party grant if I have received Block Party grant funds in the past?

Yes, you are eligible to apply for a Block Party Grant even if you have received funding before. However, please note that priority is given to first-time applicants and applications from previous grant recipients might be denied if there is a high volume of applications from the same neighborhood or if funds have been fully allocated to new applicants.

Can schools, churches, or businesses apply on behalf of a street?

Yes. Organizations may apply if they hold 501(c)(3) nonprofit status, are not under City administration (such as Boston Public Schools or Boston Centers for Youth and Families), and if the individual applying on behalf of the organization does not fall under Massachusetts General Laws Ch. 268A (Conflict of Interest). For-profit businesses are not eligible for grant funding.

The organization must communicate and collaborate with residents of the street before applying, and must close and use the street for the event.

Can I apply if I don't live on the street but my organization is hosting the event there?

Yes, you may apply, but your organization must show a clear connection to the street. Strong collaboration with residents is required, and you must engage with them before submitting your application. Community support is essential, and applications without resident involvement may be denied or revoked.

What can the grants be used for?

If awarded a grant, funds can be used for: decorations, kids' activities, non-alcoholic refreshments, lawn games, snacks, entertainment, and other community-building costs.

Funds cannot be used for: alcohol, purchases intended for private-use, fundraising, gift cards, giveaways, bouncy houses, sound systems, propane gas, on other permits, or anything not related to the event.



The Block Party Grant Committee may review proposed expenses and reserves the right to restrict the use of funds for certain items, even if not listed above.

Do I need to clean up after the block party?

Yes. Applicants are responsible for making sure all trash is removed and the street is left clean after the event. Failure to properly clean up may make you ineligible for future grants.

Are City employees allowed to apply?

Under Massachusetts General Laws Ch. 268A, City of Boston employees, their immediate family members, and those who have held such positions within the last 12 months are not eligible to receive this grant.

Can my street have both a Summer Block Party Grant and a Spooky Streets Grant?

Yes, however priority will be given to applications from streets that have not previously received a grant.

Will I need to submit photos or a recap of the event?

Photos of your event are required, as they help us celebrate and highlight block parties across the city. Additional materials are welcome but not required.

Does a Play Street Closing Permit or grant mean that a police detail or traffic officers will be provided?

Police details or traffic officers are not automatically provided for block parties. A great way to have Boston Police join your event is to invite your local police district to the Block Party. They really enjoy community invitations and often stop by to say hello when they're able.



Can my grant application be reviewed earlier because my block party date is approaching?

No. Grant applications cannot be expedited. All applications are reviewed during Block Party Grant Committee meetings in batches, and the process typically takes about four weeks. For this reason, applicants are strongly encouraged to apply at least 30 days before their event.

What are the possible reasons why my Block Party Grant was denied?

Please refer to the following list of possible reasons an application may have been denied:

- **Play Street Closing Permit Denied:** Application for a Play Street Closing Permit not approved by the Boston Transportation Department/BTD.
- **Missing Documentation:** The application lacks either a Play Street Closing Permit or Vendor ID, both of which are mandatory for approval.
- **Vendor ID Information Not Shared:** Application without Vendor ID information shared as required in the application process.
- **Ineligible Location:** The proposed location for the Block Party is within the boundaries of a BCYF facility, park, school, or private property. Only street locations are eligible.
- **Ineligible Date:** The grant is specifically designated for Block Parties occurring during the summer months. As such, Block Parties scheduled for October or later are not eligible for consideration. Only events held up to and including September 30th will qualify for this grant.
- **For-Profit Business:** Vendor IDs linked to for-profit businesses are ineligible for grant funding.
- **Conflict of Interest Law:** If an employee or board member of the applicant organization, as well as any immediate family member of such an individual, is



currently or has been within the past twelve months, an employee, agent, consultant, officer, elected or appointed official of the City of Boston. “Immediate family members” shall include an employee’s spouse, and their parents, children, and siblings. As the Massachusetts General Laws Ch. 268A, the Conflict of Interest Law, applies to all recipients of City of Boston grants and their conduct associated with the receipt of these public funds.

- **Duplicated application:** Duplicate applications associated with the same Play Street Closing Permit, street or Vendor ID will be automatically denied.