

# ● Hightstown Housing Authority ●

## **Policy Statement Resident Council Funds**

Through resident engagement initiatives, The Hightstown Housing Authority facilitates the participation of residents in issues that have an impact on their buildings and their communities. In meeting its mission, The Hightstown Housing Authority applies its resources to support meaningful engagement, reduce barriers and spark social change.

Resident Council Funds are an annual grant to the Operating Fund, and granted to the Resident Council which should be focused on building tenant independence and leadership. The Hightstown Housing Authority residents are eligible for the Resident Council Funds for community building and engagement purposes.

### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure an equitable process in allocating Resident Council Funds.

### Scope

This policy applies to Housing Authority Staff and Resident Council Members who apply for Resident Council Funds to enhance capacity in representing constituencies and engaging neighbors and communities.

### Values

As in all financial transactions at The Hightstown Housing Authority, high ethical standards, good judgment, and accountability, as well as a commitment to due diligence and transparency.

### Standards

The Executive Director is responsible for supporting Resident Council in allocating funds and reconciling expenditures.

## Policy Details:

### Distribution of Resident Council Funds

Every January, each Resident Council will receive a budget amount. The amount is based on the number of units in our development on the last day of November of the previous year.

The distribution formula: Available funds x number of units = OU Resident Council Fund

Resident Council is required to submit a budget to the main office for approval by the Executive Director and the Board of Commissioners of The Hightstown Housing Authority annually in September for the following year. All expenses must be justified and approved by the Board prior to allocation. Any request that is denied will be done in writing with a complete breakdown on how the expense failed to meet The Hightstown Housing Authority criteria. The Resident Council Chair may dispute any denial to the Board of Commissioners at their regular meeting.

### Allocation of Resident Council Funds

Funds must be allocated to activities that assist Resident Council and Individual Council Members to enhance their capacity in representing their constituencies. Use of Resident Council Funds cannot personally benefit an applicant through the form of pay, a stipend, honorarium, wage, or purchase of goods/services or any other items that are deemed to be or can be perceived to be a conflict of interest.

The Resident Council is responsible for determining priorities and for approving funding requests. The Resident Council will establish clear parameters for decision making for their current term. Resident Council Funds can only be used for these expenditures:

- Training (leadership workshops, advocacy training)
- Memberships (social justice and community organizations)
- Conferences (to pay fees and associated expenses as outlined in the Tenant Expense Guidelines for Resident Council Members and Residents -- with reasonable limitations)
- Advocacy (support to organize a rally, support for Residents to participate in issue-based advocacy groups)
- Volunteer recognition for non-applicants (awards, plaques, certificates, annual appreciation event for community volunteers)
- Consultations (resources for developing a funding application, training modules)

- Administrative expenditures (for Resident Council expenses not covered in Operating Unit budgets, for example ink or paper for Resident Council outreach or a community newsletter, food for Resident Council Meeting – see Tenant Expense Guidelines)

### Compliance:

#### Resident Council

- Resident Council is responsible to promote the availability of the fund and how to apply for funding in their community.
- Resident Council is responsible to update their community on activities being funded by posting monthly minutes.
- Resident Council must administer funds by following this policy, ensuring transparency and fairness in distribution.
- Actions will be taken against Housing Authority Staff and Resident Council Members who do not follow these guidelines, including seeking reimbursements.

### Reconciliation of Funds:

- All applicants (when applying for funding or upon receiving funding) must follow the requirements and procedures set out in the Expense Reconciliation Procedures for The Hightstown Housing Authority Tenant Guidelines.
- All funded applicants must reconcile allocated funds within 14 days of the completion of the event with their Community Services Coordinator. Failure to do so is a breach of the Resident Council Code of Conduct.
- The Resident Council Chair must submit the expense report with official receipts and unused cash, if any, to the main office within 30 days of the event.
- All funded applicants must reconcile allocated funds by submitting an expense report and original itemized sales receipts to their Resident Council Chair.
- All funded applicants must reconcile allocated funds before seeking further funding from The Hightstown Housing Authority. Outstanding unreconciled funds may preclude the funded applicant from further participation in other facets of the Tenant Engagement System.
- All funded applicants must spend funds according to the approved description issued by the Resident Council. Failure to do so is a misappropriation of funds and will be treated as unreconciled funds.
- Actions will be taken against residents who do not follow these guidelines, including seeking reimbursements and or removal from participation in other facets of the Tenant Engagement System, if applicable. Reasonable exceptions can apply upon review from the Community Services Coordinator.

## Related Policies and Procedures

- Roles and Responsibilities for Resident Council Members
- The Hightstown Housing Authority ACOP
- Cash Management Plan
- Ethics Manual
- Tenant Handbook
- Procurement Policy

## Commencement and Review

- Commencement - This policy takes effect on December 1, 2021.
- Next Review Date August 1, 2025.