



TO: Board of Estimates, Office of Comptroller
FROM: AGC1000 - City Council
DATE: 02/06/2026
Submission #: SB-26-10126
SUBJECT: Governmental/Charitable Gift Solicitation Waiver Application.

ACTION REQUESTED OF BOARD OF ESTIMATES:

The Board is requested to approve a Governmental/Charitable Gift Solicitation Waiver Application.

PERIOD OF CONTRACT/AGREEMENT: 01/01/2026 to 01/01/2028

AMOUNT AND SOURCE OF FUNDS:

Transaction Amount: \$ 0.00

Project Fund	Amount
--------------	--------

BACKGROUND/EXPLANATION:

The Council President, Zeke Cohen, will solicit funds for the City Council Culture Building and Professional Development Fund. Any funds donated to this fund will be used to support the culture-building and professional development of staff in the Council President's office. This could include: costs related to site visits to other municipalities to visit model programs, professional services for team professional development, and potential culture-building opportunities for members, and costs associated with gathering members for in-person meetings. The fund will also cover expenses not covered by the City Council President's Office's formal budget, such as food and beverages for culture-building events and trainings.

COUNCIL DISTRICT: Citywide

EMPLOY BALTIMORE:	LIVING WAGE:	LOCAL HIRING:	PREVAILING WAGE:
-------------------	--------------	---------------	------------------

N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
-----	-----	-----	-----

1% FOR PUBLIC ART: N/A.

ENDORSEMENTS:

NCAmato
Clerk, Board of Estimates

02-04-2026



BALTIMORE CITY ETHICS BOARD

100 N. Holliday Street, Suite 635 / Baltimore, MD

21202 ethics@baltimorecity.gov / 410-396-7986

GOVERNMENTAL/CHARITABLE GIFT SOLICITATION WAIVER - APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL DIRECTIONS AND GENERAL INFORMATION

Note: ***Bold-italicized terms*** are defined at the end of these directions.

I. BACKGROUND

Section 6-26 {"Gifts: Solicitation prohibited"} of the Baltimore City Public Ethics Law, contained in Article 8 of the City Code, prohibits any *public servant* from soliciting or facilitating the solicitation of a *gift*, "whether on the public servant's own behalf or on behalf of another *person*". § 6-27 {"Gifts: Acceptance prohibited"} further prohibits any *public servant* from accepting a *gift*, even if unsolicited, from any *person* that the *public servant* "knows or has reason to know" is a *controlled donor*.

Exceptions to this general prohibition are provided in § 6-26 (b), which permits solicitation if the gift is (1) for the benefit of an official governmental program or activity or a City-endorsed charitable function or activity; and (2), it either:

- (i) is expressly allowed by a rule or regulation of the Ethics Board; or
- (ii) otherwise has been approved in advance by the Ethics Board, on the written request of the *public servant* and the respective *City agency*.

Conditions for the approval of such solicitations are outlined in Board Regulation 06.26. I to standardize and clarify the requirements and procedures for invoking this exception. (The full text of the Regulation is available on the Ethics Board's website:

<https://ethics.baltimorecity.gov/gift-solicitation-waivers.>)

II. GENERAL STANDARDS FOR APPROVAL

Ethics Board Regulation 06.26.1(B) provides the following general standards for Ethics Board approval:

1. The solicitation must be for the exclusive benefit of a governmental or charitable function, program, or activity.
2. The program, function, or activity to be benefitted and the proposed solicitation campaign must have been endorsed by the Board of Estimates or its designee(s).

3. The solicitation must be directed at a broad range of potential donors and may not specially target *controlled donors*.
4. The campaign must be designed and conducted so as to avoid any suggestion that contributors might receive special access or favored treatment from any *City agency* or any *public servant*. [See, “NOTE”, *infra.*].
5. The solicitation must be approved in advance by the Ethics Board, on written request of the *sponsoring agency*.
6. The solicitation must be conducted in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Ethics Board's approval.

NOTE: In general, every solicitation should contain language stating that (1) contributing to the campaign will not result in special benefits or advantages to the donor and that (2) not contributing to the campaign will not result in a detriment or disadvantage to the party that is being solicited.

III. WHEN AND WHERE TO APPLY

An application for Ethics Board approval must be submitted to the Ethics Board ethics@baltimorecity.gov at least 45 days before any *controlled donor* is solicited, directly or indirectly.

IV. ACTIVITY REPORTS AND RECORDS

The *sponsoring agency* must periodically report solicitation activities to the Ethics Board, in a form consistent with generally accepted standards in the practice of accounting ¹, as follows:

1. A Final, Cumulative Report must be filed within 30 days after all solicitations have been made and anticipated donations received.
2. Interim Reports must be filed on the following schedule, depending on the aggregate value of donations sought by the campaign:
 - (i) for campaigns seeking \$50,000 or more in donations, once every 3 months;
 - (ii) for campaigns seeking between \$5,000 and \$50,000, once every 6 months; and
 - (ii) for campaigns seeking less than \$5,000, only the Final, Cumulative Report is required.

The *sponsoring agency* must make and maintain detailed records to assure complete reporting of all of the information required to be disclosed in the Reports. Activity reports must be signed as accurate by the *sponsoring agency* and *fiscal sponsor*. (See Form 627.)

V. FORMS AND INFORMATION

Additional forms and instructions for the application and activity reports are available on the Board's website at <https://ethics.baltimorecity.gov/gift-solicitation-waivers>.

Any questions about the waiver application and/or reporting process should be directed to Ethics Board staff at ethics@baltimorecity.gov or 410-396-7986.

¹ You may review the Governmental Accounting Standards on the Governmental Accounting Standards Board's website, accessible [here: https://gars.gasb.org/](https://gars.gasb.org/). For free access, choose “Basic View.”

DEFINITION OF TERMS

All defined terms are indicated by *bold italics*.

“Agency”/ “City agency”

- (a) *General*. “Agency” or “City agency” means any department, board, commission, council, authority, committee, office, or other unit of City government.
- (b) *Inclusions*. “Agency” or “City agency” includes:
- (1) Baltimore Children and Youth Fund;
 - (2) Baltimore City Parking Authority;
 - (3) Baltimore Development Corporation;
 - (4) Baltimore Police Department; Enoch
 - (5) Pratt Free Library of Baltimore City;
 - (6) Housing Authority of Baltimore City;
 - (7) Local Development Council, South Baltimore Video Lottery Terminal;
 - (8) Pimlico Community Development Authority;
 - (9) South Baltimore Gateway Community Impact District Management Authority; and
 - (10) any individual not embraced in a unit of City government who exercises authority comparable to that of the head of a unit of City government.

“Controlled donor”

“Controlled donor” means any *person that*:

- (1) does or seeks to do business of any kind, regardless of amount:
 - (i) with an *agency*;
 - (ii) or with another *person* in connection with or in furtherance of that other *person’s* contract with an *agency*;
- (2) engages in an activity that is regulated or controlled by an *agency*;
- (3) is a lobbyist with respect to matters within the jurisdiction of an *agency*;
- (4) has a financial interest that might be substantially and materially affected, in a manner distinguishable from the public generally, by the performance or nonperformance of the official duties of an *agency*; or
- (5) is an owner, partner, officer, director, trustee, employee, or agent of any *person* described in items (1) through (4).

“Fiscal Sponsor”

“Fiscal sponsor” means the person who is responsible for the custody, accounting, and distribution of donations. The fiscal sponsor may not be an individual employed by the sponsoring agency.

“Gift”

“Gift” means the transfer of any thing or any service of economic value, regardless of the form, for less than adequate, identifiable, and lawful consideration. “Gift” does not include political contributions that are regulated under state law.

“Person”

“Person” means:

- (1) an individual;
- (2) a receiver, trustee, guardian, personal representative, fiduciary, or representative of any kind; and
- (3) partnership, firm, association, corporation, or other entity of any kind;
- (4) except as used in the City Code, Article 8, Subtitle 9, for the imposition of criminal penalties, a governmental entity or an instrumentality or unit of a governmental entity.

“Public Servant”

“Public servant” means any official or employee of the City of Baltimore or of any *agency* of the City.

“Sponsoring agency”

“Sponsoring agency” means:

- (1) the City *agency* that, under the City Code, Article 8, § 6-26(b) and R 06.26.1, seeks to conduct a solicitation for an official governmental program or activity or for a charitable function or activity; or
- (2) if more than one City *agency* is involved, the *agency* designated to coordinate the solicitation.



BALTIMORE CITY ETHICS BOARD
 635 City Hall, Baltimore, Maryland 21202
 Phone: 410-396-7986
 Email: ethics@baltimorecity.gov

Date Received: _____

GOVERNMENTAL/CHARITABLE GIFT SOLICITATION WAIVER – APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL

Name of Benefitted Program/Charity:

Culture Building and Development Fund

PART A. SPONSORING AGENCY.

Agency Name: City Council President's Office

Contact Person/Coordinator: Hailey Kancherla

Address: 100 Holliday Street

Phone: 4432028196

Email: hailey.kancherla@baltimorecity.gov

PART B. PURPOSE OF PROPOSED SOLICITATION.

I. Identify the specific governmental or charitable program, function, or activity for which solicitations will be made.

The City Council President will solicit funds for the City Council Culture Building and Professional Development Fund. That fund's principal purpose will be to support the City Council President's Office in their efforts to enhance professional development opportunities for staff as well as to foster professional connections among peer municipalities. The fund will also cover expenses that are not covered by the City Council President Office's formal budget such as food and beverages for culture building events and trainings.

II. Describe the specific purposes to which contributions and other receipts will be applied.

Any funds donated to this fund will be used for the culture building and professional development of the staff in the Council President's office. This could include: costs related to site visits to other municipalities to visit model programs, professional services for team professional development and potential culture building opportunities of members, and costs associated with gathering members for in-person meetings.

III. Select the appropriate range for the aggregate value of the contributions sought:

- \$500,000 or more
- Between \$150,000 and \$500,000
- Between \$50,000 and \$150,000
- Between \$5,000 and \$50,000
- Less than \$5,000

Part C. WHEN AND HOW SOLICITATION TO BE CONDUCTED.

I. **Proposed starting date of solicitation:** 1/1/2026

II. **Proposed ending date of solicitation:** 1/1/2028

III. **Describe the categories of persons to be solicited and by whom and how those solicitations will be made.**

City Council President Zeke Cohen will solicit from a broad range of prospective donors. He will make those solicitations by email, phone, and in-person appeals. He will take care to avoid any controlled donors.

IV. **Identify all *public servants* and other individuals at the request of the *sponsoring agency* who will solicit contributions.**

Zeke Cohen, Baltimore City Council President

V. **Describe measures to be taken to ensure that the solicitation (i) will be directed at a broad range of donors and (ii) will not specially target *controlled donors*.**

Potential donors will be solicited based on their history of past support for the City Council's agenda and success. Most potential donors fitting this description were not controlled donors. Those potential donors who could be categorized as controlled donors will not be targeted or singled out in any way, and, if they receive a solicitation, it will be in the same manner as any other potential donors.

VI. **Describe measures to be taken to avoid any suggestion that contributors might receive special access or favored treatment from any *agency* or *public servant* of the City.**

Prospective donors will be informed that any donation will not result in special treatment or benefits to the donor, nor will the decision not to contribute result in a detriment to the prospect. We will also be sure to contact the Ethics Board if there is ever a question of if a donation can be received.

PART D. FISCAL SPONSOR (PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR CUSTODY, ACCOUNTING, AND DISTRIBUTION OF DONATIONS)

NOTE: The *fiscal sponsor* may not be an individual employed by the *sponsoring agency*.

Entity Name: Baltimore Civic Fund, Inc.

Contact Person: Christina Gatto

Address: 8 Market Place, Suite 300, Baltimore, MD 21202

Phone: 443-326-8176

Email: christina@baltimorecivicfund.org

I. Disclose the person or persons within the distributing entity who will be responsible for fund distribution and accounting.

The Baltimore Civic Fund's Chief Operations Officer is responsible for fund distribution and accounting, supported by the Civic Fund finance team and an outside CPA firm. The Civic Fund maintains a web-based accounting system which is accessible by the President, the Director of Finance, the finance team, and the CPA firm. The Partnership Managers are able to view the information, but not make edits. The Civic Fund's Partnership Managers are responsible for reviewing and approving all disbursements and providing reports and other information about program account use.

II. Describe how the funds will be held pending distributions, e.g., held in a trust or other dedicated account, in a general account, co-mingled with other funds, etc.

The Baltimore Civic Fund monitors incoming deposits daily and assigns individual funding codes to each source upon receipt. All funding is held in a general operating account but differentiated by funding code. A master list of funding codes matched to program accounts is held and updated by the Director of Finance and the Director of Partnerships. Funding codes apply to all funding types: donations, grants, public funds, philanthropic funds.

III. What measures will be taken by the distributing entity to ensure that the donations will actually be used for the intended purpose?

The Baltimore Civic Fund keeps records of all supporting documentation related to a program's scope of work and funding sources. All disbursements are initiated by a payment request form completed by City agency staff and signed by the agency's authorized signatory (Agency Director or designated staff). Partnership Managers review payment requests to ensure the request fits within the scope of work for the program as well as within any fiduciary restrictions. Requests are denied if they do not align with the program purpose or if relevant restrictions exist on the funding source. Agencies have an opportunity to amend the request if applicable.

IV. What measures are in place to account for the donations? In the event that donations exceed the charitable need, please state how the additional funds will be allocated or dispersed.

Donations are collected (1) by a web-based donation site and directly deposited into the general account; (2) by check received by mail and deposited into the general account; or (3) by ACH in the general account. All supporting documentation is uploaded into the web-based accounting system and saved with program files. Donors who use the web-based donation site receive an automated acknowledgment email and those received by other means may be acknowledged by a gift letter. Donations receive a funding code for tracking purposes and remain in the program's account to be used in accordance with the scope of the program and the purpose of the donation unless otherwise directed by the donor. Once the charitable need is reached, the web-based donation site link will be turned off. In the event the donation exceed the charitable need, Civic Fund will make every effort to contact the donor to receive authorization for a change of purpose.

V. Please provide details about the measures that will be taken by the distributing entity to ensure that *controlled donors* will not receive preferential treatment.


All disbursements require approval by the City agency's authorized signatory, as well as the Civic Fund's Partnership Managers, financial team, Director of Finance, and outside accounting firm. Sufficient supporting documentation and alignment with the program's scope of work and donation's restrictions are required. All disbursements are made in accordance with the IRS guidelines for nonprofits.

PART E. FISCAL SPONSOR SIGNATURE AND AFFIRMATION.

Part E should be completed by the *Fiscal Sponsor* upon completion of the application.

I, HyeSook Chung [Name], on behalf of Baltimore Civic Fund, Inc.

[*Sponsoring Agency*], affirm under the penalties of perjury that the contents of this application and all accompanying attachments are accurate to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief.


HyeSook Chung (Jan 8, 2026 13:53:15 EST)

Signature

Jan 8, 2026

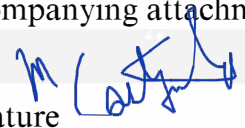
Date

PART F. SIGNATURE AND AFFIRMATION.

Part F should be completed by the *sponsoring agency* upon completion of the application.

I, Michael Castagnola [Name], on behalf of Michael Castagnola

[*Sponsoring Agency*], affirm under the penalties of perjury that the contents of this application and all accompanying attachments are accurate to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief.


Signature

01/08/2026

Date

PART G. CITY ENDORSEMENT [ONLY TO BE COMPLETED BY BOE OR DESIGNEE].

Part G should only be completed by the Board of Estimates or its designee(s).

Endorsed by the Board of Estimates

Endorsed by the Designee of the Board of Estimates:

Clerk Signature

N. Amato

02-04-2026

Date







Waiver Application Form 626- Part D completed

Final Audit Report

2026-01-08

Created:	2026-01-08
By:	Christina Gatto (christina@baltimorecivicfund.org)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAAXpS6qpRn_mi23m0b1SMB6pzfyTibkVvF

"Waiver Application Form 626- Part D completed" History

-  Document digitally presigned by Nitro Software
2026-01-08 - 4:51:56 PM GMT
-  Document created by Christina Gatto (christina@baltimorecivicfund.org)
2026-01-08 - 6:42:28 PM GMT
-  Document emailed to HyeSook Chung (hyesook@baltimorecivicfund.org) for signature
2026-01-08 - 6:52:00 PM GMT
-  Email viewed by HyeSook Chung (hyesook@baltimorecivicfund.org)
2026-01-08 - 6:53:03 PM GMT
-  Document e-signed by HyeSook Chung (hyesook@baltimorecivicfund.org)
Signature Date: 2026-01-08 - 6:53:15 PM GMT - Time Source: server
-  Agreement completed.
2026-01-08 - 6:53:15 PM GMT