

Preparing Your Summerlee Sustainable Solutions Grant Application

What the Cohort 2 application asks, and how to get ready for it

Applications open	November 8, 2026
Where to apply	unitedspayalliance.org/summerlee-grant (online only)
Certification course	February 1 – March 29, 2027, eight weeks, live and virtual
Grant range	\$4,000 – \$8,000, awarded after course completion and project approval
Questions	summerleegrants@unitedspayalliance.org

The Summerlee application is completed online. This guide walks through what it asks and why, so you can gather what you need, talk with your board and your course representative, and submit with confidence when the portal opens.

One thing to know up front: the application does not ask you to propose a project. Grantees design their project near the end of the certification course, with guidance from the USA team and their cohort. What the application does ask is about your organization, your community cat work, your readiness to learn, and how your organization makes decisions.

Gather these first

Most of the application is quick once you have these in hand.

- **Your EIN and legal status.** Eligible applicants are 501(c)(3) organizations, municipal or government entities, or organizations with a fiscal sponsor.
- **A claimed and updated Candid (GuideStar) profile.** Required for nonprofits. If yours isn't claimed, start now; it can take a while. Municipal entities are exempt. Help: help.candid.org
- **Your course representative.** The one person who will complete the eight-week course and join the biweekly cohort calls. You'll need their name, title, and email, and they need to have agreed to the dates.
- **Your most recent IRS filing type** and your current-year operating budget.
- **A budget vs. actuals report** for your last completed fiscal year and the current year to date. Details in Section 5.

Section 1: Contact and organization details

The basics. Who you are and how to reach you.

Contact information. Your name, organization, email, phone, mailing address, website, and social media links. The email you give is the one we'll use for everything about your

application, so if the person filling out the form isn't the person who'll run the program, list the inbox that should get our messages.

Legal status and EIN. Whether you're a 501(c)(3), a municipal or government entity, or working under a fiscal sponsor, plus your EIN. Municipal entities enter N/A for the EIN.

Your Candid (GuideStar) profile. The link to your profile and its current transparency level. Nonprofits must have a claimed and updated profile to be eligible; this is where funders go first to verify you, and it's the single most common reason an otherwise strong application stalls. If you're not sure what level you're at, look it up before you apply. Municipal entities enter N/A.

About your organization. Which category best fits your primary focus (you may run several programs, but pick the one that describes you most), your mission statement, a short description of your organization in up to 1,000 characters, and the year you were founded.

Section 2: Your community cat program

A snapshot of where your TNR work stands today. These questions are factual; answer them as things are.

Whether you have a TNR program, and since when. Planned programs and organizations that refer or support rather than trap are eligible, and the form gives you a way to say so. If you don't have a TNR program yet, you'll enter N/A for the start year.

How many cats you TNR each year. A rough annual number is fine; you'll choose a range.

How people reach you for help with community cats. Phone, email, web form, social media, walk-in, referrals from animal services, or some combination.

Your spay/neuter access and cost. Whether you have access to low-cost spay/neuter, and what a surgery for a community cat typically costs you.

Your spay/neuter practices. The age or weight at which you spay/neuter, and whether you spay/neuter before adoption if you adopt out.

Whether you routinely combo test community cats. This is asking specifically about healthy cats being returned to live outdoors: does your standard TNR protocol include FIV/FelV testing for them? Testing you do only for sick or injured cats, or for cats going into foster or adoption, doesn't count here.

Answer the practice questions honestly.

There is no single right answer. Organizations whose practices differ from current best practice are often exactly who the course is designed to help. We're looking for a clear picture of where you are, not where you think we want you to be.

Section 3: Course and program participation

The commitments that come with this grant. Read these with your course representative before you apply.

Your course representative. The name, title, and email of the one person from your organization who will complete the certification course and participate in the biweekly cohort calls. This person becomes the main point of contact for the course and project.

Whether anyone from your organization has already completed the course. If someone has, say so. If that person has since left the organization, there's a way to indicate that too. Graduates' organizations are welcome to apply; a different person would take the course.

Who manages communication on your end. You'll confirm that your organization is responsible for keeping the grant or fiscal contact and the operational contacts (course representative, program staff) in sync about logistics and obligations. If you're the same person for all of it, there's an option to say so.

When funds are released. You'll confirm you understand that grant funds are released only after the course is successfully completed and your project is approved.

Tracking and reporting. You'll confirm you're willing to track and report basic metrics tied to the grant: cats sterilized, areas served, people assisted, and outreach or fundraising activity. In practice this means brief monthly updates and one final summary report.

Course commitment. You'll confirm that your course representative has reviewed the application and can commit to the course dates (February 1 – March 29, 2027) and the biweekly calls. If you don't have a representative yet, the form lets you say so, but a confirmed one makes for a stronger application.

Section 4: Readiness and approach

How your organization handles change and what you're up against. This section carries real weight in review.

A time your organization changed how it does something. In up to 600 characters: what prompted the change, and what happened. This doesn't need to be dramatic. A small, real example of your organization noticing something wasn't working and adjusting tells us more than a big vague one.

Your biggest challenges in serving community cats. You'll pick up to three from a list (things like surgery access, funding, staffing, trapping capacity, complaints and ordinances, data tracking, burnout, outreach), then describe the biggest one in up to 600 characters. Be specific. "Too many cats" is a situation, not a challenge. Which neighborhood? Which bottleneck? Which complaint keeps showing up?

Staff and volunteers. How many paid staff work on your community cat program (counting anyone whose time is partly allocated to it, including admin or marketing), and how many active volunteers support it through regular activities like trapping, transport, outreach, or data tracking.

Who you work with. Your partners: vet clinics, animal services or shelters, other rescues, municipalities, or none yet.

What a strong answer looks like.

We want to know that you understand your problem and that your organization can act on what it learns. Specific beats polished.

Section 5: Finances and stewardship

How your organization is funded and how decisions get made. The governance questions are not a test of structure. Small, volunteer-run groups where the board does everything are welcome.

Your IRS filing and budget. What you most recently filed with the IRS (990, 990-EZ, 990-N, or not required for municipal entities), your total operating budget for the current fiscal year, and how much unrestricted funding you expect to have available over the next 12 months.

How much of your budget goes to community cat spay/neuter. A percentage from 0 to 100. For this grant, a community cat is any cat that's outdoors, four paws on the ground, whether feral or friendly, on owned or public property.

How you fund the work and what's hardest about it. The sources that currently fund your community cat work (donations, grants, events, adoption fees, municipal contracts, fees for service), and your two biggest financial challenges in sustaining or growing it.

How your board works. You'll describe where your board sits on a spectrum from setting direction and overseeing finances while others do the day-to-day work, to doing most of the hands-on work itself. You'll also say whether the person who runs your community cat program day to day is on the board.

Six everyday decisions. For each of these, you'll say what actually happens in practice: whether the program lead decides alone, decides and then informs leadership, needs sign-off from a board member, or needs a board vote. The six are buying \$200 of traps or supplies; changing the age or weight you spay/neuter at; accepting a new colony outside your usual area; responding to a public complaint on social media; bringing on a new volunteer trapper; and starting a new vet clinic partnership.

One scenario. If your course representative learns a new practice that would improve your program and costs nothing to try, how soon could they start using it? The answer helps us understand whether what they learn in the course can reach the cats, and how fast.

Answer the governance questions as things really are.

There's no structure we're looking for. We're trying to understand how a new idea moves through your organization, because that's what the course and the project will ask of you.

Budget vs. actuals upload. A document showing what you budgeted and what you actually took in and spent, for your last completed fiscal year and the current year to date. If you use accounting software like QuickBooks, Aplos, or Xero, export a budget vs. actuals report. If you don't, upload your budget along with an income and expense statement from your treasurer or bookkeeper. If you have neither, the form provides a template. PDF, Excel, CSV, Word, or image files, up to 5 MB each, up to five files.

Your comfort with technology. A 1-to-10 rating of how comfortable you are with Google Docs and technology in general. The course and cohort run on shared documents and video calls, so this helps us know who might need a little extra support getting set up.

Anything else. An optional space, up to 1,000 characters, for anything you want us to know that the questions didn't cover. You can also opt in to the USA newsletter for program updates.

Before you submit

- Confirm your Candid profile is claimed and updated.
- Make sure your course representative has read this guide and agreed to the dates.
- Have your budget vs. actuals file ready to upload.
- Reread your challenge and make sure it accurately describes it.
- Only one application per organization will be accepted.

Questions before the portal opens? Email summerleegrants@unitedspayalliance.org. We'd rather answer a question now than see a good organization miss out over something fixable.

United Spay Alliance | P.O. Box 612, Walkersville, MD 21793 | unitedspayalliance.org | The Summerlee Sustainable Solutions Grant Program is made possible with founding support from the Summerlee Foundation.