



Jacob Krzysiak, Neighbors' Development Coordinator, sat down with Jesse Osvold, Neighbors' Program Director, to discuss some additional details about the recent \$450,000 Department of Employment and Economic Development grant awarded to Neighbors, Inc. to share with Neighbors' constituent base.

Q: The \$450,000 Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) grant is restricted giving for Neighbors, Inc. How is this being spent to support Neighbors' clients?

A: The DEED grant is restricted, which means that Neighbors can only be reimbursed expenses that are aligned with the grant application. In this case, it will be supporting the work that is happening within the Financial Empowerment Center. This grant catapulted our services by increasing our capacity by expanding our programming to support the community in beautiful ways. Specifically, this \$450,000 grant is opening up significant opportunities to train the community in high demand fields and industry, such as health care, information technology, the public sector, manufacturing, and other trades. These are great jobs that sometimes require a little bit of prior knowledge and experience to get into. Neighbors is going to be able to put \$140,000 towards training certifications and other credentials out to the community to help prepare our clients for that work, to help prepare their skills that would better their opportunity or their capacity to be able to get these jobs, make them more marketable, or advance someone's career.

Additionally, people at times encounter challenges or barriers that prevent them from being able to move forward in their career or sustain that employment and growth. We are going to be able to offer what is called Support Services. These micro grants will open up the door to ensure that these challenges do not continue to create a barrier towards someone's success. If someone's tire pops and they cannot drive to their job, we'll help pay for that cost so that situation doesn't eliminate someone's ability to sustain their employment. If someone needs help with gas money for the first couple of weeks to get to their job when they first start because they don't have paychecks coming in yet, Neighbors can support that. New clothes that are needed or required for the job, if you think about manufacturing or trade jobs, some require steel toed boots which tend to be more expensive, we can help step in and support that person.

Finally, it is going to allow us to expand our capacity. Neighbors just hired a new Career and Financial Coach alongside our Financial Empowerment Center Manager to broaden our organization's impact. Ultimately, it means we will be able to better support everyone who comes through our doors searching for assistance.

Q: Why should I continue to support Neighbors' Annual Fund?



A: Grants are beautiful ways for Neighbors to expand and launch new initiatives, but grants are not a full encompassing answer to always supporting anybody and everybody. Every program does have different eligibility requirements or criteria that exists.

All of us at Neighbors believe our doors are open to anybody and everybody who ever needs our support. The Annual Fund is how we can do that. General operating dollars allow us to help anybody who may need a question answered, assistance in navigating a process, or help in navigating whatever challenges they may be encountering.

Our Hunger Relief Programs, for instance, is primarily funded by general operating dollars. These general operating dollars purchase a variety of food through our food bank partnership at a discounted rate with Second Harvest Heartland, helps stock the Food Shelf for our nearly 8,500 annual Food Shelf appointments, provides grocery delivery and express sites to our elderly clients and community residents, as well as supplying additional resources to expand Neighbors' express sites which helps those in need without the barrier of an appointment.

General operating funds help sustain Neighbors' current programs to ensure that alongside our organization's growth, we can continue to serve everyone who comes to us with the dignity and respect every individual deserves when seeking assistance.

Q: With an expanded staff and services, are there any barriers to enrolling in any of Neighbors' current services or programs?

A: As mentioned, Neighbors' doors are always open. We are here for the community, whoever that may be. Today, through our Financial Empowerment Center programs, Neighbors has people who are enrolled as far as Burnsville, Rosemount, Woodbury, and pockets of St. Paul. We are able to support anybody and everybody, regardless of where they are from and the general support from the community on top of these grants make that even more of a reality than I think we can imagine.

Anyone who comes through our doors at the end of the day, we are here to help. Neighbors is here to help connect people to the services, the programs, the offerings that our organization supports, but then also help make a connection to what might be most relevant for that individual whenever appropriate.

As part of Neighbors' services, our Financial Empowerment Center also consists of team members who can assist connecting clients with additional resources through other partnership organizations to help address needs that Neighbors may not be able to directly address.