



Special Olympics  
**Unified Champion  
Schools**

# **Unified Champion Schools Grant & Funding Overview**

# General UCS Info

**Special  
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New Jersey



- Your SONJ Unified Champion Schools (UCS) team includes Katie Telschow, Andrea Allen, and Jaclyn Williamson. We're here to support you and are happy to help with any questions you may have!
- The best way to reach us is by email at [UCS@SONJ.org](mailto:UCS@SONJ.org), as we're often on the road visiting schools and events
  - Our whole team has access to this account, and you'll receive a faster response than emailing one of us individually
- UCS website ([www.SONJ-UCS.org](http://www.SONJ-UCS.org)) is your best resource for everything
  - Resources, forms, links to monthly reports, etc.
  - This replaces the UCS Dashboard from past years
  - Link will always be in our email signatures
- We send a weekly email with updates each Monday morning
  - Add yourself or others to our distribution list [here](#)

# General Grant Information

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- To achieve our goal of creating school environments where all students feel accepted, respected, and included, SONJ provides funding to eligible schools to support the implementation of Unified initiatives.
  - Schools must apply each year for funding
  - The application typically opens in May
  - Our goal is to send award letters within 2 weeks of receiving your application
- SONJ receives funding from a variety of sources, all of which have strict guidelines and reporting requirements
  - The amount and type of funding we receive varies each year
- The SONJ UCS grants are intended to be seed money to get your Unified programs and activities up and running.
  - Our hope is that the district will absorb these costs within 5-7 years.
- Grant funds are designated exclusively for the school named in the award letter. Funds may not be transferred or shared between schools, even within the same district.

# Grant Overview

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- The UCS grant supports intentionally-inclusive programming by reimbursing eligible expenses.
  - Your school or district will make purchases, pay invoices, and pay stipends to advisors and coaches.
- After payment is made, schools in good standing may submit a reimbursement request to SONJ within 30 days
- The grant year runs from September through June. Funds not used and reimbursed within this timeframe will be forfeited.

# Grant Standing

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Schools in good standing will:

- Complete required reports on time and completely
- Implement the 3 components of UCS
- Implement a fundraiser to benefit your own Unified initiatives
- Attend any required meetings
- Adhere to the mission and vision of UCS

**Our team is here to help, so please don't hesitate to reach out if you're struggling with any of our requirements or guidelines.**

# Non-Reimbursable Items



Some items are not reimbursable by the UCS grant

- Examples: food, prizes, promotional items, clothes, items for events that are not Unified
- Review the full list on [www.sonj-ucs.org](http://www.sonj-ucs.org)
- If you're not sure, ask!

Just because the UCS grant can't reimburse certain expenses doesn't mean you can't use them for your Unified Sports or Unified Clubs! There are no restrictions on items supported by school, district, or fundraised dollars.

- For example, if you'd like to host a pizza party at the end of your Unified Soccer season, those expenses are not reimbursable through the UCS grant. However, you may cover them using funds from your school, district, fundraiser, or participation fees.

# Unified Requirement



- The UCS grant is intended to support truly Unified programming, which means activities should include an **approximately equal number** of participants with intellectual disabilities (athletes) and without intellectual disabilities (Unified partners).
- Reimbursement requests will only be considered for expenses that reflect this balance.
  - For example, a bowling practice with 10 athletes and 2 Unified partners would not meet the Unified criteria and therefore would not be eligible for reimbursement.
- Expenses and stipends supported by the UCS grant should be referenced in your monthly reports
  - For example, if you request reimbursement for track batons, we should see references to track practices in your monthly reports

# Pre-approval



Written pre-approval is required for the following:

- **Individual items costing \$500 or more.** Bulk orders totaling \$500 do not require approval, but single items like a basketball hoop do.
- **Uniform purchases.** Both the design and the purchase must be approved. Uniforms purchased with grant funds must have a SONJ or Unified Sports logo or reference.
- **Items featuring SONJ, UCS, or Unified Sports branding.** Includes logos for Special Olympics, Unified Sports, Unified Champion Schools, etc.
- **Note:** Pre-approvals from previous years do not carry over.
- Request pre-approval by emailing [UCS@SONJ.org](mailto:UCS@SONJ.org)

# Deadlines



- December 15, 2025 – T-Shirt Orders due
  - Note: this amount is deducted from your grant award.
  - You can request this amount by emailing [UCS@SONJ.org](mailto:UCS@SONJ.org)
- January 20, 2026 – All expenses incurred and paid in 2025 due
- April 20, 2026 – Last day to purchase physical supplies
  - Expectation is that all physical supplies will be delivered by April 20 to allow ample time for use during the school year
  - Items delivered far after this date may not qualify for reimbursement
- **July 3, 2026 – Last day to request reimbursement for 2025-26**
  - Please plan your stipend payouts accordingly!
- July 31, 2026 – Our books close
  - Please let us know far before this date if there's an issue so we can address it before our books close

# EOY Submissions

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- Reimbursement requests submitted before April 20 will be processed if the school is in good standing at that time
- Requests submitted after April 20 will be processed as soon as all of the school's monthly reports, activity trackers, and the UMass survey are completed.

# Most importantly...

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- We're here to help! Please don't hesitate to reach out to us.
- There's no question too big or small