



# Guide for Grantmaking

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# Guide Purpose and Eligible Organizations

The purpose of this guide is to outline the various grantmaking processes and opportunities stewarded by the Community Foundation.

We **strive to ensure** our **grantmaking aligns** with our **vision, mission and values**; reflects our **commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion**; and **contributes to the best outcomes for people and places** of our region.

Across our grantmaking efforts, our goal is to **expand collaborations** and **steward our resources to maximize community benefit**.

**We do this by:**

- Ensuring that we are leveraging all the fund types and grant sources we steward.
  - For example: We may direct a request for the Community Funds Grant Cycle to our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Youth Endowment, or Fall Grant processes.
- Developing relationships and understanding of priorities of funding partners outside of the Community Foundation and referring and connecting requests and opportunities to these sources when possible.
- Using a relationship-based approach to all our grantmaking and serving as a partner for all grantmaking, providing insights, perspectives, and connections.
  - For example, we are aware of the interests and priorities of our donor advised fund partners and will share funding opportunities as appropriate.
- Where possible, utilizing Trust Based Philanthropy practices to more fully embed equity within our grantmaking processes. More about our actions to utilize a trust-based approach on page 18.

**Eligible organizations** include the following types of entities who are working within our service area.

501(c)3 nonprofit or organization with a sponsor	Governmental, educational, or religious entities	Students
We welcome requests from organizations of all sizes, including small, new, or growing organizations.	Eligible grant recipients include local units of government, Tribal nations, schools, universities, and churches.	Students are eligible for scholarships with awards paid directly to schools, colleges, universities, or trade schools.

# Overview of Grantmaking Processes and Opportunities

Our **grantmaking processes and opportunities** fall into **two primary categories**:

## Donor Designated Grantmaking

- A collection of funds that were established with a donor-designated purpose.
- We have donor-designated funds supporting people and places across the region and addressing a variety of impact areas, including arts and culture, education, environment, health and human services, and youth.
- Grants are awarded through several grantmaking processes:
  - Scholarship – grants for post-secondary education; awarded through application and review process
  - Agency – grants designated for a nonprofit partner; funds awarded once annually
  - Donor Advised – grants initiated at recommendation of donor partner; awarded throughout the year
  - Fall Grants – grants for a variety of impact areas; awarded from Field of Interest funds through annual application and review process.

## Community Funds Grantmaking

- A collection of flexible, responsive assets that can address gaps and opportunities our other funds cannot.
- Grants directed by the Board and staff and are focused on areas of greatest need, as needs emerge or change over time and can fund organizations working within any of our impact areas.
- Grants are awarded through three grant processes:
  - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
  - Youth Endowment
  - Community Funds Grant Cycle

Our **grantmaking processes and opportunities** occur throughout the year, according to the general schedule below. Additional details about these opportunities and application dates are updated regularly on our website at [www.gtrcf.org/grants/](http://www.gtrcf.org/grants/).

Grant Process	Application Open	Application Close	Funds Disbursed
Agency	<i>no application process</i>		March
Community Funds	May	June	September
Community Funds – Quick Response	<i>open year-round</i>		Monthly
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	<i>open year-round</i>		Mar, May, Aug, Dec
Donor Advised	<i>no application process</i>		ongoing
Fall Grants	September	October	November
Scholarship	January	March	August
Youth Endowment	August	September	November

# Community Funds Grant Cycle

## Strategy Framework

Grants awarded through our Community Funds Grant Cycle provide the most flexibility for addressing areas of greatest need and leveraging promising opportunities. Funds awarded through this process do not have a donor designation; they are flexible and their use can be adapted as needs and opportunities change over time.

### Strategy Framework Overview

<b>Our Strategy</b>	To <b>equitably</b> invest in strategic and localized solutions that have lasting impact and <b>address areas of greatest need</b>	
<b>Our Goals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Meaningfully invest in and impact areas of greatest need</b>, with particular <b>focus</b> currently on advancing <b>housing solutions or improving mental health and well-being</b> of individuals.</li> <li>➤ <b>Prioritize</b> distribution of grant dollars to <b>communities</b> (people and places) that have been <b>historically disproportionately impacted, underserved, underfunded, or excluded</b>.</li> <li>➤ Steward a <b>grantmaking process that is simple, transparent, and accessible</b> to all organizations and people.</li> </ul>	
<b>How We Prioritize</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Areas of Greatest Need</li> <li>➤ Partnerships and Collaboration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Inclusivity and Accessibility</li> <li>➤ Capacity</li> </ul>
<b>Funding Opportunities</b>	<p><b>Quick Response</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Nimble, rapid, flexible</li> <li>➤ Addresses <b>broad impact area priorities</b></li> <li>➤ Meets <b>smaller dollar needs</b>, accepting requests up to \$2,500.</li> <li>➤ <b>Requests submitted anytime and reviewed monthly</b></li> <li>➤ <b>Staff are authorized to approve grant awards</b>, which reported to the Grantmaking Committee and Board of Directors</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community Funds Grants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Focus on <b>systemic, strategic, catalytic opportunities</b></li> <li>➤ Invest in partnerships to address <b>major community issues</b></li> <li>➤ <b>Promote collaboration and coordination</b> to achieve shared outcomes</li> <li>➤ <b>Single grant cycle annually with multi-stage review process</b></li> <li>➤ Award decisions by <b>Grantmaking Committee</b></li> </ul>

# Community Funds Grant Cycle

## Strategy and Goals

Grants awarded through our Community Funds Grant Cycle provide the most flexibility for addressing areas of greatest need and leveraging promising opportunities. Funds awarded through this process do not have a donor designation; they are flexible and their use can be adapted as needs and opportunities change over time.

### Our Strategy

To **equitably** invest in strategic and localized solutions that have lasting impact and **address areas of greatest need**.

#### Areas of Greatest Need

Community Funds are not tied to a specific cause or mission, and we prioritize grant investments based on community data, such as that represented on the [NWMI Community Development Scorecard](#). We prioritize grant investments to benefit communities (people and places) that historically have been disproportionately impacted, underserved, underfunded, or excluded.

We review our prioritizations at least every three years and can adapt over time in response to changing community needs and conditions.

#### Equity

We strive to ensure everyone can access the resources and opportunities they need to reach their potential. We embed equity in grantmaking through a strategy and process that is simple, transparent, accessible to all organizations and people, and implements trust-based grantmaking practices.

Equity is prioritized in decision-making by seeking grant partners that demonstrate inclusivity and accessibility, center lived experience of those being served, and meet the needs of underserved and underfunded communities.

### Our Goals

We are committed to continuous learning and improvement and annually review and consider adjustments as needed, with a complete and strategic review planned at least every three years.

Goal	Measures
Meaningfully invest in and impact areas of greatest need, with a current focus on advancing housing solutions or improving mental health and well-being of individuals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Scorecard</a> progress on and mental health and well-being of individuals measures</li><li>• Dollars awarded to objectives from <a href="#">Scorecard</a></li><li>• Grants by Impact Area</li></ul>
Prioritize distribution of grant dollars to communities (people and places) that have been historically disproportionately impacted, underserved, underfunded, or excluded.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Grant by place (county + Tribe)</li><li>• Grants (# and \$) to orgs led by diverse folks and serving diverse communities</li><li>• First time grant partners</li></ul>
Steward a grantmaking process that is simple, transparent, and accessible to all organizations and people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Feedback from grant partners and grant applicants (in final report and post-application)</li><li>• Feedback from grant reviewers about their experience in the process</li></ul>

# Community Funds Grant Cycle

## Funding Opportunities

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We recognize the value of having grant dollars available for quick response to emerging needs or opportunities and for a strategic grantmaking process. To leverage the value of both approaches, we will annually determine a grant budget with allocations for each.

Quick Response	Community Funds Grants <i>(Strategic Process)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nimble, rapid, flexible response to community needs, emerging opportunities</li><li>• Addresses one or more broad impact area priorities from the Comm Dev scorecard.</li><li>• Meets smaller dollar needs, accepting requests for up to \$2,500.</li><li>• Requests submitted anytime via a simple application in GLM, reviewed at a minimum monthly (as part of regular CIT meetings with a check each time for new applications and urgency needed)</li><li>• The Community Impact Team is authorized to approve grant awards, which are presented to the Grantmaking Committee as informational and Board of Directors for acceptance (as part of regular consent agenda)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Focus on systemic, strategic, catalytic opportunities</li><li>• Goal is to proactively invest in partnerships to address major community issues</li><li>• Promote collaboration and coordination to achieve shared outcomes</li><li>• Use prioritization areas, full evaluation</li><li>• Single grant cycle annually with multi-stage review process</li><li>• Award decisions by Grantmaking Committee rubric/elements, presented to Board of Directors for acceptance (as part of regular consent agenda)</li></ul>

# Community Funds Grant Cycle

## How We Prioritize

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The greatest opportunities for creating an impact are with organizations that seek to contribute to lasting change with and for our community. We support program or project specific requests and prioritize general operating support as this provides the most flexibility for our partners to implement and pursue their mission and goals and therefore have the greatest impact.

### How We Prioritize

#### Areas of Greatest Need

We prioritize grant partnerships with organizations that work toward economic, societal, or environmental outcomes identified on the NWMI Community Development Scorecard, with a particular focus on organizations addressing housing and mental health and well-being.

Things we consider:

- Is the organization or program's work likely to impact improvement on one or more objectives on the Community Development Scorecard? And how directly?
- How directly is the organization or program likely to advance housing solutions? Mental health and well-being of individuals?

#### Inclusivity and Accessibility

We strive to support partners that reflect the diversity of our communities and center those with lived experience within the organization. We prioritize grant partnerships that benefit communities that are disproportionately impacted, have historically been marginalized or underserved, or face unique or more barriers.

Things we consider:

- Is this request informed by the communities most impacted? When possible, are those with lived experience represented at multiple levels of the organization?
- Is the organization or program reaching communities that have been underserved or had less access to resources (i.e. GT Band, Kalkaska; diversely led organizations; serving low-income individuals or families)
- Is the program or organization accessible and relevant to a diversity of people (i.e. race, ethnicity, income/ economic status, immigration status, LGBTQ+ identity, veterans, and disability)? Are barriers that prevent full participation identified and addressed?

### Partnerships and Collaboration

We consider how organizations are partnering and collaborating in ways to support their work and goals. Coordinating work and fostering partnerships often means there are stronger relationships and increased community benefits. We recognize that organizations have varied capacity and different needs for partnership and collaboration to accomplish their goals.

Things we consider:

- Does this organization have the relationships needed with partners that can help them accomplish their work and achieve their goals?
- Is this work fulfilling a unique and targeted need that is not already served in the community? Or a unique role that contributes to a need or shared outcome?
- Does this organization understand the broader landscape within which it is operating?

### Capacity

We prioritize partnerships with organizations that have the capacity to ensure the organization's current and future success. We partner with organizations of varied sizes and seek to support organizations that are both new and those that are long-standing.

Things we consider:

- Does the organization have the people – staff, board, or volunteers – with the depth of skills and knowledge needed?
- Does the organization have access to current and future financial resources to support its work or an awareness or plan to access?
- Is the organization a long-standing and well-established organization? Or is it a new or emerging organization? Relative to the organization's maturity, is the capacity and leadership in place to support their work?

## How We Evaluate Requests

- We evaluate proposals based on the four themes for prioritization: Areas of Greatest Need, Inclusivity and Accessibility, Partnerships and Collaboration, and Capacity.
- In support of a process that is transparent, equitable, and fair, our staff and Grantmaking Committee use an evaluation rubric to support assessment of funding requests.
- This rubric is used to provide scores for each proposal, which is an important tool within the process, though decisions are not made based solely on this score. The scoring process is used to support an objective review and inform discussion and decision-making.



# Community Funds Grant Cycle

## Strategic Process Grant Process

Est. Timeline	Stage	Detail
May – June	Pre-Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoted through website, direct email to partners, and press releases with regular reminders</li> <li>• Staff available for meetings or conversations with applicants</li> </ul>
June	Pre-Application Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation rubric used in review by Grantmaking Committee and Community Impact Staff</li> <li>• Community Impact Staff recommends applications to move forward</li> <li>• Those not being invited to move forward are notified</li> </ul>
July	Full Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Available to applicants moved forward</li> </ul>
July	Initial Full Application Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation rubric used by Community Impact Staff</li> <li>• Full staff invited to review and offer input</li> <li>• Community Impact Staff identifies applications to be sent to Grantmaking Committee for review</li> <li>• Those not being invited to move forward are notified</li> </ul>
August	First Round Review Teams Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial Review Teams formed comprised of Grantmaking Committee and/or Board Directors, and a Community Impact Staff.</li> <li>• Evaluation rubric used during individual review.</li> <li>• Each team meets to discuss their reviews and share comments.</li> </ul>
August	Second Round Review Teams Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First round process repeated with individuals receiving additional applications to review</li> </ul>
September	Final Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Impact Staff reviews and compiles all scores and comments and, using this information, prepares a list of recommended grants that are presented to the Grantmaking Committee for consideration</li> </ul>
September	Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Grantmaking Committees reviews and discusses the grant recommendations makes final decisions</li> </ul>
September	Notification and Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All applicants notified and grant awards disbursed</li> </ul>
	Grant Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All grant partners complete a final report one year after their award</li> </ul>

## Community Funds Grant Cycle Quick Response Grant Process

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Est. Timeline	Stage	Detail
Ongoing	Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible on website</li> </ul>
First week of each month	Application review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Impact Staff reviews submitted applications at the first meeting each month</li> <li>• Evaluation based on four areas of prioritization (<i>Areas of Greatest Need, Inclusivity and Accessibility, Partnerships and Collaboration, and Capacity</i>)</li> <li>• Community Impact Staff approves grants</li> </ul>
Prior to 15th of each month	Notification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All active applicants notified of the status of their request</li> </ul>
Mid-month	Awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approved grant awards are disbursed</li> </ul>
	Grant Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All grant partners complete a final report no later than one year after their award</li> </ul>

# All Fund Types and Grant Processes - Overview

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Our **grantmaking** processes and opportunities fall into **two primary categories** – **donor designated and community funds** grantmaking. Both categories have distinct goals and related processes. The following is an overview of all fund types and related processes.

## Donor Designated Grantmaking

A collection of funds that were established with a donor-designated purpose.

### Designated Agency

Provide consistent, sustainable funding for designated nonprofit partners. Grants awarded once annually with no application required.

### Fall Grants

Grants are awarded from Field of Interest funds through an application process that generally runs from mid-August through October 1. Grants are awarded according to a fund's designated purpose to support a variety of causes and organizations, addressing all our impact areas across the region

### Donor Advised Funds

Grants are awarded with the recommendation of fund advisors. Applications for funding are not accepted, though staff share funding opportunities and needs with advisors when possible.

### Scholarships

Funding is awarded to support students in furthering their education through awards consistent with donor designated intent and fund purpose. Application Process is generally mid-January through March 1, with some variation.

## Community Funds Grantmaking

A collection of flexible, responsive assets that can address gaps and opportunities our other funds cannot.

### Youth Endowment

Youth Advisory Councils (YACs) are comprised of area high school students award grants to support organizations serving the needs of youth. Application period is July 15 – September 1 and grants are awarded in November.

### Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Committee of individuals that represent diverse communities and lived experiences award grants to invest in diversely led organizations and those serving diverse populations that are historically marginalized, underserved, and underfunded. Application open year-round and requests are reviewed four times per year.

### Community Funds Grant Cycle

Staff and Board award grants in support of areas of greatest need. Organizations are prioritized that serve communities that are disproportionately impacted, have historically been marginalized or underserved, or face unique or more barriers. Quick response grants available year-round with primary grant cycle beginning in late-May.

# Trust Based Grantmaking Practices

Trust-based philanthropy is an approach that addresses the inherent power imbalance between funders, partners, and the community. A trust-based approach advances equity, shifts power, and builds mutually accountable relationships. Core to trust-based philanthropy is six grantmaking practices that we are working to practice and incorporate within our grantmaking to more fully embed equity within our efforts.

Practice	Our Actions
<b>Give multi-year, unrestricted funding</b> Long-term flexible funding allows organizations to allocate resources where they are most needed, making room for innovation, emergence, and impact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expanding general operations funding</li><li>• Previous grant partners are invited to come back for funding.</li><li>• Monitoring ability for multi-year funds for the future (and as grant resources increase)</li></ul>
<b>Do the Homework</b> It is the funder's responsibility to get to know the issues and organizations in their funding landscape, saving nonprofits time in the early stages of the vetting process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Actively monitor needs and community data</li><li>• Proactively engage with partners to understand their work and points of connection and partnership</li></ul>
<b>Simplify and Streamline Paperwork</b> Nonprofits spend an inordinate amount of time on reports and applications. A more relational approach saves time and helps funders gain a deeper understanding of the work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Utilize simple pre-application process to reduce time spent by applicants</li><li>• Simple final grant report process</li><li>• Actively assessing our application and reporting processes and making improvements based on feedback we receive</li></ul>
<b>Be Transparent and Responsive</b> When funders model transparency, power awareness, and vulnerability, it helps build relationships rooted in trust and mutual accountability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Becoming more focused and clearer about what and how we prioritize funding requests</li><li>• Responding to partner challenges that surface through feedback</li></ul>
<b>Solicit and Act on Feedback</b> A foundation's work will be inherently more successful if it is informed by the expertise and experience of grantee partners and communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use feedback driven improvement for our own systems and processes.</li><li>• Adding more checkpoints for receiving feedback (i.e. applicant survey, conversations with unfunded applicants, and final grant reports)</li></ul>
<b>Offer Support Beyond the Check</b> Funders have more to offer than dollars alone. Responsive, adaptive, non-monetary support bolsters leadership, capacity, and organizational health.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use of relationship-based approach to work – serving as a thought partner, connector to other resources and funders, and creating space for relationship building and connections with other nonprofits.</li><li>• Engaging in policy and advocacy work</li></ul>