

Community Foundation of Elkhart County Grants

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR GRANTS?

All **public charities** with an IRS 501(c)3 status serving Elkhart County are eligible. In addition, other organizations may be eligible to receive grants for charitable purposes. These include schools, municipalities, governmental units, or chambers of commerce.

For large organizations with multiple departments, such as schools and municipalities, the highest-ranking official (such as superintendent or mayor) must approve grant applications before submission.

WHEN CAN I APPLY?

Please speak to a Community Foundation program officer before submitting an application. A program officer can guide you to make the process smooth and efficient. The Community Foundation accepts requests for under \$25,000 at any time. Committee-level applications (greater than \$25,000) are due in mid-February and mid-August.

ARE MOST GRANT REQUESTS FUNDED?

The Community Foundation has criteria by which staff and grant committee members review and evaluate grant applications. These criteria include:

- Impact on the Community
- Project Goals
- Organizational Capacity
- Stakeholder Support
- Partners

An Evaluation Rubric establishes criteria and standards and describes what performance looks like at each level.

The Evaluation Rubric provides a guide for organizations to prepare applications and for grant evaluators to review the applications with consistency and thoroughness. An organization or project is not required to be strong in all areas to receive funding. Funding decisions are not made strictly based on rubric scoring.

Grantmaking supports the Community Foundation’s mission “to improve the quality of life by inspiring generosity.” Achieving the most significant impact over time is a guiding goal of the grantmaking process. In addition, as a steward of the community’s resources, the Community Foundation desires to support projects that are important to the community. Financial donations from the community to a project are indicators of community support and are a factor in funding decisions.

The Community Foundation is not typically the first funder nor the largest funder of a project. Given the number and size of requests the Community Foundation receives, funds are available for less than half of total dollars requested.

WHAT ARE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION’S PRIORITIES FOR GRANTS?

The grant committees and board of directors have selected several areas of emphasis for both funding and leadership. Population level indicators serve as a guide for the ongoing work. The Community Foundation will partner with others to build and lead initiatives in these areas.

- Early childhood development and education
- Career awareness, exploration & employability skills (grades 4 – 12)
- Internships & apprenticeships (grades 4 – 12)
- Vibrant Downtowns
- Parks
- Connected Network of Trails

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I SUBMIT A GRANT APPLICATION?

A program officer will contact you and partner with you to develop a strong proposal. The program officer anticipates questions from the reviewers so you can provide additional information. If the organization is new to the Community Foundation, the program officer may explore information about the governing board, history of programs, and financial performance. If the organization is newly formed, additional questions about the plan for ongoing operating support and methods for measuring impact may be explored by the program officer.

For requests over \$25,000, the grant committee members may submit questions following an initial review of the application. These questions are shared with the organization to prepare responses. In most cases, a time will be arranged for the organization to present (in person or via video) to the grant committee. This presentation is typically 10 to 15 minutes and includes an overview of the project, followed by questions and answers. The final funding decision can be expected within two weeks of the committee meeting.

WHAT ARE THE MOST FREQUENT APPLICATION MISTAKES?

- Little to no discussion with program officer prior to submission. (We want to prevent the need for you to make significant revisions.)
- Failure to partner or collaborate with other community entities where possible
- Asking Community Foundation for more than 50 percent of the needed financial support for project
- The project does not support your organization’s mission or strategic plan
- Goals are not measurable. No baseline or target is provided for the goals.
- The leadership of the organization (i.e. superintendent, mayor, CEO, executive director) is not aware of the project or has not approved it.

WHO REVIEWS AND MAKES DECISIONS ON GRANTS?

The Community Foundation would not exist without “community.” We believe it is our responsibility to maintain a process that preserves community volunteers as decision-makers in the grantmaking process with support from foundation staff. Therefore, the Community Foundation has developed a structure of three committees, each consisting of volunteers who live and/or work in Elkhart County. The team of program officers makes funding recommendations for grants under \$25,000. The board of directors ultimately approves or denies all grant requests.

WHEN CAN I EXPECT A DECISION?

Grant applications for less than \$25,000 are reviewed and awarded within six weeks. Organizations seeking larger grants are typically notified of the decisions within 2 to 3 months, following grant committee and board meetings in April and October.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT IN TERMS OF REPORTS AND SITE VISITS?

Most recipients will be asked to submit a report and possibly complete a site visit on or before the first anniversary of their grant date. The Community Foundation will remind the organization of due dates in advance. Recipients of a multi-year grant can expect an annual progress report and possibly a site visit before the following year’s payment. Also, depending on the nature and size of the grant, an additional, comprehensive report may be required following the end of the project (typically applied to multi-year or long-term projects). Site visits, when requested, usually fall in the month after the report is due to allow the program officer time to review the information before the visit. However, site visits are flexible, arranged at a mutually agreeable time.

I WAS JUST AWARDED A GRANT. HOW DO I SHARE THE NEWS?

The Community Foundation loves to share in our partners' success and in telling your story. We encourage our grant recipients to download our press kit with logos and a sample press release. In addition, we also encourage you to reach out to our Marketing and Communications Team to discuss additional marketing or promotions you would like to consider in support of your project and how we may help.

WHAT IS A SPONSORSHIP?

A sponsorship is used to support a fundraising event for nonprofits serving Elkhart County, local chambers of commerce and other similar initiatives. The Community Foundation does not sponsor athletic leagues, athletic teams, or most school fundraising events.

Can I apply for a sponsorship if I have another active grant?

Yes. Having an active grant does not preclude you from seeking sponsorship for an event. As always, speak with your Program Officer before completing an application.

WHAT PROJECTS ARE NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING?

- Direct assistance to individuals or scholarships for tuition
- For-profit organizations
- Projects aimed at promoting a religion or construction projects for religious institutions without community access
- Political campaigns or direct lobbying efforts
- Projects that do not serve residents of Elkhart County
- Reduction of debt, including payment for expenses incurred before grant approval
- Travel for bands, sports teams, classes, and similar groups
- Food requests from food pantries
- Medical, scientific, or academic research
- Problems resulting from an organization's failure to plan adequately. Such as:
 - Relying on a small number of donors for support without developing a plan to sustain programming
 - Running operating deficits over multiple years
 - Not anticipating construction contingency costs
 - Not planning for maintenance costs or replacement costs of existing equipment