**2025 Community Grant Program: Project Support**

Applicant Guidelines

The Community Grant Program is Greater Worcester Community Foundation’s signature funding opportunity, awarding close to $2 million annually across five strategic focus areas for both discrete project/programming and general operating support.

The following guidelines are for the application for project support.

**Timeline:**

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| **Information Session** | May 7 at 9:00 a.m. on Zoom |
| **Letter of Intent Opens** | April 14 |
| **Letter of Intent Closes** | June 6 |
| **Notification of 2nd round** | July 7 |
| **Project Conversations** | July through August |
| **Decisions** | Early September |
| **Payment** | Mid-September |
| **Grantee Report** | To be scheduled |

**Areas of Support:** We are interested in supporting requests that have goals/outcomes highly aligned with one of the following focus areas.

**Focus Areas**

1. **Arts & Creativity:** Projects or programs that use the artsas a vehicle for community cohesion.
   1. Creative placemaking (process that uses art, culture and design to improve the physical and social wellbeing of a community).
   2. Projects that are intersectional in nature and promote arts and non-arts partnerships.
2. **Basic Needs:** Projects or programs that ensure all residents have access to food, shelter and resources to achieve permanency.
3. **Economic Opportunity**: Programs and projects that help individuals and families have opportunities to develop wealth and work towards financial self-sufficiency, such as:
   1. English language learning programs.
   2. Culturally responsive workforce programs (especially within healthcare, social services and the arts).
4. **Health & Wellbeing:** Projects or programs within physical and behavioral health systems that increase ease of access and improve outcomes, particularly:
   1. Healthcare & social services navigation (helping people gain access to care).
   2. Complementary & palliative care (the important things insurance won’t cover).
   3. Healthy pregnancies & strong starts for new families.
5. **Youth Development:** Projects or programs that provide young people with meaningful resources/experiences/leadership development opportunities that are often hard to access.
   1. Services that are typically not offered in a school setting (enhancement, skill building, leadership opportunities, other unique development opportunities).
   2. Postsecondary training, education opportunities, job training.

**Lenses**

In addition to the focus areas, we also strive to be in relationship with projects and organizations who:

* Have an authentic presence and connection to Worcester County (have local relationships, are engaged in local conversations and/or are helping to change pressing local needs in this region).
* Strive to be equitable.
* Are the appropriate organizations to be leading the proposed work (possess the relevant knowledge, relationships and expertise to be the ones delivering the program, with the work tethered to organizational mission and vision).
* Involve clients and participants in the development of programs and organizational leadership.

**Eligibility:**

* Types of Organizations
  + 501c3 nonprofits, or any entity operating under fiscal sponsorship of a 501c3.
  + Collaboratives and coalitions with a fiscal sponsor and identified project lead.
  + Houses of worship that run community-serving programs which are not faith-based and do not proselytize.
  + Large multiservice institutions applying for well-aligned discrete projects.
* Geographic Location & Service Area (in order of preference)
  + - Based in Worcester County and serve primarily its residents.
    - Not based in Worcester County but have a meaningful physical presence.
    - Providing an unduplicated service in Worcester County and can demonstrate authentic partnerships and relationships with local stakeholders.
* Ineligible Organizations & Individuals:
  + Businesses
  + Government organizations or municipalities
  + Individuals (scholarships, tuition, direct aid etc.)
  + Projects occurring in classrooms during school time as part of the academic program/curriculum.
  + Organizations requesting support for capital projects/campaigns.

**Scope & Requirements:**

* Grant range is $2,500 - $25,000.
* Partial grants can be awarded.
* Support can be for a pilot, programmatic expansion, and/or support for ongoing program.
* Organizations should be in good financial standing with an intact governance structure.

**Selection Criteria:**

Applications will be assessed by Foundation staff and community volunteers based on the following criteria:

* **Feasibility:** The budget is realistic, and the proposed work is achievable within our grant range.
* **Community Access and Inclusion:** The project increases access and reduces barriers for residents of Worcester County.
* **Innovation and Impact:** The project creatively and effectively addresses a pressing community need.
* **Clear Goals & Outcomes:** The project has measurable and manageable goals and outcomes that are aligned with one or more of our focus areas.
* **Commitment to Equity:** The organization demonstrates a strong commitment to equity, community voice and systems change.
* **Organizational Strength:** The organization has sound financial and governance functions.

**GWCF Support & Feedback**

* **Before You Submit:** You may reach out to a member of our program team for coaching, conversation and/or an application review.
* **Applications Under Review:** Every application we receive undergoes a fair and thorough review. You will be notified each step of the way regardless of the outcome.
* **Decisions**: Program staff are happy to have follow up conversations. We can share themes and feedback on how your application faired through the process.