2023 Community Grant Program for Operating Support
Applicant Guidelines

The Community Grant Program is GWCF’s signature competitive granting opportunity. The responsive and flexible program awards close to $2 million annually in a range of focus areas.

**New for 2023:** The program has been split into two distinct categories with separate deadlines: Program Support and Operating Support. For project support, [click here](#).

*2022 Operating Grantees: Do not submit a grant through this cycle. Program staff will be in touch with your to discuss the renewal process.*

The Community Grant Program for Operating Support seeks to support organizations with:

- Missions that are highly aligned to one of our expressed focus areas (Health & Wellbeing, Arts & Creativity, Youth & Families or Basic Needs)
- Sound organizational practices
- Expressed commitments to equity, community voice, systems disruption
- Annual operating budgets within the limits of our available resources (see below).

Additionally, we seek to make grant investments that are as transformative as possible given our financial resources and the current needs of our local nonprofit sector and community. We are aspirational in our role to correct larger historical philanthropic trends and practices that have created barriers to accessing funding for certain types of organizations. Finally, we hope to continue to sharpen our guidance for applicants on the amount requested for operating support that is in line with our resources.

To that end, we are piloting the following funding structure for the 2023 cycle.
Requested Amount Ranges Based on Annual Organizational Budget:

- Under $400,000 – up to 10%
- $400,000- $1,000,000 – up to 5%
- $1,000,001- $5,000,000 – up to $25,000
- Over $5,000,000 – ineligible

Eligibility & Scope

Eligible to apply:

- 501c3 nonprofits, or any entity operating under a fiscal sponsorship of a 501c3
- Collaboratives, or loosely organized coalitions, under a fiscal sponsorship, are welcome to apply
- Organizations based in and exclusively or primarily serving Worcester County Residents

Not eligible to apply:

- Individuals (tuition, scholarship, direct aid etc…)
- Businesses
- Houses of Worship
- Government organizations or municipalities
- Organizations seeking support for a Capital project or campaign
- Organizations not based in Worcester County
- Organizations with an annual operating budget over $5,000,000
- Organizations and programs not aligned to the focus areas and lenses outlined below

Scope:

- Grant requests must be based on the formula above (with maximum grant size of $50,000)
- Partial grants will be awarded

Focus Areas & Lenses

Focus Areas:

1. **Health & Wellbeing** - Organizations working to strengthen the systems that ensure those from historically excluded populations have equitable access to healthcare.

2. **Arts & Creativity** - Organizations working to build and support a diverse and strong Arts & Culture Ecosystem where all belong.

3. **Youth & Families** - Organizations working to ensure families have what they need to thrive and that young people have access to meaningful opportunities
4. **Basic Needs**: Organizations working to ensure all residents of our community have food and shelter.

**Lenses:**

In addition to the focus areas, we also strive to be in relationship with organizations who are on a journey to examine, learn and pivot in the areas of equity, community voice and disrupting systems. We look for honest and authentic reflections vs. advances responses.

**Equity:** We believe equity is one part of racial justice, and thus we include in our approach work that addresses root causes of inequities, not just their manifestations. Requests should demonstrate a thoughtful approach to who will benefit and how inclusion and equity will be approached. This looks like:

- Moving beyond diversity and inclusion into understanding systems that create and perpetuate racial inequities
- Recognition of the role your organization plays in the system and looking to re-orient your mission and resources to create an impact on systemic inequity
- Work towards eliminating policies, practices, attitudes, behaviors and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or other identities
- Prioritizing leaders, staff and volunteers from historically excluded groups

**Community Voice:** Organizations with strong community voice co-create and lead programming together, create structures in partnership or are led by those more impacted by the issue. New projects should be able to demonstrate that they are created either in direct response of the community you serve or is being co-created or led in partnership.

**Disrupting Systems:** We are interested in being in relationship with organizations looking closely at ways to move our community to a more equitable place by understanding root causes of inequities and engaging in partnerships, coalitions and advocacy work that results in changed systems. While we recognize many small direct service providers do not have the bandwidth to engage in this work on a wide scale level, we believe all organizations have something meaningful to share in this area. Examples include:

- Championing the gathering and sharing of important data and research
- Aligning with others in partnership to move issues forward
- Engaging in formal advocacy and policy issue work
- Attending community meetings and uplifting your voice on important issues

If you have questions about these guidelines, contact:
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