2023 Community Grant Program for Project 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 across two granting cycles and 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 operating support, [click here](#).

The Community Grant Program for Project Support seeks to support organizations that:

- Create innovative solutions to pressing community needs utilizing new and/or proven models
- Create access and reduce barriers for residents of Worcester County
- Are within a scope of work for which a grant of up to $25,000 would be financially impactful
- Have goals and outcomes that are highly aligned to one of the expressed areas of interest (outlined below)
- Are committed to equity, community, and systems disruption
- Are sound organizations with strong financial and governance functions

The Process for Project Support Grant Requests

**New Process for 2023.** GWCF continues to work to create grant opportunities that are more responsive and less burdensome to our grant partners. We are excited to pilot this new way of grantmaking for GWCF in this grant cycle.

- **Letter of Interest (LOI) Submission Deadline:** June 16
  - Applicants will submit an LOI through our online platform that provides a high level overview of the project in an open ended approach

- **Project Conversations:** First half of July
  - Project leads for strong LOI’s will be invited to have a conversation with GWCF staff and members of the grants committee to further discuss their work

- **Grant Notifications:** Mid-August
  - GWCF grants committee will review all applications and GWCF staff will notify all applicants.
• Grant Reporting
  o GWCF Project grant partners will be invited to a group debrief 12-18 months post grant award

We strive for this approach to take less total time for applicants, be more interactive, and provide a different method for storytelling.

Eligibility & Scope

Eligibility:

• Organizations and projects serving Worcester County Residents.
  Priority is given in the following order for projects led by organizations who are:
    1. Based in Worcester County and serve primarily its residents
    2. Not based in Worcester County but have a meaningful physical presence (staff and/or location)
    3. Providing an unduplicated service in Worcester County and can demonstrate they have authentic partnerships and relationships with local stakeholders
  • 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 as a project lead partner
  • Houses of worship running community-serving programs that are not faith based and do not proselytize
  • Large multiservice institutions applying for well-aligned discrete projects
  • Pilot projects, program expansions, and ongoing projects are eligible

Who & what is not eligible?

• Individuals (tuition, scholarship, direct aid etc…)
• Businesses
• Government organizations or municipalities
• Projects occurring in classrooms during school time as part of the academic program
• Capital projects/campaigns
• Organizations and programs not aligned to the focus areas and lenses outlined below

Scope:

• Grants will range in size from $2,500-$25,000
• Requests should include budgets with meaningful overhead and true costs
• Partial grants will be awarded
• Grant size will be determined on a multitude of factors – including total project cost, organizational budget and size, and alignment with grant program goals
Focus Areas & Lenses

Focus Areas:

All requests will be measured against their alignment to one of the focus areas and the lenses listed below. We recognize the limitations of our total grant allotment, and seek to be in partnership with organizations where our grant would make a transformative difference for that nonprofit, as opposed to being a drop in the bucket.

Therefore, we have adjusted our scopes to be more in line with our grant size and seek projects that are also in alignment (i.e. supporting shelter access vs. new builds). This list is not meant to be exhaustive. Please reach out to a member of the program team to discuss your idea.

1. **Health & Wellbeing**: Strengthening the systems that ensure those from historically excluded populations have equitable access to healthcare. Strategies include:
   a. Expanding culturally-responsive healthcare workforce
   b. Expanding access to care
   c. Improving pre-natal care/healthy pregnancies
   d. Wellness programs promoting health and/or improving health outcomes

2. **Arts & Creativity**: Building and supporting a diverse and strong Arts & Culture Ecosystem where all belong. Strategies Include:
   a. Work that engages, celebrates and strengthens our communities
   b. Projects that are intersectional in nature and promote arts and non-arts partnerships (Previous Creative Intersection grant partners are encouraged to apply)

3. **Youth & Families**: Ensuring families have what they need to thrive and that young people have access to critical supports and meaningful experiences. Strategies Include:
   a. Increasing access to quality early childhood care
   b. Opportunities to increase family wealth (Job training, financial literacy, entrepreneurship, increasing minimum wage etc…)
   c. Meaningful out of school experiences

4. **Basic Needs**: Working to ensure all residents of our community have food and shelter. Strategies Include:
   a. Expanding access to SNAP & HIP
   b. Projects focused on providing wrap around support services
   c. Program that increase shelter access

Lenses:

In addition to the focus areas, we also strive to be in relationship with projects and 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. advanced 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 and projects 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 are 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:
Sarah Shugrue
Director of Grantmaking & Capacity Building
sshugrue@greaterworcester.org