



**COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION**
OF GREATER FORT WAYNE

RISING TOGETHER

Guidelines and Instructions

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Rising Together Grants

Rising Together Grants are the result of the work the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne has undertaken to align our grantmaking with our strategic vision. The Foundation decided to evolve its grantmaking model for three reasons:

1. The Community Foundation believes its community grantmaking will make the greatest impact when its approach is aligned with its *Let's Rise! Vision Plan*.



Connected Community

We believe that being an advocate for the underserved, instilling pride, and building relationships creates a sense of belonging.



Inspiring Places

We believe a community filled with inspiring spaces engages, connects, and energizes residents and visitors.



Everyone's Economy

We believe in an economy where every citizen has the opportunity for upward mobility and increased security, and is motivated to achieve their goals.



Lifelong Learning

We believe a culture of lifelong learning helps people flourish—strengthening our workforce, and increasing resiliency.



Healthy Mind and Body

We believe each person in our community can reach their highest potential when they have access to tools and resources that support their mental and physical health.

2. The Community Foundation believes that its grantmaking will demonstrate and live out the values of the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne:

- **Connectedness:** We're driven to foster strong, meaningful relationships with each person we work alongside.
- **Equity:** We strive to honor the unique needs of each individual and organization, providing equitable access to resources and opportunities.
- **Impact:** Each decision should move us toward positive and lasting change, encouraging growth and propelling our community forward.
- **Integrity:** Our stakeholders trust us with their resources in perpetuity. We honor donor intent and act with our community's needs in mind.
- **Passion:** We pursue our work with enthusiasm and dedication because we love our community.

3. The Community Foundation seeks to eliminate barriers for its grantees and to create stronger relationships.

The Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne looks forward to working alongside Allen County's nonprofit organizations and community leaders to overcome systemic challenges and uplift our entire community.

Rising Together Overview

Rising Together Competitive Grants

Rising Together Grants are given to nonprofit organizations to fund their operations. These unrestricted grants can fund the organization in any way it chooses. The Community Foundation has five grant cycles aligned with our *Let's Rise!* Vision Plan. Please apply to the pillar that most closely aligns with your organization's mission. Descriptions of each pillar are below. If you are unsure which pillar to choose, please contact us; we can help.

Connected Community

Affecting change in our community by advocating for the underserved, instilling pride, and building relationships to create a sense of belonging. Examples of groups that might fit this category are arts, transportation, animal rights, and groups supporting people with health conditions or impairments.

Everyone's Economy

Creating an economy where every citizen has the opportunity for upward mobility and increased security and is motivated to achieve their goals. Examples of groups that might fit this category are workforce development, housing, and basic needs.

Lifelong Learning

Building a culture of lifelong learning that helps people flourish, strengthening our workforce and increasing resiliency. Examples of groups that might fit this category are education, after-school programs, and adult learning.

Inspiring Places

Creating a community with spaces that engage, connect, and energize residents and visitors. Examples of groups that might fit this category are arts, environment, and community development.

Healthy Mind and Body

Helping everyone in our community feel mentally and physically healthy, with access to tools and resources to reach their highest potential. Examples of groups that might fit this category are healthcare, mental health, food and fitness, and basic needs.

Rising Together Grant Application Overview

The decision-making and approval process will take three months from the date of application submission. The Pillar Strategic Grants Committees will review and evaluate grant applications in five cycles, each tied to our *Let's Rise!* Vision Plan Pillars. The Committees will then make recommendations to the Board of Directors for final approval.

Rising Together Grants are given to nonprofit organizations to fund their operations. These unrestricted grants can fund the organization in any way it chooses. Therefore, the Rising Together Grant application

is structured in four parts to inform the Community Foundation about the nonprofit's operations and the organization's overall health according to best practices in the nonprofit sector.

The lack of requested information or an incomplete application will result in grant denial. The final decision on all grants rests with the Community Foundation Board of Directors, based on recommendations from the Pillar Strategic Grants Committees and consideration of available funds.

Rising Together Application and Evaluation Process and Preparation

Process

We want to enhance your organization's chance of a successful grant application; therefore, in addition to our guidelines, the following deadline suggestions may help with your application.

- Connected Community – March 1
- Everyone's Economy – May 1
- Lifelong Learning – July 1
- Inspiring Places – September 1
- Healthy Mind and Body – November 1

Preparation

- Be concise and communicate your message.
- Describe how your proposal supports your organization's mission and helps change the systems within which your organization is working.
- Please share your success evaluation method and include baseline statistics and benchmarks.
- Explain your proposal's potential benefits to the community.
- Include the most up-to-date financial information available. A budget is required for requesting support.
- Make sure all uploads are legible.
- Proofread carefully, ensuring numbers add up and typographical errors are removed.
- If in doubt, please ask for clarification. We are happy to help answer questions as you complete your grant application.
- Please note: the Community Foundation may adjust the requested amount at any time during the review process.

Eligibility Quiz

The Community Foundation requires an Eligibility Quiz to ensure that applicants to the Rising Together Grant program meet basic criteria for the application process before proceeding. The Eligibility Quiz for the Rising Together Grant program requires an organization to check each item before proceeding:

- You are a 501(c)(3) organization
- You have been in existence for at least 3 years
- At least 50% of people served are in Allen County and/or you provide a unique service to the county
- You do not require participation in religious programming for people to receive services
- You do not require a statement of faith from your employees

Rising Together Grant Questions

General Information

1. Explain how your organization strategically aligns with the pillar, including any specific work you are doing to impact the community.
2. Operational support requested.
3. Amount requested.
4. Previous Rising Together/Pillar funding.

Governance

1. Is there a formal evaluation process for your Executive Director from the Board of Directors?
2. Is there a formal evaluation process from staff for your Executive Director that is shared with the Board of Directors?
3. What is your current board recruitment process?
4. According to your bylaws, what are your current board member term limits?
5. According to your bylaws, how often does your Board of Directors meet?
6. Please list all your board committees.
7. If you believe any information you've provided in this section requires additional context or explanation, please briefly elaborate here.

People/HR

1. Please attach your organizational chart.
2. Is your organization primarily led or run by volunteers (0-1 paid staff members and the rest are volunteers)?
3. What professional development have all levels of your staff had in the last year?
4. Do you have a formal written succession plan for your Executive Director/CEO?
5. Years of service in key positions: Executive Director, Development Director, CFO/COO/Finance/Operations Director, Program Director/Manager.
6. Race and ethnicity of board members, staff, senior staff.
7. Gender identity of board members, staff, senior staff.
8. Age of board members, staff, senior staff.
9. If you believe any information you've provided in this section requires additional context or explanation, please briefly elaborate here.

Programs

1. What problem are you trying to solve or what issue are you trying to address?
2. How do you know you are making an impact?
3. How are you partnering with others (including government, other nonprofits, etc.)?
4. Race/ethnicity of people served.
5. Gender identity of people served.
6. Ages of people served.
7. If you believe any information you've provided in this section requires additional context or explanation, please briefly elaborate here.

Financial/Fundraising

1. Please use the chart in the application to include your entire organization's current and previous fiscal year operating budget revenues.

2. For the above chart, if Other Revenues were entered, please specify what they are. If Other Revenues are the majority of income, please explain.
3. Please use the chart for your entire organization's current and previous fiscal year operating budget expenses.
4. For the above chart, if Other Expenses were entered, please specify what they are. If Other Expenses are the majority of expenses, please explain.
5. If your approved budget has a significant surplus or deficit, please explain.
6. Please provide the previous 2 years' balance sheet for your organization.
7. Please provide income statements for the current and two previous fiscal years.
8. Does your Board of Directors formally approve the budget annually?
9. Do you have 3-6 months of operating support in reserve?
10. How are you building and maintaining relationships with individual donors?
11. Optional: Please attach your fund development plan.
12. Do you have an endowment at a bank or other financial institution?
13. If you believe any information you've provided in this section requires additional context or explanation, please briefly elaborate here.

Rising Together Grant Evaluation Rubric

A grant evaluation rubric is a detailed outline that helps evaluators score proposals consistently. The rubric helps minimize personal bias.

Governance – 30 points

Evaluator Review Criteria: Is there accountability for the Executive Director and transparency with the Board about what all staff are experiencing within the organization? Does the Board of Directors have formal processes in place? Does the Board have adequate committees from which to groom volunteers for Board service? Does it appear that there is proper oversight of the organization overall?

1-10 Response does **not** meet criteria

- There is limited (or no) information about the governance of the organization
- There are no (or very limited) indicators that demonstrate the Board is functioning at a high and appropriate level (examples: approving a negative budget, no evaluations of the Executive Director, high staff turnover under the Executive Director)
- There is no accountability for the Executive Director
- The Board is not diverse in any category and does not reflect the population of Allen County or those served

11-17 Response **somewhat** meets criteria

- What the organization has in terms of governance is vague
- There are very few board committees
- There are no evaluations of the Executive Director or staff
- Diversity of the Board is observed in **one** category of diversity (i.e., race and ethnicity, age, gender identity)

18-24 Response **strongly** meets criteria

- The organization has clear board committees but may not be using these as pipelines for board recruitment
- The Board **or** staff is evaluating the Executive Director, providing some accountability
- Board term limits are in place but may be extended too long (two 3-year terms is best practice)

- There is diversity on the Board amongst **two** categories of diversity, reflecting the diversity of Allen County and the populations served

25-30 Response meets criteria in an *exemplary way*

- Board **and** staff are evaluating the Executive Director, indicating clear communication to the Board and holding the Executive Director accountable
- Board committees are robust and are clear pipelines for board members
- The Board meets regularly and there are appropriate succession plans to ensure new thought and vision
- There is diversity on the Board amongst **all** categories of diversity, reflecting the diversity of Allen County and the populations served

People/HR – 20 points

Evaluator Review Criteria: Does the organization provide opportunities for employee growth? Is there high turnover in certain key positions, indicating instability? Does the diversity of the staff reflect the diversity of clients served?

1-5 Response does *not* meet criteria

- There is no professional development and turnover is very high in **all** positions (high turnover is defined as someone in their role for less than 2 years)
- There is no succession plan
- The organization is not diverse in any category and does not reflect the population of Allen County or those served

6-20 Response *somewhat* meets the criteria

- Professional development is only offered for one staff person
- There is no succession plan and there is high turnover in all positions **except** the Executive Director
- Diversity of staff is observed in one category of diversity (i.e., race and ethnicity, age, gender identity)

11-15 Response *strongly* meets criteria

- **Most** employees are receiving some professional development—may or may not be annual
- There is no formal succession plan for the Executive Director, and there is some turnover at **one or two** levels of senior leadership
- There is diversity amongst **two** categories of diversity, reflecting the diversity of Allen County and the populations served

16-20 Response meets criteria in an *exemplary way*

- **All** employees at all levels are receiving professional development annually
- There is a formal succession plan for the Executive Director, and there is very little turnover at **all** levels of senior leadership, indicating strong relationships
- There is diversity amongst **all** categories of diversity, reflecting the diversity of Allen County and the populations served

Programs – 20 points

Evaluator Review Criteria: Is the organization serving direct needs and also working to address deeper systemic issues? Is the organization demonstrating deeper impact aside from numbers served? Is the organization truly working in collaboration with others to fulfill their mission?

1-5 Response does *not* meet criteria

- There is no (or very limited) information about what the organization does

- There are no (or very limited) indicators of success or impact and no examples of collaboration
- The organization is not diverse in any category and does not reflect the population of Allen County or those served

6-10 Response *somewhat* meets the criteria

- What the organization does is vaguely described
- There is an attempt to describe the organization’s impact but it is demonstrated only in a reporting of numbers served
- There are no (or very limited) examples of collaboration
- Diversity of clients is observed in one category of diversity (i.e., race and ethnicity, age, gender identity)

11-15 Response *strongly* meets criteria

- It’s clear what the organization does, and its efforts are driven by its mission
- Response provides clear details of impact, and they are focused on direct need **or** systemic change
- Response demonstrates collaboration with other organizations in a hire-for-service type of relationship
- There is diversity amongst **two** categories of diversity, reflecting the diversity of Allen County and the populations served

16-20 Response meets criteria in an *exemplary* way

- What the organization does is exceptionally defined (clear and compelling) and is mission-driven with clear impact
- Response provides compelling and exemplary examples of impact—focusing both on direct need **and** systemic change
- Response demonstrates true collaborative programming with other organizations
- There is diversity amongst **all** categories of diversity, reflecting the diversity of Allen County and the populations served

Finance and Fundraising – 30 points

Evaluator Review Criteria: Is the organization running at a budget deficit or are they at least breaking even? Is there revenue diversity (multiple funding sources, ideally 1/3 earned income, 1/3 grants, 1/3 individual donations) to mitigate risk? Are the assets on the balance sheet greater than the liabilities? Are the assets liquid or are they fixed (ensuring that the majority of their assets are not locked up in property and that they have some access to cash if needed)? Is the organization engaging with donors or are they heavily reliant upon other sources of income such as events or grants?

1-10 Response does *not* meet criteria

- A negative budget was approved by the Board of Directors
- The organization has only one income stream and is solely dependent on it
- The organization’s liabilities are greater than the assets, and the organization has no liquidity and large sums of debt
- The organization has no reserves
- It is very clear the organization is not fundraising or engaging with individual donors

11-17 Response *somewhat* meets criteria

- A negative budget was approved by the Board of Directors
- The organization demonstrates **very little** revenue diversity and is heavily reliant upon one income stream more than others

- The organization’s assets are greater than the liabilities, and the organization has no liquidity or access to cash and has large debts
- The organization has no operating reserve or endowment
- The organization is doing one fundraiser or campaign per year and does not interact with individual donors

18-24 Response *strongly* meets criteria

- The budget is balanced at break-even
- The organization demonstrates **some** revenue diversity but is more heavily reliant upon one or two streams of income
- The organization’s assets are greater than the liabilities, but the organization does not have much liquidity or access to cash
- The organization has an operating reserve **or** an endowment
- The organization may be hosting events or annual campaigns, but it is unclear if or how they are interacting with individual donors beyond this

25-30 Response meets criteria in an *exemplary* way

- The budget is balanced at break-even or with a profit for the year
- The organization demonstrates exemplary revenue diversity and is not solely dependent upon any one income stream
- The organization’s assets are greater than the liabilities **and** the organization has a healthy liquidity
- The organization has an operating reserve **and** an endowment
- It is very clear the organization is actively fundraising and engaging with individual donors

After each section, the evaluators must describe how they arrived at their scores in written detail.

For scores **1-17 (out of 30)** or **1-10 (out of 20)** – Are there actions the applicant can take to improve in this area? Were any portions of this response unclear?

For scores **18-30 (out of 30)** or **11-20 (out of 20)** – What made this a strong or exemplary response? Can you offer any constructive feedback to help further enhance this area?

Important things to note:

- Budget amounts per pillar are set at the start of each calendar year.
- The requested amount may be adjusted at any time by the Community Foundation during the review process.
- Requests above \$50,000 will not be considered. The average grant size of a Rising Together Grant is \$20,000.

Funding Eligibility, Guidelines, and Reporting

- **501(c)(3) Status:** You must be classified as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.
- **First-Time Grantee:** First-time grantees to receive Rising Together Grants are typically awarded \$5,000 to begin their process as a Rising Together grantee.
- **Location:** At least 50% of the people you serve must be in Allen County, and/or you provide a unique service to the county.

- **Multi-Year Funding:** Rising Together Grants are given in one-time-only funding amounts and will not entertain multi-year requests.
- **No Medical or Academic Research:** The Rising Together Grant program will not fund medical or academic research due to specific IRB requirements.
- **Pauses in Funding:** Funding may be temporarily suspended due to a substantial organizational change, such as an Executive Director’s departure, financial distress, or the like.
- **Previous Funding:** Grantees can only receive **one** Rising Together Grant per calendar year. If you are denied in a particular pillar, you may not apply for a different pillar until the following calendar year.
- **Religious Requests:** The Community Foundation will not provide funding for organizations that require religious participation from their constituents/clients or a statement of faith signed by their employees. See FAQs for the types of religious organizations or programs the Community Foundation will fund.
- **Reporting:** Rising Together Grants do not currently have any reporting requirements.
- **Restrictions:** As required by IRS rules, grant funds may not be used: a) to carry on lobbying activities as defined under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code; b) for partisan political activities that are prohibited under Section 501(c)(3); c) to make a grant to any individual for travel, study, or other similar purposes or to make a sub-grant to any other organization unless the grant complies with Section 4945(d)(3) or (4) of the Internal Revenue Code and the grant is part of the approved purpose; or d) to undertake any activity for any purpose other than the charitable and educational purposes specified in Section 170(c)(2)(B) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Does the Community Foundation fund religious organizations?

The Fort Wayne community is home to various faiths. We are fortunate to have many faith-based agencies that serve our community, some located in houses of worship and some at separate locations. As part of the Community Foundation’s mission to “serve all the people of Allen County,” we fund faith-based groups that meet specific guidelines. The Community Foundation will allow funding to religious organizations for charitable purposes but will not provide funding for religious purposes. If you require religious participation from your clients or those you serve, your organization cannot receive funding.

Characteristics of eligible programs may include, but are not limited to:

- May be located in a house of worship
- Separate nonreligious programs from religious programs
- May use the same room, but not at the same time, for religious and nonreligious programs
- Are open to all, regardless of religious affiliation
- Abstain from religious worship, instruction, or proselytization (recruitment)
- Eliminate required statements of belief from participants

Descriptions of previously funded programs:

- A soup kitchen operated out of a church
- Transitional housing for homeless families run by a faith-based organization

- Case management for families in need at a faith-based social service agency
- Emergency housing located in various churches
- A food bank serving the unemployed out of a faith-based ministry

2. Why does the Community Foundation not fund organizations that require their employees to sign statements of faith? Is this a new policy?

This is not a new policy. The Community Foundation does not fund organizations that require employees to sign a statement of faith because doing so limits the pool of potential employees. Such a requirement excludes certain individuals, which goes against our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. We believe in creating an inclusive environment that welcomes people from all backgrounds and perspectives. You can read more about this in our DEI Statement and Strategy [here](#)

3. What is the review and selection process for Rising Together Grants?

Proposals are evaluated by one of our five Pillar Strategic Grant Committees, which are made up of community volunteers, the month directly following the pillar deadline, using the rubric provided in the Rising Together Grant Application and Evaluation Process section of the Rising Together Grant Guidelines.

4. Is an audit required to receive Rising Together Grant funding?

No.

5. Can we receive more than one Rising Together Grant per calendar year?

No. You may not apply in more than one pillar per calendar year. If you are denied in a pillar during a calendar year, you may not apply for another pillar until the following calendar year.

6. What if we apply to the “wrong” pillar?

You won't be penalized if you apply in a pillar that does not seem to match your mission best. Upon the result of your grant application, our grants team will encourage you to apply in a different pillar the following year. If you feel that you have applied to the wrong pillar, you may apply to a different pillar the following calendar year.

7. If my organization receives a Rising Together Grant, can we receive other grants from the Community Foundation in the same calendar year?

Yes! Rising Together Grants are operational grants. You may also consider applying for our Agile, Engage, or Emergency Grants. Agile Grants are project-oriented and interest area-specific. Engage Grants are for first-time grantees or in support of a new project. Emergency Grants are available for organizations facing an emergency due to a sudden, unexpected occurrence demanding immediate attention.

8. Who makes up the evaluation committees?

The different Strategic Grant Committees are made up of volunteers from around the community, including other nonprofit leaders. Each Strategic Grant Committee volunteer signs a conflict-of-interest form to disclose any conflicts prior to evaluating grants. If you are interested in being a grant evaluator, please reach out to one of the staff members listed below.

9. Who can I talk to at the Community Foundation about grants?

As part of its mission, the Community Foundation strives to serve as a community leader and convener to help create a brighter future for Allen County's residents. We welcome opportunities for our board and staff to learn more about the community's needs. If you have questions, please contact us.

Contact Us

We understand that you may occasionally have questions about the application process. Please direct those questions to the contacts below.

The Community Foundation is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., however, most of the grants team is unavailable after noon on Friday and will respond to inquiries the following week.

Contact: Angela Stanley, Senior Impact Advisor, astanley@cfgfw.org
Alison Gerardot, Chief Impact Officer, agerardot@cfgfw.org

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