



# ENGAGE GRANT PROGRAM

## Guidelines and Instructions

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## Engage Grants

Engage Grants were introduced during the Community Foundation’s 100th-anniversary celebration as the *Because We Love Our Community* grant program. The program was started to celebrate a significant milestone, grow relationships with nonprofits the Community Foundation had never granted to, and create better opportunities for grassroots organizations to access funding. The Board of the Community Foundation was so pleased by the results of the *Because We Love Our Community* grant program that they agreed to set aside funding for years 2023 and 2024 to continue the program under a new name, Engage Grants. Engage Grants provide the same opportunities as the *Because We Love Our Community* grants. This grant program is meant to act as a “front door” to the Community Foundation, providing quick, low-barrier funding to first-time grantees and organizations with new projects or programs that positively impact the community’s well-being. Funding of the Engage Grant program is determined annually as additional funding is available.

Grantees are not required to be 501(c)(3) organizations; however, they do need to prove a charitable purpose. Fiscal sponsorships are also acceptable. These grants—of up to \$3,000—are available from March to October and are reviewed monthly.

### 1. 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.

### 2. 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 community.

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## Engage Grant Application and Evaluation Process

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Engage Grants provide up to \$3,000 in funding to first-time applicants for operational support or specific programs. This program is designed for organizations that are new to our foundation and have never received a grant from us before. Applications are accepted from March through October. Engage Grants are available for funding made possible by donors who have established funds to support specific interest areas within our community. For more details, including application questions and the evaluation rubric, please review these Grant Guidelines.

This grant program is open from March through October. Please be thorough in your narrative and include the necessary information for request review. Requests will be reviewed monthly.

### Eligibility Quiz

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

- You are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization or a community/neighborhood group
- You have not received an Engage Grant in the last calendar year
- At least 50% of people served are in Allen County and/or you provide a unique service to the county
- You are not requesting funds for an event sponsorship
- You do not require participation in religious programming for people to receive services
- You do not require a statement of faith from your employees

### Engage Grant Questions

#### General Information

1. Program/Project Name
2. Website/Main Online Presence
3. Amount Requested
4. Are you a current or previous grantee of the Community Foundation?

#### Project/Program

1. Project/Program Description – Please describe the project/program/organization for which you seek funding and how your requested funds will be used.
2. Qualifications – What makes your organization unique and effective, as compared to other organizations, in offering this project/program?
3. Impact – What does success look like due to this project/program/organization?

#### Budget and Timeline

1. Program/Project Budget – Please provide your program/project-specific budget, including all income and expenses, as an Excel document.
2. Timeline – Outline the anticipated timeline for this project/program.
3. Sustainability – What long-term strategy is needed to fund this project/program/organization beyond the grant period?

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4. Feasibility – If the Community Foundation can only partially support this program/project or cannot support it at all, will the program/project/organization still be able to happen? Please elaborate.

## Engage Grant Evaluation Rubric

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

### Project/Program Description – 20 points

*Evaluator Review Criteria: How clearly does the organization describe the project/program/organization and how the funds will be used?*

**1-5 Response does *not* meet criteria**

The description of the project/program/organization is unclear *and* there is no real explanation of how the funds will be used.

**6-10 Response *somewhat* meets criteria**

The description of the project/program/organization is unclear *or* there is no real explanation of how the funds will be used.

**11-15 Response *strongly* meets criteria**

The project/program/organization's description is clear, the use of the funds is clear, and it seems aligned with the organization's mission.

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

The description of the project/program/organization is exceptionally defined (clear *and* compelling), with clear mission alignment and impact.

### Qualifications – 20 points

*Evaluator Review Criteria: How well does the organization describe its uniqueness in offering this project/program/organizational description?*

**1-5 Response does *not* meet criteria**

The project/program/organizational concept is not unique; various groups or organizations offer identical programs throughout the community.

**6-10 Response *somewhat* meets the criteria**

This project/program/organizational concept is not unique in the type of service offered but may be unique to the individuals it is serving (e.g., homeless shelter that serves a population not currently being served).

**11-15 Response *strongly* meets criteria**

This project/program/organizational concept is unique in the community but may be overlapping with similar projects/programs and may not be addressing a clear community need.

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

This project/program/organizational concept is unique to our community. No one else is doing this work, and it will fill a very clear gap/need within the community.

### Impact – 20 points

*Evaluator Review Criteria: How well does the organization define and describe success due to this project/program/organizational implementation?*

**1-5 Response does *not* meet criteria**

There is no clear description or definition of success.

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**6-10 Response somewhat meets criteria**

The organization describes success, but it is vague and may be unrelated to the actions of this project/program/work of the organization.

**11-15 Response strongly meets criteria**

The description and definition of success are clear, and the project/program/organization's impact is clearly described.

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

The description and definition of success are exceptionally defined (clear *and* compelling), with a clearly defined impact.

**Program/Project Budget – 10 points**

*Evaluator Review Criteria: Is there a clear budget that includes all income and expenses and clearly explains how these funds will be used?*

**1-5 Response does not meet criteria**

The budget includes income *or* expenses; the complete funding picture is unclear.

**6-10 Response somewhat meets criteria**

The budget includes income *and* expenses, but these are incomplete, and the total funding picture is unclear.

**11-15 Response strongly meets criteria**

The budget includes income and expenses, and a clear explanation of how funds will be used, but the Community Foundation may be the only contributor, and/or expenses may be somewhat unreasonable for the project/organization.

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

The budget includes income and expenses, clearly explaining how funds will be used, including other contributors to the project/program/organization, and demonstrating reasonable expenses.

**Timeline – 10 points**

*Evaluator Review Criteria: Is the timeline reasonable?*

**1-5 Response does not meet criteria**

There is no timeline included.

**6-10 Response somewhat meets criteria**

The timeline is included but is not reasonable for the project/program/organization.

**11-15 Response strongly meets criteria**

The timeline for the project/program/organization is reasonable.

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

The timeline is clear and concise, and demonstrates this project/program will have a clear start and end, or the agency has demonstrated a clear picture of an organizational timeline.

**Sustainability – 20 points**

*Evaluator Review Criteria: How well does the organization outline the long-term strategy for funding this project/program/organization beyond the granting period? Is it clear the Community Foundation will not be continually asked to fund this program/organization in perpetuity? Is there a path to sustainability?*

**1-5 Response does not meet criteria**

There is no long-term strategy for this project/program/organization or mention of sustainability.

**6-10 Response somewhat meets criteria**

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The organization describes a vague long-term strategy, but it is clear this has not been thought through, and the Community Foundation will likely be asked to continue to fund this project/program/organization in subsequent years.

**11-15 Response *strongly* meets criteria**

There is a clear description of a long-term strategy for funding and sustainability.

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

The long-term strategy for funding is exceptionally defined (clear and compelling), with a very clear path for sustainability. It is clear Community Foundation funding will be phased out over time.

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

For scores **1-13** – Are there actions the applicant can take to improve in this area? Were any portions of this response unclear?

For scores **14-20** – What made this a strong or exemplary response? Can you offer any constructive feedback to help further enhance this area?

**Important things to note:**

- Applications are accepted and evaluated on a first-come, first-served basis until funds available for the calendar year are gone.
- The Community Foundation may adjust the requested amount at any time during the review process.
- Requests above \$3,000 will not be considered. The maximum grant size of Engage Grant funding is \$3,000.

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## **Funding Eligibility and Guidelines**

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- **501(c)(3) Status:** You *do not* have to be classified as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization to receive an Engage Grant, however, you must prove a charitable purpose. Examples of non-501(c)(3) entities that have received funds in the past include neighborhood planning groups and school programs. Fiscal sponsorships are also acceptable and encouraged.
- **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:** Engage Grants are given in one-time-only funding amounts.
- **No Medical or Academic Research:** The Engage Grant program will not fund medical or academic research due to specific IRB requirements.
- **No Operational Support:** The Engage Grant program is designed to fund new to us nonprofit organizations. It will fund program/project-specific requests as well as operational support. The Community Foundation will not fund operational deficits.
- **No Sponsorships, Fundraising Events, Annual Funds:** The Engage Grant program is designed to fund specific projects or programs and new-to-us organizations or groups. However, it does not include traditional sponsorships or support for events that raise money for the organization, nor does it support any other fundraising activities such as annual funds or drives.

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- **Previous Funding:** Grantees can only receive **one** Engage Grant. If you have received an Engage Grant previously, you are no longer considered a new-to-us organization; therefore, you would need to apply for an Agile or Rising Together grant.
- **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:** Engage Grants require a final report six months after receiving a grant. The Community Foundation welcomes the opportunity to brag about its grantees and the outstanding work you are doing in the community! We want to know how things are going and would love any photos or videos you're willing to share about your important work. All final reporting will happen through the online grants management system/grants portal.
- **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.

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## Frequently Asked Questions

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### 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

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- 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?

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 Engage Grants?

Proposals are evaluated monthly by the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne's Supervisor's Leadership Group using the rubric provided in the Engage Grant Application and Evaluation Process section of the Engage Grant Guidelines.

## 4. Is an audit required to receive Engage Grant funding?

No.

## 5. Can we receive more than one Engage Grant per calendar year?

No.

## 6. If my organization receives an Engage Grant, can we receive other grants from the Community Foundation in the same calendar year?

Yes! Engage Grants are for new program/project-specific grants for organizations new to the Community Foundation. However, if you have a program or project that is not new, you may consider applying for an Agile Grant. If you are looking for operational funding, and have existed for more than three years, we encourage you to apply for a Rising Together Grant in the pillar that best aligns with your mission.

## 7. 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](#).

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## Contact Us

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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: Stephanie Carlson Plimpton, Senior Impact Advisor, [scarlson@cfgfw.org](mailto:scarlson@cfgfw.org)  
Angela Stanley, Director of Impact, [astanley@cfgfw.org](mailto:astanley@cfgfw.org)  
Alison Gerardot, Chief Impact Officer, [agerardot@cfgfw.org](mailto:agerardot@cfgfw.org)

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