



# Our LGBTQ Fund

## 2026 GRANT APPLICATION GUIDELINES

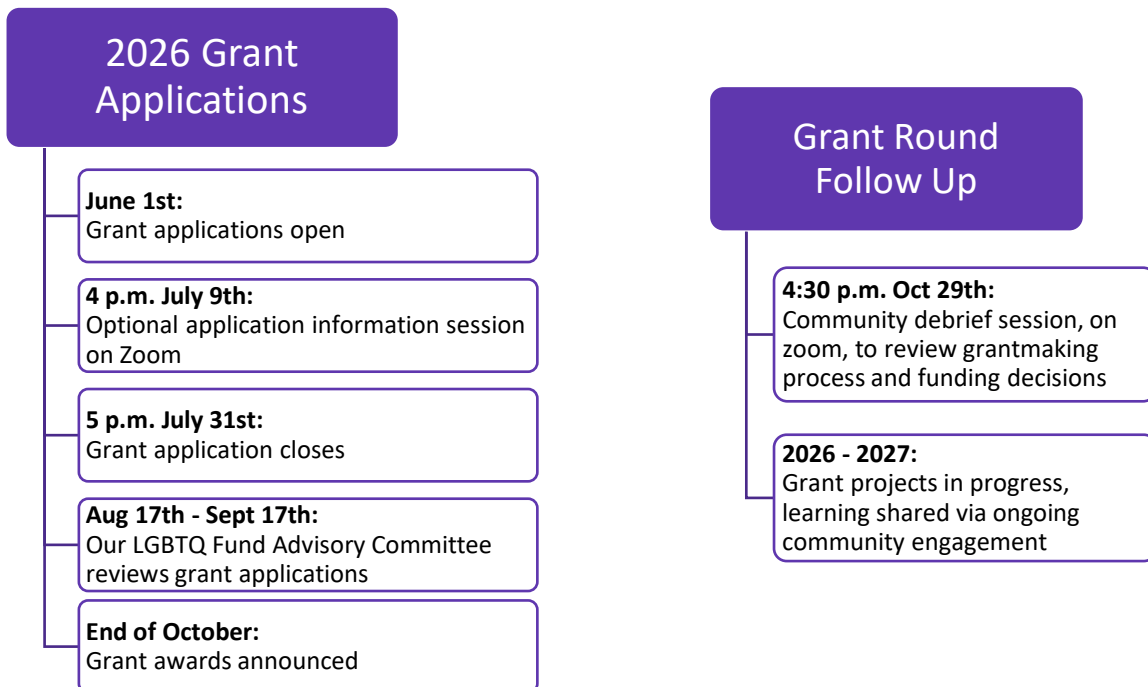
### REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

We invite you to consider applying for funding available through Our LGBTQ Fund at Grand Rapids Community Foundation, whose North Star is: *The people of West Michigan deserve to thrive. Together, we must ensure everyone has access to opportunity, prosperity and belonging. It is only by embracing our differences and overcoming inequities that we can create a more vibrant community.* Our LGBTQ Fund was founded in 2014 and exists to provide a safe, welcoming and healthy environment for LGBTQ+ communities in West Michigan by increasing wellness and prosperity levels, visibility, acceptance, support, and access to resources. **Grant applications must be submitted electronically using the [online portal](#) by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2026.**

Included in these guidelines, you will find:

- 2026 Grant Application Timeline
- Background and Context
- Focus Areas
- Eligibility
- Submission Process
- Application Questions
- Reporting Requirements
- Resources and Contact Information

### TIMELINE SNAPSHOT





Join us for a virtual session where we'll go over our grant application process and highlight the priority areas specific to our LGBTQ Fund on **Thursday, July 9<sup>th</sup>, at 4 pm**. [Click here to register](#) or visit [GRFoundation.org/LGBTQFund](http://GRFoundation.org/LGBTQFund) to learn more.

## **BACKGROUND and CONTEXT**

Our LGBTQ Fund knows that building deep relationships with communities most impacted by inequity must be at the core of our work. We seek guidance from those communities to help identify and implement solutions to address critical issues. In the summer of 2022, we began an ongoing engagement with local LGBTQ+ communities through an open house and focus groups, centered on listening, relationship-building and equity. This community-informed process shaped our grantmaking framework and helped identify the priority areas reflected in this request for proposals. It reaffirmed the need to center work led by LGBTQ+ communities, especially LGBTQ+ communities of color and LGBTQ+ youth and to support community groups, projects and movements that exist outside of traditional nonprofit structures and organizations.

Our LGBTQ Fund operates from a belief that LGBTQ+ communities are not a monolith. In the United States, people are impacted by oppressive systems based on gender, gender identity and sexual orientation that intersect with those based on race and ethnicity, disability, class, age and other forms of discrimination in ways that are unique to each individual. For example, the experiences and challenges of a white, cisgender gay man tend to be different from those of a Black transgender woman, even though both might identify as part of an LGBTQ+ community. There are many groups and organizations already serving LGBTQ+ communities, and we seek to partner with those that align with the goals and values of both Our LGBTQ Fund and Grand Rapids Community Foundation as a whole. We recognize that our resources are limited, and we believe that meaningful community change, defined by those most impacted by inequity, can only be achieved through strong collaboration with organizations, community groups and individuals representing a variety of intersecting identities.

Our work is also informed by volunteer advisory committee members who lead decision-making for Our LGBTQ Fund, including recommendations for grant awards. This committee is made up of LGBTQ+ community members and allies representing a range of ages, races and ethnicities, and life and professional experience. You can view the list of committee members on [our website](#), and connect with us if you are interested in serving in the future.

## **COMMUNITY NEED AND FUNDING REALITIES**

In 2024, Our LGBTQ Fund received 23 applications totaling \$844,359 in funding requests, while only \$100,000 was available to award during that grant cycle. You can learn more [here](#). This significant gap between community needs and available resources is something we experience each competitive grant round. It speaks to both the strength and creativity of LGBTQ+ organizations and initiatives across our community and the continued under-resourcing of this important work. We regularly receive more high-quality, impactful proposals than we're able to fund.



As a result, funding decisions are not easy. Each application represents meaningful, community-rooted work, often led by and for LGBTQ+ individuals, including those most impacted by inequities. Our volunteer advisory committee takes this responsibility seriously, engaging in thoughtful review, discussion and reflection throughout the grantmaking process. Members consider each proposal in relation to the fund’s focus areas and current community needs, using shared tools like a rubric to help guide those conversations.

We expect that our grantmaking approach will evolve as we continue to learn and grow, and we know there will be moments when we fall short of our goals. We are committed to actively and regularly seeking feedback on ways to improve our practice and better serve our community. Opportunities for engagement with Our LGBTQ Fund throughout this grant cycle are outlined in the timeline above.

## FOCUS AREAS

Up to \$100,000 will be awarded for programming that addresses [social determinants of health](#) (SDOH) for LGBTQ+ communities. SDOH are the environmental conditions in which people live, work and play that impact health and quality-of-life outcomes. Proposals addressing the priorities below, and which are tied to SDOH, may include (but are not limited to):

- Increasing access to housing for LGBTQ+ communities, especially LGBTQ+ communities of color and LGBTQ+ youth
- Navigating and accessing physical and mental health services, especially for transgender and nonbinary communities, including identity and gender-affirming care
- Opportunities for wealth building, including the creation of mutual aid spaces and direct giving, entrepreneurship, and leadership development by and for LGBTQ+ communities, especially LGBTQ+ leaders of color
- Social, cultural, educational, or recreational activities that strengthen support networks and a sense of belonging and/or amplify the voices and experiences of LGBTQ+ communities, especially LGBTQ+ communities of color and LGBTQ+ youth
- Research and data collection around key issues impacting LGBTQ+ communities, especially communities of color and LGBTQ+ youth
- Community organizing and/or advocacy efforts for access to any of the areas listed above

While consideration will be given to all applications, in alignment with the Community Foundation’s values and North Star, priority will be given to proposals that:

- Come from organizations or community groups led by people of color (defined as a majority in three or more of the following categories: founder, executive director, internal leadership team, staff, volunteers and board of directors)
- Center LGBTQ+ communities, especially LGBTQ+ communities of color and LGBTQ+ youth, in the co-creation and co-implementation of proposed programming or services



- Demonstrate specific efforts to serve LGBTQ+ communities of color and/or LGBTQ+ youth (communities that are [disproportionately impacted](#) by housing instability, unemployment, exposure to violence, and accessing physical and mental healthcare and social services)
- Include collaborative partnerships among multiple organizations or community groups

## ELIGIBILITY

Community organizations and groups, whether they are 501(c)(3)s or are willing to obtain a [fiscal sponsor](#) (also called a fiduciary, which is an organization with the legal structure to accept grant funds on your behalf), and government entities (including schools) may apply for grants for programs that benefit LGBTQ+ communities in Kent, Ottawa, and Allegan counties. If you need a fiscal sponsor and do not currently have one, reach out to us for support as soon as possible. This does not disqualify you from submitting a grant application. Eligible organizations do not discriminate against hiring staff or providing services based on race, gender, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, age, national origin, or disability. Applications from religious organizations for non-religious purposes will be considered.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

Grant applications must be submitted electronically using the [online portal](#) by **5:00 p.m. on Friday, July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2026**. Visit [GRFoundation.org/GrantPortalSupport](#) for an instruction manual and video tutorials. New applicants must create a new organization account. All applicants must review their organization profile, which requires a listing of board members, organization description, primary contact, as well as current and last year's annual budget amounts. Applications require a brief project description, project start and end dates, a project budget, demographic information for participants, staff, board, and volunteers, and responses to the questions below. Applications also require uploaded financial documentation. Examples of what you can provide include internal financial statements (balance sheet, cash flow statement, etc.), Form 990 or audited financial statements.

The application includes six questions (question numbers 2 - 7) requiring long-form responses, which can be answered in written or video format. We know word limits can add extra work, and that some guidance helps both applicants and our volunteer reviewers. Word counts are suggestions only; we simply encourage you to explain your work as clearly and concisely as possible. Applicants who choose to respond to long-form questions in a single video response must state each question before providing a response, suggested not to exceed more than 12-15 minutes in length, and submit a shareable link with transcription through Google Drive or YouTube.

## NEED HELP?

We want to ensure that you feel supported in the process of applying for grant funding at Grand Rapids Community Foundation. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us!

- For questions related to the content of your proposal, eligibility requirements, or identifying a fiscal sponsor, contact Chantal Pasag, program officer, at 616.284.4924 or [CPasag@GRFoundation.org](mailto:CPasag@GRFoundation.org)
- For technical assistance with the online application, call Keri Jaynes, grants manager, at 616.284.4911 or email [KJaynes@GRFoundation.org](mailto:KJaynes@GRFoundation.org).



- For more information about Grand Rapids Community Foundation and Our LGBTQ Fund, please visit [GRFoundation.org/OurLGBTQFund](http://GRFoundation.org/OurLGBTQFund).

## APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Please answer the questions to the best of your ability and as it applies. If you find that a question doesn't apply to your organization and/or project, briefly state why. Our goal is to learn about your organization, your project, project goals, and the impact it will have on our LGBTQ+ communities as it aligns with our focus areas. If you have questions about the application process, you can [register for the application information session](http://GRFoundation.org/LGBTQFund), which is also available at [GRFoundation.org/LGBTQFund](http://GRFoundation.org/LGBTQFund).

- 1)** Grand Rapids Community Foundation is committed to creating a community that is working to eliminate inequities and is anti-racist. We seek partners who share in this commitment and demonstrate practices that disrupt the conditions that hold racism in place.
  - a)** Is anyone excluded from services, employment, or volunteer participation based on their age, ability, economic circumstance, education, race, criminal record, ethnicity, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, religion, spiritual beliefs, marital status, national origin, or veteran status? **(Yes or No)**
    - i)** If "Yes," please describe the exclusions and reasons behind them.
  - b)** Does your organization have an equity statement that communicates your pursuit of anti-racist practices and aspirations toward equity? **(Yes or No)**
  - c)** Identify the categories in which people of color are a majority at your organization: founder(s), executive director, leadership team, board of directors, volunteers, staff **(check boxes)**  
Is your organization led by people of color (defined as having people of color as a majority in three or more of the categories above)? **(Yes or No)**
  - d)** While discrimination based on sexual orientation is illegal in the state of Michigan, there are still many folks who don't feel safe disclosing this information in the workplace. However, we value work led by those most impacted, and for this fund that includes LGBTQ+ communities. To the best of your ability, please identify the categories in which LGBTQ+ people are a majority: founder, executive director, leadership team, board of directors, volunteers, staff, and communities served. **(check boxes)**
- 2)** Describe the proposed project or program, including which social determinate(s) of health it will address, specific LGBTQ+ communities served, and timeline. *(approximately 300 words)*
- 3)** How do you define success for this proposal, and what signals will confirm you have accomplished your goals? *(approximately 200 words)*
- 4)** How do you incorporate the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion into the operations of your organization or community group? For example, do you include the perspectives of the communities you serve in program design and delivery, or do you have specific equity policies or hiring practices that inform



your work? Can you give examples of how your organization demonstrates these equitable practices internally? (*approximately 300 words*)

- 5) How have LGBTQ+ community members (especially LGBTQ+ communities of color) been engaged in creating the proposed project or program, and what leadership role will they play throughout implementation and evaluation? (*approximately 200 words*)
- 6) We believe that collaboration strengthens work through the diversity of thought, creativity, and relationship-building it facilitates. Please describe the roles of your organizational partners. If you do not currently collaborate with other groups or organizations, please share why this approach does not advance your mission. (*approximately 150 words*)
- 7) How does this proposal disrupt the root causes or underlying conditions (policies, practices, institutions, culture, systems and power) that hold inequitable outcomes for LGBTQ+ communities in place? If it does not do so, in what other ways does your organization or community group address this? (*approximately 200 words*)
- 8) Is there any other information or feedback you would like to share with us? (*approximately 150 words*)

### Demographics

- Provide gender, race and ethnicity data for clients, staff, board and volunteers.

### Budget

- Explain how Our LGBTQ Funds will be used.
- Applicants must complete the budget template provided. If available, applicants may also upload a supplemental budget document to provide additional detail for review.

## REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

We seek to minimize extractive reporting burdens on our grant partners. You may complete a traditional written check-in or participate in a 30-minute meeting with a program officer and/or LGBTQ Fund committee members within two months of the end of your grant period. Both options require submission of a final budget in our online portal. Written and meeting check-ins include sharing the successes and lessons learned throughout the grant period (recognizing that conditions may be different than when you applied and that your definition of success may have shifted) and feedback about the grant process as a whole. You will also be invited to share photos, videos, or other visual materials if they are available as a way for us to celebrate and amplify your critical community work. To build transparency and community accountability, summaries of your work will be made available throughout our ongoing engagement processes.