



YOUTH FUND GRANT APPLICATION GUIDELINES

GRAND RAPIDS COMMUNITY FOUNDATION'S YOUTH FUND

By connecting people, their passions, and our region's resources, Grand Rapids Community Foundation and our partners work toward an inclusive and equitable West Michigan. Over the last century, the Community Foundation has used the tools of philanthropy to respond to community needs. The Youth Fund was established in 1994 with a \$1 million grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. A permanently standing Youth Grant Committee was established in 1998 to advise on the fund. Today, this committee is comprised of 21 young people from throughout the greater Grand Rapids area, who are responsible for distributing up to \$50,000 in grants each year. Our YGC volunteers remain dedicated and passionate about the work they do and welcome youth-centering organizations to apply for projects that align with the current priority areas. To learn more about the Youth Fund and the organizations previously supported, visit GRFoundation.org/YGC.

PRIORITY AREAS

A total of up to \$65,000 is available to assist with enhancing or implementing youth-serving programs in Kent County and is usually distributed among multiple organizations. Typically, grant awards range from \$1,000 to \$5,500, with an average award amount of \$3,000.

In the Fall of 2024, YGC members conducted a needs assessment of students in Kent County. Data from this survey, in conjunction with [Grand Rapids Community Foundation's values and North Star](#), addressing our commitment to racial, social and economic justice, informed a request for proposals that address the following:

- Pressure to succeed academically or getting into college
- Youth access to mental health services and resources
- Paying for college
- Body image issues (including low self-esteem, and eating disorders)
- Youth sense of not fitting in or feeling that they don't belong
- Youth conflict with parents or teachers

Survey respondents indicated that the following types of programming and activities may be useful in addressing these issues. **This should not be seen as an exhaustive list** but rather as a springboard for ideation and creative responses and solutions:

- Life skills training (e.g. managing time, financial literacy including making budgets, doing taxes, saving and investing money, building healthy habits, cooking, and other practical skills)
- College prep- SAT/ACT classes, financial aid workshops, college visits
- Employment skills training, job placements, and internships
- Art, writing, or music programs or activities
- Competitive sports (*not school-based*)
- More mental health counselors, workshops, and/or other mental health resources
- Homework help and tutoring

Priority will be given to proposals that:

- Come from organizations led by people of color (defined as a majority in three or more of the following categories: founder(s), executive director, internal leadership team, board of directors, volunteers, and staff)
- Serve youth of color, and build leadership capacity in youth, allowing them to co-create and co-implement programming focused on the issues listed above

ELIGIBILITY

501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, government entities (including schools), or community groups with [fiduciaries](#) may apply for grants for programs that benefit youth in the greater Grand Rapids area. The YGC values projects that promote inclusiveness and do not discriminate in 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

Your grant application must be completed online through our [grant portal](#). All applicants need to create a new **organization account** and 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, racial and gender demographic information for clients, staff, board, and volunteers, and a total number for each group. 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.

Grant applications must be submitted electronically using the online portal by **5:00 p.m. on Friday, January 16th, 2026**. Youth Grant Committee volunteers may request a brief evening meeting with a representative of your organization to learn more about your work and proposal during the weeks of February 9 or 16. Decisions will be announced by the end of April. Grand Rapids Community Foundation processes grant payments electronically. Partners who have not signed up to receive electronic payments will be required to do so before payment is processed.

Following decisions, all partners are required to complete a progress report within two months of the project end date provided in the application. Questions from the progress report will be shared with all grant partners following notification of a grant award.

Through our Youth Fund, high school student volunteers serving on the Youth Grant Committee have the unique opportunity to learn about philanthropy and experience grantmaking firsthand. We recognize this may create a more labor-intensive application process than you might typically expect from our Community Foundation. We appreciate our partners' willingness to support this experience for these student volunteers. We are happy to answer questions or offer support as needed.

NEED HELP?

- For questions related to the content of your proposal, eligibility requirements, or support identifying a fiscal sponsor, call Chantal Pasag at 616.284.4924, or email CPasag@GRFoundation.org.
- For technical assistance with the online application, call Keri Jaynes at 616.284.4911 or email KJaynes@GRFoundation.org.

YOUTH GRANT APPLICATION QUESTIONS

The grant application must be completed [online](#). You may choose to complete a traditional written application in narrative form, or **we highly encourage you to submit a video** of up to five minutes in length that addresses questions in the Youth Involvement, Youth Project Information, and Youth Evaluation sections below. Videos should not address the Budget or Demographic sections of the application. MP4 format is required (our grant portal cannot accept uploaded videos in any format other than MP4).

- **Youth Involvement**

- Youth grants seek to support projects that not only have youth participants but also build leadership capacity. Please describe how youth take a leadership role in the planning and implementation of this project (Please note that youth participating in programs and submitting pre and post-survey data is not sufficient.)
- Estimate the number of youth who will participate, including age information (based on similar or past projects completed).
- How will youth be identified, selected, or recruited for participation in the project? How does the project engage diverse youth audiences?
- Describe the role of adults in the project and their qualifications.

- **Youth Project Information**

- Describe your project as instructed below (note that youth are reviewing your applications- please be as clear and concise in your responses as possible)
 - Provide a SPECIFIC and CONCISE description of the proposed project or program.
 - Include a timeline and expected date of completion.
 - Specify how often the activity will take place, the location, the length of each session, and on how many occasions the activity takes place. (For example, an activity occurs twice each week for six hours per week, over a ten-week period.)
 - Briefly address how you will shift your program if health restrictions are needed.
 - Include a website link for additional information on your project, if available.
- What is the goal of your project? Your goal should be Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic, Time-bound, Inclusive, and Equitable.
- What priority area (from the list on page 1) does your project or program address?
- Please describe the inspiration behind your program and explain how its goals and activities directly align with the current priority areas. In your response, highlight the specific needs or challenges your program addresses, and discuss how your approach supports or advances the priorities identified by the committee.
- How does your project reflect the values and North Star of the Grand Rapids Community Foundation?
- Optional: Upload a document about the project or organization that you believe would be helpful for reviewers.

- **Youth Evaluation**

- What makes this project or program unique from others in the community?
- What specific and quantifiable measurement will you use to determine if your project was successful? If it is an existing program, what actions have you taken to improve it?

- **Project Budget**

- Which specific portion of the expenses listed in your project budget would be paid for with this grant?
- If this proposal is not fully funded, will you carry out the project? If so, where will you find funding?
- Provide the total budget amount for the organization's annual operating budget.
- Project Budget: List all expenses and income sources for your project, including the status of other grant sources, and specify EXACTLY how requested grant funds will be used (i.e.; 25 t-shirts @ \$10 each=\$250.00).

- **Demographics**

- Identify the categories in which people of color are a majority.
- Provide gender identity and racial/ethnic identity demographic information for the clients, staff, board, and volunteers.
- Provide the number of individuals in each of the following categories: paid full-time staff, paid part-time staff, volunteers, clients, and board of trustees.