



2025 GRANT MAKING GUIDELINES

REMINDERS TO NOTE IN 2025

- Due to the competitive nature of the Growing Communities priority area, the LOI has been streamlined as much as possible to reflect the increased applicants and limited available grant funds. Please note that while we typically receive 75–90 letters of inquiry, we expect to provide 7–8 grants through this priority area in 2025.
- The Fall Grant Cycle timeline which includes the Leadership Development and Animal Welfare priority area has shifted from August to October 2025.
- Due to limited resources, LCCF paused the Capacity Building priority area in 2024 to concentrate our resources to support our work and investment in our Growing Communities priority area. We hope to reintroduce the Capacity Building priority area sometime in the future.
- All applications will be made via our **Foundant** Grants Management System. LCCF has many **resources** to help you navigate the system.
- The maximum grant request for the 2025 Growing Communities priority area is \$30,000.

PROGRAM & COMMUNITY INVESTMENT STRATEGY

In 2022, LCCF implemented a new **Program & Community Investment Strategy** to guide the Foundation’s work and priorities over the coming years. The strategy is guided by the principles of **trust-based philanthropy**, **equity** and **addressing root causes**. Our staff is committed to ensuring that we are using these lenses in our programs, grantmaking, our organizational culture and in all that we do.

With this new strategy in place, we have identified three program pillars that will shape how we spend our time and resources going forward:

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| ECONOMIC JUSTICE | Within this pillar is our Small Business Growth Initiative , a focus on safe and affordable housing, workforce development and investments in innovative strategies to decrease our county’s economic disparities. |
| COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP | This pillar encompasses our Community Strength Funding Program and Leadership Development priority areas, and has an emphasis on supporting grassroots community-based organizations, community organizing and public policy initiatives. |
| RAPID COMMUNITY RESPONSE | Much of our grantmaking in our Growing Communities priority area (previously Basic Human Needs) falls under this pillar. (See details on page 3.) Additionally, this pillar encompasses our Crisis Relief Fund which will include an increased focus on violence prevention and intervention in Lake County. |

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR APPLICANTS?

As a community foundation, we remain committed to investing in organizations working to improve the lives of our Lake County neighbors. Much of what we have historically funded falls within this framework. In our grantmaking going forward, we will prioritize applications that align with one or more of the three pillars of **Economic Justice**, **Community Ownership** and **Rapid Community Response**.



Our priority areas of Growing Communities (formerly Basic Human Needs), Early Childhood Education, Leadership Development and Animal Welfare will remain the same. We will be more intentional about selecting grassroots community-based organizations for funding. We define grassroots organizations as those situated within the community, led and guided by individuals from that community who are addressing issues directly impacting them. We believe that grassroots organizations have the lived experience and community knowledge necessary to make a meaningful impact in their neighborhoods alongside their neighbors.

The chart below indicates where our funding opportunities fall within these pillars:

| ECONOMIC JUSTICE | COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP | RAPID COMMUNITY RESPONSE |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing Communities priority area (ex: safe & affordable housing, workforce development, projects that decrease economic disparities, etc.) • Early Childhood Education priority area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing Communities priority area (community organizing, public policy initiatives, initiatives that create knowledge, resources and enthusiasm for a community issue, or ideas that help community reimagine) • <u>Community Strength Funding Initiative</u> • <u>Leadership Development</u> priority area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing Communities priority area (food, emergency shelter, healthcare, mental health, youth support, immigrant support, legal services, etc.) • Lake County <u>Crisis Relief</u> grants |

GRANT CYCLES, PRIORITIES AND TIMELINES

The Foundation has two competitive grant cycles:

- **SPRING GRANT CYCLE: Growing Communities and Early Childhood Education priority areas**
Growing Communities opens in January 2025 and includes a letter of inquiry process. In 2024, the Early Childhood Education priority area was moved to the spring cycle and will remain so moving forward.
- **FALL GRANT CYCLE: Leadership Development and Animal Welfare priority areas**
Opens in October 2025 and does not include a letter of inquiry.

SPRING GRANT CYCLE

Growing Communities Priority Area

PROPOSALS CONSIDERED: \$5,000 - \$30,000

AVAILABLE FUNDS: APPROXIMATELY \$200,000 (LIKELY 7-8 GRANTS)

LCCF supports organizations that work collaboratively to address the needs of our residents. As a funder, we desire to have impact beyond just the basic necessities and to create a place where our neighbors can not only survive, but where they can thrive. While we will certainly invest in basic needs such as food and shelter, we also hope to see organizations tackling community issues in ways that will ultimately address root causes and result in systemic change.

The Foundation accepts both project-based and general operating requests through this priority area. We believe that to create a thriving Lake County, everyone needs equitable access to:

- Affordable, nutritious food
- Affordable, comprehensive health care (including mental health)
- Safe and affordable housing
- Education and workforce opportunities
- Immigration and legal support services



The Foundation's goal is to invest in work that allows people who are disproportionately affected by lack of access to obtain support through wraparound services, a continuum of care, or close collaborations with other providers. Grants will be prioritized for work that:

- Is led by grassroots, community-based organizations as defined on page 2
- Addresses barriers to access of services and benefits for our neighbors in Lake County
- Addresses otherwise unmet basic needs as the only service provider in the area

Early Childhood Education Priority Area

PROPOSALS CONSIDERED: \$5,000 - \$10,000

AVAILABLE FUNDS: APPROXIMATELY \$20,000 (LIKELY 2 GRANTS)

Organizations that receive funding in the Spring Cycle are eligible to receive funding in the Leadership Development priority area in the Fall Grant Cycle. This priority area does not require a letter of inquiry process.

Organizations that promote early childhood education (prenatal–age 5) will be invited to apply for grants made through the Lake County Early Childhood Education Fund. This restricted fund was established in 2010 with the purpose of promoting early childhood education across Lake County, Illinois.

Grant funds are prioritized for work that:

- Supports new and innovative approaches to provide early childhood education
- Addresses barriers to access of early childhood education opportunities for Lake County residents
- Addresses otherwise unmet needs as the only service provider in the area

2025 SPRING GRANT CYCLE PROCESS AND TIMELINE

The Growing Communities priority area requires a letter of inquiry. This year's LOI has been shortened and requires organizations to briefly summarize their funding request. The LOI will be available on the LCCF [grant portal](#) on **January 13, 2025** and will be due by **January 31, 2025**. LCCF will then review submitted LOIs and invite select organizations to submit full proposals. The application for The Early Childhood priority area will open **January 13, 2025** and is due by **February 28, 2025**. The full application for The Growing Communities priority area will be due by **March 28, 2025**.

2025 SPRING GRANT CYCLE TIMELINE

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| January 13, 2025 | Spring Cycle opens; letter of inquiry for Growing Communities priority area and application for Early Childhood Education available on grant portal |
| January 31, 2025 | Growing Communities letter of inquiry due by 5 p.m. via portal |
| February 28, 2025 | Application for Early Childhood Education due by 5 p.m. via portal |
| March 3, 2025 | Organizations invited to submit full Growing Communities proposal notified |
| March 28, 2025 | Full applications for Growing Communities due by 5 p.m. via portal |
| April – mid-May 2025 | Foundation's due diligence process |
| May 14, 2025 | Grant awards determined by LCCF Board of Directors |
| May 16, 2025 | Grant recipients notified |
| June 2025 | Grant awards disbursed |
| December 5, 2025 | Mid-year grant report due by 5 p.m. via portal |
| July 17, 2026 | Final grant report due by 5 p.m. via portal |

FALL GRANT CYCLE

Leadership Development

PROPOSALS CONSIDERED: \$1,000 - \$5,000

AVAILABLE FUNDS: APPROXIMATELY \$15,000 (LIKELY 3-4 GRANTS)

The Foundation has identified a critical need to invest in high quality, accessible and relevant **leadership development** opportunities to help support Lake County's nonprofit sector. As high capacity nonprofit leaders prepare for and enter retirement, there is an urgent need to cultivate a pipeline of talent that has the capacity and confidence to step in and lead. The Foundation is committed to investing in the future of our county's nonprofits and their leaders through this priority area.

Grant funds are prioritized for work that:

- Provides leadership development opportunities that help build a pipeline of competent, emerging leaders for the county's nonprofit sector
- Increases access for leaders of color and other underrepresented groups to quality programming
- Builds the overall capacity of the county's nonprofit sector

[Read more](#) about eligible leadership development projects.

Please note that this priority area is intended to support cohorts and coalitions that impact Lake County's greater nonprofit sector. Contact Quetzali Gómez at Quetzali@lakecountycf.org with questions.

Animal Welfare

PROPOSALS CONSIDERED: \$1,000 - \$5,000

AVAILABLE FUNDS: APPROXIMATELY \$19,000 (LIKELY 4 GRANTS)

Organizations that attend to the needs of animals in Lake County are invited to apply for grants made through the Lake County Humane Society Fund. 16% of this restricted fund's spending allocation is designated for this purpose annually.

Grant funds are prioritized for work that:

- Cultivates new and innovative approaches to support animal welfare in Lake County
- Addresses otherwise unmet needs as the only service provider in the area

2025 FALL GRANT CYCLE PROCESS AND TIMELINE

The Fall Grant Cycle priority areas **do not** require a letter of inquiry.

2025 FALL GRANT CYCLE TIMELINE

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| October 6, 2025 | Application open in grant portal |
| October 31, 2025 | Applications due by 5 p.m. via portal |
| Early November, 2025 | Foundation's due diligence process |
| November 19, 2025 | Grant awards determined by LCCF board of directors |
| November 21, 2025 | Grant recipients notified |
| December 2025 | Grant awards disbursed |
| December 11, 2026 | Final report due by 5 p.m. via portal |

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

All grant requests must be submitted via LCCF's [Foundant grant portal](#) for review by Foundation staff, the LCCF Grants and Community Outreach Committee and the Board of Directors.

Please note that in 2022, LCCF added evaluation criteria designed to gauge whether the applicant organization is reflective of the community it serves and to encourage and provide support for applicants to engage on an institutional equity journey.

Applications will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- Request aligns with the Foundation's [mission and values](#) and with its strategic pillars of [Economic Justice](#), [Community Ownership](#) and [Rapid Community Response](#).
- Request responds to a high priority need based on current Lake County specific data
- The applicant's staff, leadership and board are reflective of the community it serves. If not, the organization is taking meaningful steps to prioritize and support diversity and equity.
- Applicants either have their own diversity statement or will adopt the Foundation's [Diversity Statement](#) if there is not one in place.
- Strong, documented partnerships currently in place
- Request has potential to leverage other resources or donor support
- High probability of affecting significant change over the next 3 years
- Cost-effective delivery of direct services or advocacy
- Likelihood of success and a track record of provider(s)/partners in achieving outcomes
- Strong methods for tracking outcomes

Like the nonprofits we serve, LCCF is on a journey toward becoming a more equitable institution. We welcome the opportunity to join in conversation with you and offer support in your organization's efforts to move this critical work forward. Please read more about how LCCF can support your organization in racial equity work [here](#).

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

The Foundation considers applications from organizations that demonstrate success and sustainability with program goals and outcomes.

Eligible organizations are:

- Nonprofit agencies with evidence of tax exempt status under [Section 501 \(c\)\(3\) of the Internal Revenue Code](#) or those using a 501 (c)(3) fiscal agent
- Eligible applicants MUST be in good standing with the IRS
- Located within and/or primarily serving residents of Lake County, except for regional, statewide or national projects or research that may benefit a substantial portion of Lake County residents
- Non-discriminatory in the hiring of staff or in providing services on the basis of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, national origin or ability

FUNDING LIMITATIONS

Grants **will not** be made for the following:

- Scholarships
- Individuals
- Sectarian purposes (programs that promote or require a religious doctrine)
- Support of single-disease oriented research, treatment or care
- The sole purpose of writing, publishing, producing or distributing audio, visual or printed material
- The sole purpose of conducting conferences, festivals, exhibitions or meetings
- Reducing operating deficits or liquidating existing debt
- Capital improvements/campaigns
- Endowment campaigns
- Political campaigns
- Sponsorship of events/fundraisers
- Memberships/dues

ABOUT THE LAKE COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

The Lake County Community Foundation asserts that the quality of life of Lake County can be improved through an earnest effort to bring community members, organizations, government, businesses, corporations and civic leaders together to establish a common vision, adopt a shared set of measurable goals and pursue evidence-based activities that reinforce those goals as a means of addressing the most pressing needs of our community.

By being proactive in identifying opportunities that advance its mission, the Foundation focuses on making a measurable impact on high priority issues with its available funding and additional resources. The Foundation envisions a countywide health and human services delivery system that is robust and thriving with a network of providers capable of achieving the greatest impact on the growing and changing needs of our Lake County neighbors. With an emphasis on partnership and collaboration, while using innovation and organizational strength as its compass, the system will foster transformational change in communities across Lake County.

MISSION

The mission of The Lake County Community Foundation is to improve the quality of life of residents of the county by providing civic leadership, promoting collective philanthropy and partnering with our grant recipients. In pursuit of this mission, we act as a:

- **CATALYST**—by mobilizing community leadership to find and fund collaborative, innovative approaches to address Lake County’s most pressing issues.
- **CONNECTOR**—by maintaining in-depth knowledge of the nonprofit sector, sharing it with others and building partnerships that strengthen our community.
- **GRANT MAKER**—by leveraging the power of collective philanthropy to pool charitable dollars to achieve the greatest possible impact.
- **STEWARD**—by acting as a trusted guide of donor resources and partnering with community-minded individuals, families and organizations to ensure a legacy for charitable solutions.

VALUES

The Lake County Community Foundation, honoring a century old tradition of community philanthropy, awards grants to nonprofit organizations that are addressing the most pressing needs of residents in our county. As a community leader and steward of donor resources, the Foundation believes that large scale social change requires broad, cross-sector coordination versus isolated intervention. Recognizing that successful grant making is rooted in clearly articulated values, the Foundation envisions a community that models:

- Community & Connectedness
- Civic Leadership
- Equity
- Integrity
- Innovation
- Opportunity

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

The Foundation believes that the diversity of our community is a fundamental strength of our region. Our mission to improve the quality of life for the most vulnerable residents of Lake County is best fulfilled when we embrace diversity as a value and a practice. We define diversity to include (but not limited to) age, disability status, economic circumstance, ethnicity, gender, race, religion and sexual orientation.

The Lake County Community Foundation requires all applicants to either have an adopted diversity statement or to adopt the Foundation's [Diversity Statement](#) if there is not one in place. Additionally, the Foundation asks that applicants provide demographic data on board and staff as well as clients/beneficiaries of the projects. The Foundation believes that the board and staff composition of grant recipients should reflect the diversity and demographics of the community being served and include diversity among its leadership at the board and senior staff levels to ensure variation of perspective across all decision-making levels. For this reason, the Foundation does take into consideration the demographic make-up of the board, staff and clients of a grant applicant as an important evaluation criterion.

**Questions about the Foundation's grant making or application process
may be directed to Quetzali at Quetzali@lakecountycf.org.**