

MINNESOTA COMMUNITY IDEAS PROGRAM

GRANT GUIDELINES

I**NNOVATION:** Communities advance creative solutions to their challenges and opportunities.

D**EVELOPMENT:** Communities develop, test and spread ideas.

E**QUITY:** Communities are equipped and connected to benefit from change.

A**GENCY:** Communities inform and form change.

S**OLUTIONS:** Communities realize significant, long-lasting change.

INTRODUCTION

The Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation is pleased to announce the second year of the Minnesota Community IDEAS Program. As the Minnesota community grant partner of the Bush Foundation, we will grant \$1.6 million each year to eligible organizations located in and serving Minnesota and the 11 Native Nations within the same geography. The second year of the program will launch in January 2026, when organizations can express their interest in applying through a brief online interest form.

The **Minnesota Community IDEAS Program** seeks to design, test and spread ideas that make our communities better for everyone and inspire, equip and connect people through meaningful, community-led change.

The Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation believes organizations that live out their vision and values have the potential to have transformational impact within their communities. Transformational impact is long-lasting, meaningful change that can happen through ideas of all sizes, within communities of all sizes, and through organizations of all sizes.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY OVERVIEW

The Minnesota Community IDEAS Program will grant \$1.6 million each year, beginning 2025 through 2027. Grants will be awarded on an annual basis, one round per year.

In 2026, nine selected organizations will each receive a total award of \$125,000.

Funding is unrestricted and can be used for any charitable purposes that align with the vision and purpose of the Minnesota Community IDEAS Program, including operating costs, program-related expenses, capital expenditures or whatever else would best support the organization's ongoing good work.

To ensure broad and equitable distribution across the entire state of Minnesota and the 11 Native Nations within the same geography, the Foundation will distribute grants into three target communities.

TARGET COMMUNITIES

Three awards will be distributed to each of the following target communities:

1. **Greater Minnesota** – Organizations located outside the 7-County Metro Area.
2. **Twin Cities Metro Area** – Organizations located within the seven counties of Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott and Washington.
3. **Native-led organizations that serve Native communities** within Minnesota and the 11 Native Nations within the same geography.
 - Organizations must have at least 51% of the Board of Directors and Senior Leadership identifying as Native to be considered Native-led.

No formal report will be required for this grant program. Instead, the Foundation will meet annually with each grantee for structured time for reflection and insights to build a supportive relationship, prioritize learning and develop deeper partnerships with funded organizations across the state.

ELIGIBILITY & SELECTION CRITERIA

Wondering if your work fits with the Minnesota Community IDEAS Program? If you have specific questions about eligibility or selection criteria, contact the Community IDEAS program team at MNCommunityIDEAS@spmcf.org or [651.325.4202](tel:651.325.4202).

ELIGIBILITY

Grants will be awarded to Minnesota nonprofit organizations meeting the following criteria:

- Organizations must be located in Minnesota. If awarded, all grant funds must be used for charitable purposes to benefit communities in Minnesota.
- Organizations that are 501(c)(3) public charities or government entities (including schools and tribal governments) are eligible to apply.
- The Foundation accepts applications from organizations or programs that are fiscally sponsored. Fiscal sponsors must be 501(c)(3) public charities or government entities (including schools and tribal governments).
 - If an organization is selected and invited to apply, the Foundation will learn more about its fiscal sponsor and collect a fiscal sponsorship agreement.
 - If the applicant is selected as a grant recipient, their fiscal sponsor will serve as the grantee and receive the funds.
- Groups of organizations (such as coalitions or collaboratives) are eligible to apply, but only one organization may apply and receive the award on behalf of the group.
- Organizations that received Minnesota Community IDEAS awards in the past are not eligible to apply.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Community Selection Committees will consider the following questions in their criteria for grant review and selection. The Foundation understands that each organization's work in their community looks different. Each idea might not prioritize all these values to the same extent, but the strongest applications will speak to how the proposed work might address each of these criteria.

1. **Innovation** - Does the proposed work advance a bold and creative solution for the challenges and issues affecting the community? Does the proposed idea use creative approaches, technologies, collaborations, and/or methods to drive sustainable change and solve problems more effectively?

2. **Development** - Does the proposed work have a well-defined strategy to develop and test these bold ideas? Does it have a clear, actionable plan to solve problems and create opportunities?
3. **Equity** - Does the proposed work support building an equitable future for communities and the individuals in those communities who have been historically underserved (Black, Native, Asian, Latino, new Americans, immigrants, refugees, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ communities, veterans, rural communities, low-income communities, and others)?
4. **Agency** - Does the proposed work build agency and identify comprehensive approaches to listen, engage and involve the community to ensure the people served inform, form and benefit from the organization's impact?
 - **Benefits** - The community served realizes significant impact and change for the issues and challenges they identify as most critical to them.
 - **Informs** - Work should be shaped by input from the community itself. This means the organization listens to the experiences, needs, and feedback from the community it serves to align its goals and initiatives with the actual needs and priorities of the community.
 - **Forms** - Beyond being informed by the community, the community has an active role in shaping the work. The community is directly involved in designing and implementing programs and solutions, and the organization's work reflects the values, culture, and strengths of the community.
5. **Solutions** - Does the proposed work have the potential for significant and long-lasting change? Does it address the root causes of significant community issues and systemic challenges? Would it inspire others in the region and serve as a model for future success?

APPLICATION PROCESS

To reduce the time and capacity required by an applicant to participate in this grant program, the Foundation has designed a two-step application process.

STEP 1: INTEREST FORM & RANDOM SELECTION

Organizations interested in applying will complete a brief online interest form to provide details of the organization, confirm eligibility and provide a brief summary of the proposed idea.

Organizations will also identify which of the target communities they are applying under. Each applicant may only apply within one target community. If an organization is in multiple locations, they should choose the target community that most closely reflects the community or impact associated with the proposed idea.

1. Greater Minnesota
2. Twin Cities Metro Area
3. Native-led organizations that serve Native communities

Only one interest form may be submitted for each eligible organization.

[Download a PDF of the Interest Form](#)

SELECTION PROCESS - STEP 1

For each of the target communities, the Foundation will randomly select 20 eligible organizations to proceed to the application phase in step 2. Refer to the selection process section for more details.

STEP 2: APPLICATION & COMMUNITY SELECTION

Organizations selected will receive an invitation to complete an application through the Foundation's online grant portal. Only these selected organizations will be eligible to complete an application.

In this step, the Foundation will actively support organizations in preparing their application as follows:

- Organizations will be offered an opportunity to meet with Minnesota Community IDEAS program staff to help navigate the application process and to support the organization in preparing a successful application.
- Organizations completing an application will receive a \$750 grant and will have an opportunity to receive feedback if not selected.

[Download a PDF of the Application](#)

SELECTION PROCESS – STEP 2

Applications will be reviewed by a Community Selection Committee to determine the three awarded organizations from each target community. Refer to the selection process section for more details.

SELECTION PROCESS

STEP 1 – RANDOM SELECTION

All eligible organizations that complete an interest form will be entered into a randomized selection process to identify 20 organizations within each of the target communities.

The Advisory Committee designed this process with the intention to:

- Remove merit-based bias from initial selection and provide equal access to this opportunity for organizations of all sizes, capacities and resources
- Reduce the capacity organizations need to submit detailed merit-based applications
- Create opportunity for the Foundation to work more closely with selected organizations to develop the best application possible
- Compensate all organizations submitting applications within the program's budget

STEP 2 – COMMUNITY SELECTION

The Foundation will convene a separate Community Selection Committee for each target community. Each Selection Committee will review applications and make final decisions on the organizations awarded funding from each target community. Selection Committee members will include a diverse group of community members from each target community. Each committee will receive staff support throughout the process.

TIMELINE

Interest form submissions will be accepted from January 5 through January 28, 2026. All Interest forms must be submitted by 1 p.m. on January 28, 2026.

Eligible organizations who complete an interest form will be entered into a random selection process to determine organizations invited to complete a full application.

In February, selected organizations will receive an email invitation with instructions on how to submit an application through the online portal.

Organizations will be offered an opportunity to meet with Minnesota Community IDEAS program staff to help navigate the application process and to support the organization in preparing a successful application.

The step 2 application deadline will be 1 p.m. on April 30, 2026.

Applications will be reviewed by a Community Selection Committee in May 2026, and grant recipients will be selected and awarded in July 2026.

Contact the Foundation with questions by email at MNCommunityIDEAS@spmcf.org or [651.325.4202](tel:651.325.4202).