2026 Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo Competitive Process

Considering a Community Foundation Strategic Plan midterm update, the Community Foundation has revised its primary Competitive Process for 2026. Letters of intent have been eliminated. Instead, requests this year will be by full application only.

Please note, the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo has only one annual Competitive Process grant cycle.

Deadlines:
- **Application available online February 6, 2026**
- **Applications will be accepted until March 6, 2026 at 4 PM. No exceptions.**
- Grant outcome notification will be sent to applicants in late June 2026

To submit an application for a Competitive Process grant, please go [HERE](#) to access the Foundant Grant Lifecycle Manager

Applications must address one of the Solutions listed under the Community Foundation's four Community Goals. For 2026, applicants can submit for unrestricted support for programming.

I.   Achieve racial/ethnic equity. Requests must address the following Solution:
   Solution
   1.   Promote civic engagement and leadership

II.   Promote economic mobility through educational achievement, workforce readiness and access to family sustaining jobs for residents living in low-income households. Requests must address one of the following Solutions:
   Solutions
   1.   Improve the school readiness of children (ages 5 and under), academic achievement and postsecondary completion of students living in low-income households.
   2.   Promote civic engagement and leadership

III.   Steward significant environmental resources in the context of climate resilience.
For the purposes of this application, climate resilience is defined as: The ability to prepare for, recover from, and adapt to climate impacts. Resilience efforts must be executed at the asset, neighborhood, or individual level. Requests must address one of the following Solutions:
   Solutions
   1.   Protect and restore the region's waterways
   2.   Strengthen environmental organizations and collaboratives to support climate resilience and sustainability with a preference for addressing the needs of vulnerable communities and climate education
   3.   Promote civic engagement and leadership

IV.   Promote regional vibrancy through architecture, arts, and culture. Requests must address one of the following Solutions:
   Solutions
   1.   Promote equitable access to long-term arts instruction for children and youth living in low-income communities
   2.   Promote civic engagement and leadership

3. Promote cultural tourism by restoring and leveraging significant historic buildings and architectural landmarks. (Defining historic as official recognition by State/National Register of Historic Places or local preservation ordinance.)

NOTE: Special funding available to support the following:
- Programs that serve the visual, speech or hearing impaired (~$10,000)
  - *Preference for this special funding will be given to applications that align with one of the Solutions listed under four Community Goals.*

With any of the above civic engagement and leadership Solutions, the Community Foundation is looking at the issue of civic health which is defined as: *Developing strong connections between residents, robust relationships between people and public institutions, and positive attachments to the places where they live.* **Civic engagement and leadership requests must directly and clearly connect to the Community Goal.**

Eligibility
- Grants are awarded only to organizations that have current Section 501(c)(3) status as determined by the Internal Revenue Service.
- Applicants must be located in or serving one of the eight counties of Western New York: Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Niagara, Orleans, and Wyoming.

Other Matters
- Submitted applications will receive an emailed acknowledgement sent to the account used to log into the system. This is your proof of submission.
- Any one organization may submit up to two applications maximum. However, each organization can only receive one grant through this process yearly and, should funding be awarded, the choice of what is funded is at the discretion of the Community Foundation.
- If a non-profit received a 2025 Community Foundation competitive grant from this process, they will not be eligible to apply to the 2026 cycle.
- The Foundation will offer the opportunity for multi-year support with consecutive year support contingent upon prior year outcomes.
  - Multi-year grants will only be offered to those organizations with a past grant history with the Community Foundation and based on the request.
  - Please contact Director, Community Impact Darren Penoyer to discuss multi-year requests *before* applying.
- The Foundation expects that all grants be utilized within one year of receipt of funds, except for multi-year awards.
- The Foundation is receptive to requests that address advocacy, research and policy analysis aligned with the four Community Goals.
- The Foundation reserves the right to pay grants in a single installment or in "draws" at its sole discretion.
- Applications may be shared with Foundation clients.
- The use of grant funds for purposes not pre-approved by the Foundation or not supported through required documentation will result in a request that those grant funds be returned to the Foundation.
- The Foundation will **not** consider competitive funding for:
  - Higher education scholarships (separate application, deadlines, and process)
  - Projects outside the eight Western New York counties (Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Niagara, Orleans and Wyoming)
  - Religious purposes. Funding cannot be used to support religious activities such as worship or proselytizing. Secular programs or services must be available to eligible participants without regard to religious belief or willingness to participate in religious activities.
  - Schools not registered with the New York State Education Department
  - Attendance at or sponsorship of fundraising events for organizations

- o Field trips, museum, cultural, and event admissions/tickets, and school assemblies unless they are part of a long-term program or curriculum
- o Annual events or festivals
- o Any partisan political activity. Funds from the foundation cannot be used to support or oppose a candidate for political office.
- o Projects and activities that have occurred. The Foundation will not, except in extraordinary cases, provide payment or reimbursement for expenses incurred prior to the funding decision being communicated to the applicant.

Funding amounts

- *The average grant through this process over the past decade is $18,000 TO $20,000. The maximum award is $50,000.*
  - o *While we appreciate optimism and understand that funding is difficult to obtain, please be realistic with your request given the average grant*

2026 Application Questions

NOTE: Applications must be submitted electronically online utilizing the Foundant Grant Lifecycle Manager. No paper or emailed copies will be accepted.   The following questions are provided for your reference when completing the application online. Character counts include spaces.

- Application questions will be aligned with the chosen Solution

ALL APPLICATIONS
- Project name (100 characters)
- Concise one-sentence summary of request (300 characters)
- Date grant required (numeric)
  - o *Your application will only be considered if this date is on or after July 1, 2026*
- What is your total operating budget for your most recently-completed fiscal year? (numeric)
  - o *The Community Foundation will also be reviewing your most recent IRS Form 990 online at the GuideStar website. Should there be none listed, we may request a copy of your most recent audit or financial review and its accompanying management letter.*
- What is your mission statement? (500 characters)
  - o *Ideally, this is your board-approved mission statement that is 1-sentence long.*
- Which community or communities does your organization serve? What would be lost to those communities if your organization no longer existed? (3,000 characters)
  - o *Frame your answer within the context of the community you serve. Only if appropriate, your answer may reference your organizational values of equity around accessibility, race and ethnicity, income levels, gender, etc. The strongest answers will include demographic data on the your community/ies served. If you do not track these demographics, please share the reason why, describe any barriers you experience in collecting this information, and tell us what assistance or guidance would help you do so.*
- How does feedback from your community you serve influence your organization? (2,000 characters)
- Which solution are you focusing on for this grant application? (radio buttons, choose one)
- **I: Achieve racial/ethnic equity.**
  - o I1: Promote civic engagement and leadership
- **II: Promote economic mobility through educational achievement, workforce readiness and access to family sustaining jobs for residents living in low-income households.**
  - o II1: Improve the school readiness of children (ages 5 and under), academic achievement and postsecondary completion of students living in low-income households.
  - o II2: Promote civic engagement and leadership (in education only)

III: Steward significant environmental resources in the context of climate resilience.

- *For the purposes of this application, climate resilience is defined as: The ability to prepare for, recover from, and adapt to climate impacts. Resilience efforts must be executed at the asset, neighborhood, or individual level.*
  - III1: Protect and restore the region's waterways
  - III2: Strengthen environmental organizations and collaboratives to support climate resilience and sustainability with a preference for addressing the needs of vulnerable communities and climate education
  - III3: Promote civic engagement and leadership
- **IV: Promote regional vibrancy through architecture, arts, and culture.**
  - IV1: Promote equitable access to long-term arts instruction for children and youth living in low-income communities
  - IV2: Promote civic engagement and leadership
  - IV3: Promote cultural tourism by restoring and leveraging significant historic buildings and architectural landmarks (Defining historic as official recognition by State/National Register of Historic Places or local preservation ordinance.)

QUESTIONS FOR SOLUTIONS I1 (RACIAL EQUITY), II2 (EDUCATION), AND IV2 (ARTS, CULTURE, AND ARCHITECTURE): PROMOTE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP
- How many people will be impacted by this initiative? (numeric)
  - *Number should be realistic and measurable.*
- Of those impacted by your work, how many do you define as vulnerable communities? (numeric)
- What's your definition of vulnerable communities? (1,000 characters)
- Provide a description of your work/initiative. (3,000 characters)
  - *If appropriate, you may want to include the following:*
    - *What makes your approach unique?*
    - *How will you engage people? What's the purpose of engaging people?*
    - *Are there other organizations doing similar work to your community? If yes, how do you complement that project/program?*
    - *What is the timeline of your request project/program?*
    - *If collaboration is a part of this request, provide those details here.*
- Who will lead this work? What are their qualifications? Why are they best suited to this work? (2,000 characters)
- How will you measure success? (2,000 characters)
  - *The strongest answers have 2 parts:*
    - *Clear, quantifiable metrics. Ex. attendance numbers, website traffic, retention rate, etc.*
    - *Qualitative metrics. Ex. testimonials from participants, open-ended survey results, etc.*
  - *Bulleted responses are welcome.*

QUESTIONS FOR SOLUTION II1: IMPROVE THE SCHOOL READINESS (AGES 5 AND UNDER), ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT, AND POSTSECONDARY COMPLETION OF STUDENTS LIVING IN LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS
The strongest applications typically have the following characteristics:
  - *Long-term - Programming that runs up to one year long*
  - *Persistent Engagement - People are engaged several days a week for sequential programming. These are not drop-in or optional services*
Please answer the questions below based on your programming ONLY.
- How many people do you intend to serve through your long-term educational programming? (numeric)
  - *We define long-term as programming that lasts at least multiple weeks. Please do not include numbers for drop-in or optional programming.*
- Of these people served, how many do you define as living in low-income communities? (numeric)
- How do you define low-income communities? (1,000 characters)
- Of these people served, how many demonstrate persistent attendance? (numeric)
  - *We define persistent attendance as people who are returning on a regular basis for programming.*
- What is the frequency and duration of your long-term educational programming? (500 characters)

- ○ *ex. 1 hour per day for 5 days a week for 9 months of the year*
- Provide a description of your long-term education programming. (2,000 characters)
  - ○ *If appropriate, you may want to include the following:*
    - ▪ *What makes your approach to long-term education unique?*
    - ▪ *Are there other organizations providing similar services to your community? If yes, how do you complement those similar services?*
    - ▪ *What is the timeline of your request project/program?*
    - ▪ *If collaboration is a part of this request, provide those details here.*
- Who will lead your long-term education programming? How are they best-suited to meet the needs of the people served? (2,000 characters)
- How will you know if your programming is successful? How will you measure success? (2,000 characters)
  - ○ *The strongest answers have 2 parts:*
    - ▪ *Clear, quantifiable metrics. Ex. attendance numbers, website traffic, retention rate, etc.*
    - ▪ *Qualitative metrics. Ex. testimonials from participants, open-ended survey results, etc.*
  - ○ *Bulleted responses are welcome.*

QUESTIONS FOR III1: PROTECT AND RESTORE THE REGION'S WATERWAYS; III2: STRENGTHEN ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND COLLABORATIVES TO SUPPORT CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY WITH A PREFERENCE FOR ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES AND CLIMATE EDUCATION; AND III3 PROMOTE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

- How many people will be impacted by this initiative? (numeric)
  - ○ *Number should be realistic and measurable.*
- Of those impacted by your work, how many do you define as vulnerable communities? (numeric)
- What's your definition of vulnerable communities? (1,000 characters)
- How does this address climate resilience per the Community Foundation's definition? (1,500 characters)
  - ○ *For the purposes of this application, climate resilience is defined as: The ability to prepare for, recover from, and adapt to climate impacts. Resilience efforts must be executed at the asset, neighborhood, or individual level.*
- Provide a description of your work/initiative. (2,000 characters)
  - ○ *If appropriate, you may want to include the following:*
    - ▪ *What makes your approach unique?*
    - ▪ *How will you engage people?*
    - ▪ *Are there other environmental organizations doing similar work to your community? If yes, how do you complement that project/program?*
    - ▪ *How does your work contribute to a strong environmental sector as a whole?*
    - ▪ *What is the timeline of your request project/program?*
    - ▪ *If collaboration is a part of this request, provide those details here.*
- Who will lead this work? What are their qualifications? Why are they best suited to this work? (2,000 characters)
- How will you measure success? (2,000 characters)
  - ○ *The strongest answers have 2 parts:*
    - ▪ *Clear, quantifiable metrics. Ex. improvement of engagement, measurable progress in environmental change, organizational capacity enhancement, website traffic, retention rate, etc.*
    - ▪ *Qualitative metrics. Ex. testimonials from participants, open-ended survey results, etc.*
  - ○ *Bulleted responses are welcome.*

QUESTIONS FOR SOLUTION IV1: PROMOTE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO LONG-TERM ARTS INSTRUCTION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH LIVING IN LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES

The strongest applications typically have the following characteristics:
- ○ *Long-term - Programming that runs the academic year (or longer)*

- o *Persistent Attendance - Youth are returning on a regular basis for sequential programming, these are not drop-in or optional classes.*

Please answer the questions below based on your long-term arts education programming ONLY.

- How many youth do you intend to serve through your long-term arts education programming? (numeric)
  - o *We define youth as age 18 or younger.*
  - o *We define long-term as programming that lasts at least multiple weeks. Please do not include numbers for drop-in or optional programming.*
- Of these youth served, how many do you define as living in low-income communities? (numeric)
- How do you define low-income communities? (1,000 characters)
- Of these youth served, how many demonstrate persistent attendance? (numeric)
  - o *We define persistent attendance as youth who are returning on a regular basis for programming.*
- What is the frequency and duration of your long-term arts education programming? (500 characters)
  - o *ex. 1 hour per day for 5 days a week for 9 months of the year*
- Provide a description of your long-term arts education programming. (2,000 characters)
  - o *If appropriate, you may want to include the following:*
    - ▪ *What makes your approach to long-term arts education unique?*
    - ▪ *Are there other organizations providing similar services to your community? If yes, how do you complement those similar services?*
    - ▪ *What is the timeline of your request project/program?*
    - ▪ *If collaboration is a part of this request, provide those details here.*
- Who will lead your long-term education programming? How are they best-suited to meet the needs of the youth served? (2,000 characters)
- How will you know if your programming is successful? How will you measure success? (2,000 characters)
  - o The strongest answers have 2 parts:
    - ▪ *Clear, quantifiable metrics. Ex. attendance numbers, website traffic, retention rate, etc.*
    - ▪ *Qualitative metrics. Ex. testimonials from participants, open-ended survey results, etc.*
  - o *Bulleted responses are welcome.*

QUESTIONS FOR SOLUTION IV3: PROMOTE CULTURAL TOURISM BY RESTORING AND LEVERAGING SIGNIFICANT HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND ARCHITECTURAL LANDMARKS

- Please provide the historic designation for your organization. Specify the level of designation - city, state, federal - and the year this designation was received. (500 characters)
  - o *You must have official historic designation in order to apply for this grant*
- How many visitors does your organization host annually? (numeric)
- Describe the significance of your historical building and/or architectural landmark. If this request is for a project, outline how this project will restore or leverage the structure/ landmark. How does the building or landmark promote cultural tourism in Western NY? (2,500 characters)
- How will you know if your programming is successful? How will you measure success? (2,500 characters)
  - o The strongest answers have 2 parts:
    - ▪ *Clear, quantifiable metrics. Ex. attendance numbers, website traffic, retention rate, etc.*
    - ▪ *Qualitative metrics. Ex. testimonials from participants, open-ended survey results, etc.*
  - o *Bulleted responses are welcome.*

ALL APPLICATIONS

- Total cost (numeric)
  - o *Provide the total cost of the project/program.*
- Amount requested (numeric)
  - o *The average grant through this process over the past decade is $18,000 TO $20,000. The maximum award is $50,000.*
  - o *While we appreciate optimism and understand that funding is difficult to obtain, please be realistic with your request given the average grant*

- What will you use the requested funds for? (5,000 characters)
  - *You may answer this question in the text field with bullets OR upload a budget.* (5MB upload) *Click here to download an example and optional template (download available on application)*
  - *Your answer should include the following:*
    - *Type of expense and cost*
    - *Revenue sources. If the organization is seeking or has received additional funding specific to this grant application, provide the source and amount awarded/pending. This is especially important if your Total Cost exceeds the Amount Request.*
    - *Allocation of this grant dollar request*
    - *Organizations are encouraged to include unrestricted, general operating dollars in the budget to build in your own flexibility.*
- How will this funding support your work? (2,500 characters)
  - *If you are applying for long-term education, your answer must be specific to your long-term education programming.*
- If the fund were only able to partially fund your request, can you proceed? Which parts of your request would you prioritize? (2,000 characters)
- Upload 1 (optional): You may upload up to 3 pages of materials that enhance the story of your organization and/or supplement the narrative you have already provided. The strongest uploads demonstrate support for your programming directly from your community served. (8MB upload)
  - *Guidelines:*
    - *Examples of meaningful content include photos, videos, testimonials from your community served, participant letters, survey results, media reviews, etc.*
    - *Evaluators will review up to 3 uploaded pages. Evaluators will review up to 3 minutes of video content. If you are uploading a longer video, please specify the 3 minutes you would like reviewed. If nothing is specified, evaluators will review the first 3 minutes. To stay within maximum file sizes, upload a PDF with a link to the video. This PDF counts towards your total of 3 pages.*
- Upload 2 (optional): If partnership is a significant aspect of your application, provide letter(s) of support from your partner(s). (7MB upload)
- Upload a board list with name, employer, and professional position (5MB upload)
- Do you certify that the Executive Director and a Board Officer have approved this grant request and that all information provided is accurate to the best of your knowledge? (radio buttons)
  - Yes
  - No