



2026 Competitive Grant Application General Information and Schedule

The Niagara Area Foundation (NAF) was founded by a group of philanthropically minded Niagara County community leaders in 2000. Since that time, the NAF has focused on supporting the needs of the area using the best available information and resident feedback.

By utilizing best practice methods, and in conjunction with an independent consultant, the NAF Council undertook an extensive strategic planning process during the past year in order to identify the evolving needs of Niagara County. In 2026, NAF will consider any submitted applications that have maximum positive impact on Niagara County and that align with one of the Council's two goals:

- **YOUTH ENRICHMENT:** To build stronger communities through youth enrichment, positive youth development, and equity and inclusion.
- **ENVIRONMENT:** To enhance education and build awareness about the importance of a healthy, vibrant, and safe ecosystem for Niagara County residents.

YOUTH ENRICHMENT

Preference Statement

Preference will be given to projects that are located within or serve urban and rural low-income communities in Niagara County.

Solutions

The NAF will define solutions to accept applications for funding as:

- Increasing children's learning opportunities with quality early childhood education, enhanced youth literacy programs, and treatment for obstacles to learning such as mental health and/or addiction challenges.
- Ensuring youth have opportunities to participate in enrichment programs, arts and cultural activities (preference for classical music, both symphonic and choral), and civic life, with an emphasis on increasing access to youth from unserved or underserved communities.

ENVIRONMENT

Preference Statement

Preference will be given to projects that are located within or serve low-income urban or rural communities in Niagara County.

Solutions

The NAF will define solutions to accept applications for funding as:

- Foster residents' education and appreciation of natural resources and promote environmentally sound practices.
- Creation and/or enhancement of public parks, green spaces and community gardens that build neighborhood connections. Preference will be given to the use of sustainable practices (e.g. native plantings, green practices, and rain gardens).
- **Applications MUST be submitted electronically online. No paper, email, or pdf applications will be accepted. Outcome reporting will also be online when closing the grant. For your convenience, on page 2 are the guidelines and an outline of the questions you will be required to address when completing your electronic application.**

- NAF is committed to making grants that will have the maximum positive impact on Niagara County in a competitive process.
- Youth and children are defined as 18 years old and under.
- All qualifying grant applications received by NAF will be evaluated based on the community need that will be served.
- The total amount available for disbursement in 2026 is approximately \$75,000
- Applications may be shared with Foundation clients.
- Grants are awarded only to organizations that have current Section 501(c)(3) status as determined by the Internal Revenue Service.
- NAF *will not* consider funding:
 - Higher education scholarships (separate application, deadlines, and process)
 - Religious purposes
 - Projects for residents of other counties. Funding must support Niagara County residents only
 - Schools not registered with the New York State Education Department
 - Attendance at or sponsorship of fundraising events for organizations
 - Annual events or festivals
 - Any partisan political activity. Funds from the NAF cannot be used to support or oppose a candidate for political office.
 - Projects and activities that have occurred. The NAF will not, except in extraordinary cases, provide payment or reimbursement for expenses incurred prior to the funding decision being communicated to the applicant.
- NAF requires all grants to be closed out within one year of receipt of funds.
- NAF reserves the right to conduct an independent evaluation of grant expenditures for up to four years. The grantee agrees to provide the information necessary to complete such an evaluation. Failure to submit requested information in a timely fashion may obligate the grantee to refund the grant.
- The use of grant funds for purposes not pre-approved by NAF or not supported through required documentation will result in a request that those grant funds be returned to NAF.
- The failure of an applicant to properly close out a grant in a timely manner will be a factor when considering new grants.
- The NAF is a supporter of the BoardStrong initiative, which assists public charities in achieving the highest standards of board leadership, governance and oversight. We recommend organizations utilize this service to improve their capacity and strengthen their boards by providing access to a pool of talent for board service and governance resources:
www.boardstrong.org
- The NAF embraces the benefits of diversity, equity, and inclusion. In its grantmaking decisions, the NAF supports organizations, projects, and programs that share its belief that no person in the United States shall on the basis of the Protected Characteristics, or any other improper criterion, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under its programs or activities.

Funding amounts

- *The historical average for a competitive grant through this process is approximately \$6,000.*
- The maximum grant available through the NAF competitive process is \$10,000.

- Should an organization be requesting more than \$10,000, they **must** contact the Foundation in advance to discuss their application.
- Please be sure to review the grant history listed on the NAF website for more information:
 - <http://www.cfgb.org/for-nonprofits/for-grant-seekers/niagara-area-foundation-grants/>

Timeline

Application opens: September 8, 2026

Application deadline: October 6, 2026, at 4 PM

NOTE: Applications in draft form on the website after the deadline will be considered abandoned and will not be eligible to be considered for funding.

Decision notification: Mid-December 2026

Questions may be directed to Cara Reynolds at 716-852-2857, x 238 or carar@cfgb.org

2026 Grant Application Questions

- Mission statement (500 characters)
- Project/Program name (200 characters)
- Certify that the maximum impact of this project/program will be in Niagara County, NY (yes/no)
- Amount requested
- Date required
- Concise one sentence summary of project/program (300 characters)

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- 1. Define need - why should this be done?** (3,000 characters)
 - Please include how this project/program goals align with the NAF's goals, and
 - Who and how many will benefit (if applicable)
- 2. Describe the project/program** (3,000 characters)
 - Please address how this project will be implemented and sustained
 - The timetable for the project/program, and
 - Please include frequency and depth of the project/program
 - (Example: number of programming days per week, number of hours for each programming day, number of weeks/months the program will run, etc.)
- 3. Who will be involved?** (3,000 characters)
 - Please describe the staff/volunteers who will be leading this project/program and why they were chosen
 - Please include whether you intend to collaborate with other organizations, and
 - Explain how you will work together
 - *If you indicate partnerships in the proposal, it is important to include Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) or Letters of Support (LoS) from the partners*
- 4. How will you know if this project/program is successful?** (2,000 characters)
 - How will it be measured?
 - Project outcomes should be specific, measurable, accountable, realistic, and time-bound.
 - Please provide quantitative and qualitative outcome data, when appropriate.
 - *Example: Total number of students impacted by your program, etc.*
- 5. What other supports are needed?** (2,000 characters)
 - The NAF Council is committed to continued learning as it implements its new strategic plan. What other assistance, beyond funding, might you need to make this project/program successful?

PROJECT BUDGET

- Provide a budget breakdown, specific to your request, identifying the costs/description of the line items that are being requested from the NAF.
- Click here to download an example and optional template. NEED TO UPDATE THIS FILE! Upload 4 MB)
- Budget narrative (optional) (Upload 4 MB)
- What investment is your organization making in this project? If none, type N/A (1,000 characters)
- Who else is providing funding for this project/program, and what is the status of those requests? (2,000 characters)
 - If partner organizations (if any) are providing financial and in-kind support, please provide the details.
- If the NAF were only able to partially fund your request, can you proceed? If yes, provide details on how your programming would be affected. (1,500 characters)

CERTIFICATION OF GRANT ELIGIBILITY

Board Endorsement

- Certification that the executive director and a board officer have approved submittal of the grant request and that all information provided is accurate (yes/no)
- Confirmation that organization has a Conflict of Interest policy in accordance with New York State Law (yes/no)
- List of all board members (Upload 4 MB)
- The Foundation is a strong advocate of the capacity building website BoardStrong (www.boardstrong.org)
 - Have you completed a BoardStrong organizational profile? (yes/no)
 - If you have a BoardStrong profile, have you accessed board candidates? (yes/no)

ATTACHMENTS

- Memorandum of Understanding or letters in support of your project/program from collaborators, other funders or community members – strongly advised (Two upload areas, one 5 MB, the other 4 MB)
- You may upload up to 3 pages of meaningful content 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.
 - **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.