

21st Century Fund Competitive Grant Application General Information and Schedule

The 21st Century Fund is a giving circle made up of over-350 separate member donors. One \$100,000 award is made to a 501(c)(3) non-profit every other year through a member driven vetting and voting process. The 21st Century Fund is unique in that successful applicants will make presentations to, and interact with, the membership at two separate large in-person events.

- **Applications MUST be submitted electronically online by the deadline. No paper, emailed, or pdf applications will be accepted. Outcome reporting will also be online when closing the grant. See below for the guidelines and an outline of the questions you will be required to address when completing your electronic application.**
- Organizations must have current Section 501(c)(3) status as determined by the Internal Revenue Service.
- The 21st Century Fund membership will consider all proposals. *However there is a strong preference for requests that are sustainable, requiring minimal future grant support of any type, and resulting in long-term significant impact within the eight county region.* Please see page 3 for a list of past grants.
- Historically, the 21st Century Fund has not supported:
 - Unsustainable salaries
 - General operating expenses
 - Travel
- The membership will consider an applicant's annual budget amount, leadership, and organization's years in existence to determine the capacity to implement a project.
- 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.
- Successful 21st Century Fund awardees are not excluded from future application cycles as long as their prior 21st Century Fund grant is closed properly.
- The 21st Century Fund grant should be utilized within one year from the final vote event. Grants not released within six months of the event may be cancelled unless there are extenuating circumstances. Any request for a change from the original timeline must be made in writing.
- The membership will consider allowing up to 10% of the grant amount for indirect costs.
- The Foundation reserves the right to pay grants in a single installment or in "draws" at its sole discretion.
- The membership requires that all winning applicants obtain three bids for any equipment purchase before funding is released.
- The Foundation 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 the membership or not supported through required documentation will result in a request that those grant funds be returned to the fund.
- The failure of an applicant to properly close out a grant in a timely manner will be a factor when considering new grants.
- The membership will not consider competitive funding for:
 - Higher education scholarships
 - 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
 - Annual events or festivals
 - One-time events unless it's one part of a larger overall project.
 - Any partisan political activity. Funds from the foundation cannot be used to support or oppose a candidate for political office.
 - Projects and activities that have occurred. The 21st Century Fund will not provide payment or reimbursement for expenses incurred prior to the awardee receiving their check.

Timeline

- Applications available online: October 3, 2025
- Virtual prospective applicant briefing: October 7, 2025, from 4 PM to 5 PM
 - **ZOOM INFORMATION FOR APPLICANT BRIEFING:**
 - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84724122690?pwd=9pfrioxUazCa2NG4rA1PLSMLqnUCA0.1>
 - If you plan on attending the virtual grantee briefing session, please contact Nora Kennon at norak@cfgb.org.
 - If you are not able to attend the applicant briefing at the scheduled time, a recording will be posted on the website afterward at:
<https://www.cfgb.org/nonprofits/grants/21st-century-fund/>
- Application deadline: December 5, 2025 at 4 PM, *no exceptions!*
- Semi-finalists announced: Mid-February 2026
- Presentation event: March 2026
- Final vote event: April 2026
- Release of funds: After completion of necessary paperwork, winner can ideally expect release of funding by the end of June 2026

Questions may be directed to Darren Penoyer at 716-852-2857, x 206 or darrenp@cfgb.org

Past Grant Recipients

2024	Family Promise of WNY: Build a family shelter to respond to homelessness
2022	Mercy Flight: Implementation of a lifesaving ambulance system in rural WNY
2020	FeedMore WNY: Hydroponic farm
2018	Niagara Falls Boys and Girls Club: 17 th Street Clubhouse renovations
2016	Gerard Place: Commercial kitchen for job training program
2014	Explore and More Children's Museum: Exhibit schematic design consultants
2012	Westminster Economic Development Initiative: Commercial kitchen installation for West Side Bazaar
2010	Buffalo Museum of Science: Master planning for new science studios
2008	Massachusetts Avenue Project: Community food resource and micro enterprise center
2006	WNY Public Broadcasting/WNED: Buffalo architectural experience video
2004	Buffalo Zoo: Rainforest exhibit design
2003	Buffalo State College: Community maritime center planning
2002	Burchfield Penney Art Gallery: Materials reuse project/Art on Wheels
2001	Martin House Restoration Corporation: Darwin Martin House restoration

21st Century Fund Grant Application Questions

NOTE: Spaces count as characters.

- Project name (100 characters)
- In one concise sentence, what exactly will 21st Century Fund support go to? (150 characters)
- Project summary (1,000 characters)
 - A description of the critical impact this project will have on WNY
 - The scope of direct impact this project will have (area, number of people, dollar amount)
 - A description of long term and/or direct impact(s) this project will have (area, number of people, dollar amount)
- Date funds required and why the funds are needed by the stated date (250 characters)
- CEO/Executive Director biography (1,000 characters)
- Mission statement (500 characters)
- Upcoming key staff transitions (500 characters)
- Board member list that MUST include (5 MB upload)
 - Length of service
 - Date of term expiration
 - Profession
 - Employer
- Board involvement (1,000 characters)
 - What percentage of your board financially supports your organization?
- History of grant requests (1,500 characters)
 - Five year history of prior grant requests to the Community Foundation competitive process and 21st Century Fund ONLY that includes:
 - Date submitted

- Action (approved/denied) taken on each

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- Briefly describe the project/activity (2,000 characters)
 - If it has unique features, please describe these in detail
 - If you have partners in this project, who are they and what is their role?
 - *Please keep in mind, this description will be sent to all 21st Century Fund members, posted on our website, and sent to the press when we describe your project.*
- Is this project or activity being undertaken by anyone else in the area? (1,000 characters)
 - If so, describe the other provider(s) and projects/activities
 - Provide the names and contact information for any other providers or projects
 - What relationship do you have/plan to have with these other providers?

PROJECT READINESS

- Project/activity approvals (1,000 characters)
 - Does your project/activity require approvals (e.g. permits, environmental impact statements, etc.) from governmental entities? If so, provide the timeline for anticipated approvals and submit any applications/approvals already submitted/obtained (in provided upload area)
- Timeline and readiness (1,500 characters)
 - Describe the timeline and readiness of the project/activity for which the 21st Century Fund support is requested
 - How soon can the work begin? Please provide estimated start date
 - What is the projected project completion date?
 - If it is part of a larger project, describe the full project and define its major milestones
 - Indicate specifically when the 21st Century Fund money will be utilized
- Past project history (1,500 characters)
 - Please describe the history of a project your organization has worked on that is approximately the same size and magnitude as the one you are applying for via this grant application. If you have not completed a project of similar size and magnitude as the one you are applying for via the application, please describe your biggest project to date and/or the one you are most proud of, which our Application Review Committee may view on a site visit

JUSTIFICATION FOR 21ST CENTURY FUND SUPPORT

- Project innovation (1,000 characters)
- Project impact (3,000 characters)
 - Describe how the project will have significant, immediate, and ongoing impact on its target audience and area.
 - Who will be the primary beneficiaries of the project? Be specific about their demographics and how they will benefit from the project.
 - Who else will benefit on a broader scale? Again, be specific.
 - How long will it take for these benefits to have an impact?

- How, when, and by whom will attainment of these impacts and outcomes be measured?
 - How does the project develop resources for the region (i.e. people, natural environment, built environment)?
- Grant supplement/leverage (1,000 characters)
 - What plans do you have to supplement (or leverage) the 21st Century Fund grant should it be awarded to you?
- Project completion/advancement (1,000 characters)
 - How will 21st Century Fund support be a catalyst for the completion or significant advancement of the project? What would be the consequence(s) of not receiving 21st Century Fund support?

PROJECT FUNDING STATUS

- Project budget (5 MB upload)
 - Utilizing the budget form downloadable on the electronic application, please complete then upload a comprehensive project budget that shows all expenses, revenues and respective totals.
 - Specifically indicate how 21st Century Funds will be utilized.
 - If the project is to carry on for a number of years, provide a multi-year budget projection including expected sources of revenue (please remember that 21st Century Fund support is a "one-time only" grant).
 - Please make sure that all the columns and rows are totaled and the 21st Century Fund column in particular reflects a total of \$100,000.
- Current year budget (5 MB upload)
 - Please upload your organization's current year budget with year-to-date actuals against budget.
- Certification
 - Certification that the executive director and a board officer have approved submittal of the grant request and that all information provided is accurate.
- Verification of contact person for this application (100 characters)
 - Name
 - Title
 - Contact's preferred phone number