

Grant Guidelines



BLACK HAWK COUNTY 2nd GRANT CYCLE – 2026

IMPORTANT DATES		
APPLICATION OPENS	MAY 15, 2026	This document provides the necessary details about this specific grant opportunity, including deadlines and eligibility requirements. For information about accessing the online grants management site, tips on grantwriting, and more, visit the Nonprofit FAQ section of our website (www.cfneia.org). If you have any additional questions, please contact our administrative office at 319-243-1358 or programs@cfneia.org .
APPLICATION DEADLINE	JULY 15, 2026 AT 5:00 PM	
GRANT WORKSHOP: Please join us on Wednesday, May 20, 2026, at 1pm for a virtual grant workshop to learn more about our grant cycle. RSVP Here		
Zoom Drop-In: Grant Assistance Office Hours		
Thursday, May 28, 2026 – 10am – 11am		Thursday, June 25, 2026 – 10am to 11am
Thursday, June 4, 2026 – 2pm to 3pm		Monday, July 12, 2026 – 2pm to 3pm
Thursday, June 11, 2026 – 10am to 11am		Wednesday, July 15, 2026 – 10am to 11am
Thursday, June 18, 2026 – 2pm to 3pm		Thursday, July 9, 2026 – 2pm to 3pm

Grant Amounts

The majority of our competitive grants range from \$5,000 to \$25,000, with some grants exceeding that range. Applicants interested in making a request outside of our typical range are encouraged to contact the Programs Team at programs@cfneia.org prior to applying. Past grant award details are posted on the Community Foundation’s website.

What We Support

The Black Hawks Grant Cycle provides grants to improve life in Black Hawk County, Iowa. We want to help develop communities that people want to live in through the Community Foundation’s Impact Priority areas of grantmaking. For more information on our Impact Priorities, visit cfneia.org/impactpriorities.

Our Impact Priorities

Opportunity & Access

Health & Safety

Vibrant Communities

Youth Empowerment

How Our Impact Priorities Guide Us

Our impact priorities guide where and how we invest in our communities. They help focus our grantmaking on projects that build opportunity, strengthen community connections, and create long-term impact. We encourage applicants to consider how their work aligns with these priorities.

Opportunity & Access

Everyone deserves the chance to reach their potential. We partner with organizations and actively work to remove barriers and expand pathways to opportunity so all people, especially those in underserved and rural areas, have equitable access to the resources and support needed for economic prosperity.

*We welcome proposals that create Opportunity & Access for residents and have an interest in funding nonprofit organizations that provide **opportunities to populations with demonstrated resource gaps and historic underinvestment**. We also seek to invest in organizations that strengthen **pathways to employment** and promote **long-term economic stability and mobility**.*

Health & Safety

Every person has the right to live in a safe, stable, and healthy environment. We work with organizations providing essential health and human services.

*We welcome proposals that promote Health & Safety in our county and have an interest in funding organizations that ensure the general safety of all residents and those that demonstrate meaningful outcomes related to critical health issues facing individuals in our county. We particularly want to make investments in programs and services that address **mental health, food insecurity, and housing stability**.*

Vibrant Communities

Vibrant Communities are places where people want to live, work, and play. We connect and collaborate with organizations bringing neighborhoods to life through arts, culture, recreation, and economic development.

*We welcome proposals that contribute to building Vibrant Communities in our county. We have an interest in funding organizations that demonstrate their contributions to long-term vitality by enhancing quality of life for a broad segment of our population through amenities and places people love to be, with a special interest in investing in **arts and culture, and events that celebrate and enhance community culture and connection**.*

Youth Empowerment

Young people are the future leader and changemakers of our region. We support programs that provide educational opportunities, leadership development, and mentorship.

*We welcome proposals that meet the unique needs of young people in our county by empowering them through meaningful development opportunities. We also want to invest in funding organizations that increase **equitable, accessible, and sustainable childcare opportunities**.*

Eligibility to Apply

Organizations must provide benefits to the people of the Black Hawk County *and* must meet the following criteria to apply for a grant:

- Classified as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization or be a government entity.
- Tax-exempt organizations classified as *other* than 501(c)(3) are also eligible *if* the project is deemed charitable; please contact our office to discuss the project’s eligibility prior to submitting a proposal.
- Current with all state and federal reporting requirements, such as filing of 990 forms.
- No past due grant reports for previous grants.
- Requests that include or require participation in inherently religious activities such as religious worship, instruction, or proselytization or activities that promote specific religious doctrine are not eligible.
- Application must be completed by the due date using the online application and CFNEIA grant site.

Groups, projects, or initiatives that do not meet the above eligibility requirements may submit a request through a fiscal sponsor. Fiscal sponsors must be classified as a 501(c)(3) or a government entity. The Foundation prefers that the fiscal sponsor’s mission closely aligns with the sponsored project. **Fiscal Sponsors will be legally and financially responsible for any grant funds that are awarded.**

Eligibility Based on Funding Type

We believe you know how to best utilize the resources you have to provide service to our community, and as such, we *encourage* 501(c)3s to apply for general operating support. The following is an outline of what funding types are eligible based on the organization applying:

	Operations	Programming	Equipment/ Materials	Capital
501(c)3 Nonprofits Serving our County	Eligible*	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible
City & County Governments Public + Private Schools (K-12 & higher education) Other Foundations	Not eligible	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible
Churches Other Non-501(c)(3), Tax-Exempt Organizations	Not eligible**	Eligible**	Eligible**	Eligible**
Fiscally Sponsored Entities	***	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible

*For operations in our county only.

**Request must be charitable and benefit community as a whole (i.e. community programming, space, etc).

***For Fiscally Sponsored entities, please contact our office to confirm eligibility for operations funding.

Restrictions

- Organizations are limited to one application per calendar year with some exceptions, including the *Cedar Falls School District, the City of Cedar Falls, the City of Waterloo, Hawkeye Community College, University of Northern Iowa, and the Waterloo Community School District.*
- Fiscal sponsors may also submit up to one additional proposal within the same calendar year.
- Grant request minimum is \$5,000.
- Requests for debt repayment and/or pass through funds (funds to be paid to another entity) are not eligible.

Review Criteria

Applications will be reviewed and scored on the following elements:

Impact Criteria — Reviewers will assess how well the proposed project addresses a clear Community Need & Impact potential in Black Hawk County, and how strongly it aligns with one of the county's four Impact Priorities (Opportunity & Access, Health & Safety, Vibrant Communities, and Youth). Impact is the most important factor in scoring.

Core Criteria — Reviewers will also evaluate all applications using consistent criteria that apply across all priorities:

- **Organization Capability** — Does the applicant have the capacity to successfully deliver the project?
- **Collaboration** — Does the project align with community partners to avoid duplication and maximize resources?
- **Budget Clarity** — Are the proposed expenses clear, reasonable, and an appropriate use of funds?
- **Learning & Improvement** — Does the organization listen to the people it serves and adapt based on feedback?

The Grant Selection Committee

Our Black Hawk County Grants Distribution Committee, composed of Community Foundation board members and community volunteers from throughout Black Hawk County, is charged with making funding recommendations to the CFNEIA Board of Directors after reviewing and evaluating all eligible applications. The Committee carefully reviews and considers all eligible applications based on the guidelines stated herein. The Committee list can be found at <https://www.cfneia.org/about-us/meet-the-team/>.

How to Apply

Applicants interested in seeking grants should fully review these grant guidelines prior to submitting an application to ensure all eligibility requirements are met. Applications must be submitted through the foundation's online grant management system. Visit <https://www.cfneia.org/nonprofits/grant-opportunities/> to access the online grant system, and to find additional resources for grant seekers.

Important Dates

- **The grant application deadline is 5:00 pm on July 15, 2026.** *Technical support will be available to applicants until 5:00 pm on the day of the deadline.*
- All applicants will be notified of the results of the grant process in mid-September 2026.
- Grant awards will be presented during a ceremony in October 2026. More details will be provided with grantee notifications. ***Grantees (along with staff & board members) are strongly encouraged to attend this ceremony to be recognized.***
- Grant reports for successful proposals are due January 30, 2027.

Questions

The Programs Team can be contacted at programs@cfneia.org to explore the appropriateness of requests and for any further guidance. ***First-time applicants are encouraged to seek guidance to strengthen their alignment and application.***

Contact Dotti Thompson, Grant and Scholarship Manager, 319-243-1358 or dthompson@cfneia.org for assistance with eligibility questions or accessing the grant site.