

Grant Guidelines



BENTON COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANTS – 2026

IMPORTANT DATES		
APPLICATION OPENS	SEPTEMBER 1, 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	OCTOBER 15, 2026 AT 5:00 PM	
Zoom Drop-In: Grant Assistance Office Hours: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81066591446		
Wednesday, September 9, 2026 – 11:00am – 12:00pm		Tuesday, October 6, 2026 – 12:00-1:00pm
Tuesday, September 15, 2026 – 3:00-4:00pm		Thursday, October 8, 2026 – 3:00-4:00pm
Thursday, September 24, 2026 – 9:00-10:00am		Monday, October 12, 2026 – 11:00am-12:00pm
Tuesday, September 29, 2026 – 3:00-4:00pm		

About the Benton County Community Foundation

The Benton County Community Foundation is an affiliate of the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa, created by and for the people of Benton County, for the purpose of generating both endowed and unrestricted funds to support charitable capital projects, activities, services, programs, and organizations that will improve the quality of life for the residents of Benton County, Iowa. Visit www.bentonccf.org to learn more.

What We Fund

The Benton County Community Foundation provides grants to improve life in Benton County, Iowa. We want to help develop communities that people want to live in, as well as benefit rural areas of the county. We do this 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

Eligibility to Apply

Organizations must provide benefits to the people of Benton 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 previously awarded 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.
- Requests for political activity/lobbying, debt repayment, endowment contributions, funds that will re-granted by the applicant to another entity, and/or expenses incurred prior to grant notifications are not eligible.
- **Fiscal sponsors may submit only one application per sponsored organization.**

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 align with the sponsored project. **Fiscal Sponsors will be legally and financially responsible for any grant funds that are awarded.**

NOTE: Please read the guidelines and application instructions thoroughly before submitting the application.

Restrictions

In addition to the eligibility requirements, the following restrictions apply:

- One application per organization with the **exemption of Government Entities and Fiscal Sponsors.**
- Government entities and schools may submit only one application per department.
- Minimum grant request: \$5,000.
- Applicants **must** use the Budget Template that is linked to the application; those that do not include the required Budget Template will be disqualified (see page 4 for a sample budget).
- Bids/estimates for work to be completed or equipment/materials to be purchased should be attached to the Support Document section of the application.
- Requests from veterans' organizations are eligible **if the project benefits the whole community.**
- Requests for veterans' memorials are not supported.
- Requests for city welcome signs and wayfinding signs are not supported for funding.

Funding Priorities

Highest priority for funding is given to projects that:

- Address a community need, demonstrate broad-based community support, and provide benefits that are community/county wide.
- Show a high level of support or leveraged funding from other sources. For government entities, requests with committed funds from the city/county for the project are given higher priority.
- Maximize community resources through cooperation and collaboration with other organizations in the community and work to eliminate redundant services, programs, or projects.
- Show long-term sustainability of the project without annual grant support from the BCCF.

Review Criteria

Applications will be reviewed and scored on the following elements:

- **Organization** – The overall health of the organization and how the application reflects the organization’s capability for completing the project.
- **Feasibility** – The probability the project will be successful, including the organization’s level of staff/volunteers and collaboration with community partners.
- **Community Need and Outcomes** – The need for the project and how the proposed outcomes impact the community/county.
- **Project Budget** – The details of the budget and the ability to secure and/or leverage other funding sources, including in-kind services. ***Requests that do not show other funding sources are scored at zero for the budget portion of the application.***

Grant Selection Process

The Benton County Community Foundation is made up of community volunteers from throughout Benton County. This committee is responsible for making funding recommendations to the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa’s board of directors. The Committee carefully reviews and considers all eligible applications based on the guidelines stated herein. The Committee list can be found at www.bentonccf.org.

How to Apply

Before applying, applicants should review these grant guidelines to ensure they meet all eligibility requirements. 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 additional resources for grant seekers.

Important Dates

- ***A Grant Workshop will be held on September 8, 2026 from 12-1:00pm at the Van Horne Community Center (508 1st Ave., Van Horne).*** You can RSVP for this workshop at this [link](#).
- ***The grant application deadline is 5:00 pm on October 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 decisions in mid-December 2026.
- Grant awards will be presented at an award ceremony in early-mid January 2027. ***Grantees (along with staff & board members) are strongly encouraged to attend this ceremony to be recognized.***
- Grant reports for successful proposals will be due on January 31, 2028.

Grant Conditions

Awarded applicants are required to:

- Sign a Terms of Grant agreement which clarifies legal parameters for use of the grant.
- Submit a Grant Report to show the results of the project and to show that all the funds have been spent as intended. (If the project takes longer to complete, the Community Foundation will consider a request to extend the Grant Report deadline.)

Questions

Applicants should contact Shanda Hansen, Director of Affiliate Impact, at 319-243-1357 or shansen@cfneia.org to explore the appropriateness of requests and for any further guidance. First-time applicants are highly encouraged to contact Shanda for guidance to strengthen their alignment and application.

Applicants can contact Dotti Thompson, Grant and Scholarship Manager, at 319-243-1358 or dthompson@cfneia.org with specific questions on eligibility or accessing the grant site.

	Sample BCCF Project Budget				
	Project: Roof Repairs				
Project Items	Total Project Cost	CF Request	Other Funding Amt.	Other Funding Source	Funding Status
Roofing Shingles	6000.00	4500.00	1000.00	Agency Funds	Received
			500.00	Grant - Walmart	Pending
Roofing Supplies	5000.00	2500.00	1500.00	In-Kind-Menards	Secured
			1000.00	Donations	Received
Labor	4500.00	3000.00	1500.00	In-Kind- Volunteers	Secured
Total	\$ 15,500.00	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 5,500.00		

Instructions:

Enter each expense line item for the request in the Request Expenses column (Column A). In the Total Item Cost column, enter the total cost for the corresponding line item (Column B). The cost of the line item that is being requested from the CF is entered into the CF Request column (Column C). Any additional funding amounts for each request expense are entered separately in the Other Funding column (Column E). Select the appropriate funding source for each other funding amount in the Funding Source column (Column F) from the drop-down menu. Select the appropriate funding status for each funding source in the Funding Status column (Column G) from the drop-down menu. **The Total Item Cost column must equal the CF Request Column plus the Other Funding Column. Definitions listed below are for the other funding amounts, not the CF request.**

Funding Source Definitions:

Agency - Funds from the organization's budget or reserves

In-Kind Services - Labor or other services provided at no cost or by volunteers

Grant - Grant funds for this request (other than those from this CF), including grants pending/received from other CFNEIA Affiliates

Donations - Funds received from private individuals or businesses

United Way - Funds received through United Way organizations

Other - Funds from a source not listed

Funding Status Definitions: This is for the other funding sources; not the requests from this CF

Pending - Funds have been sought, but are awaiting approval/denial

Secured - Funds have been committed but not received by the organization

Received - Funds have been received and are earmarked for the request