



*Northern Lights.mn's event Northern Spark 2015. Photo: Ian Plant, Luke Savisky, E/x MN.*

Community Innovation Grants support communities to use problem-solving processes that lead to more effective, equitable and sustainable solutions. Think of it as civic R&D, allowing communities to develop and test new solutions to community challenges.

### Meet the 2016 recipients

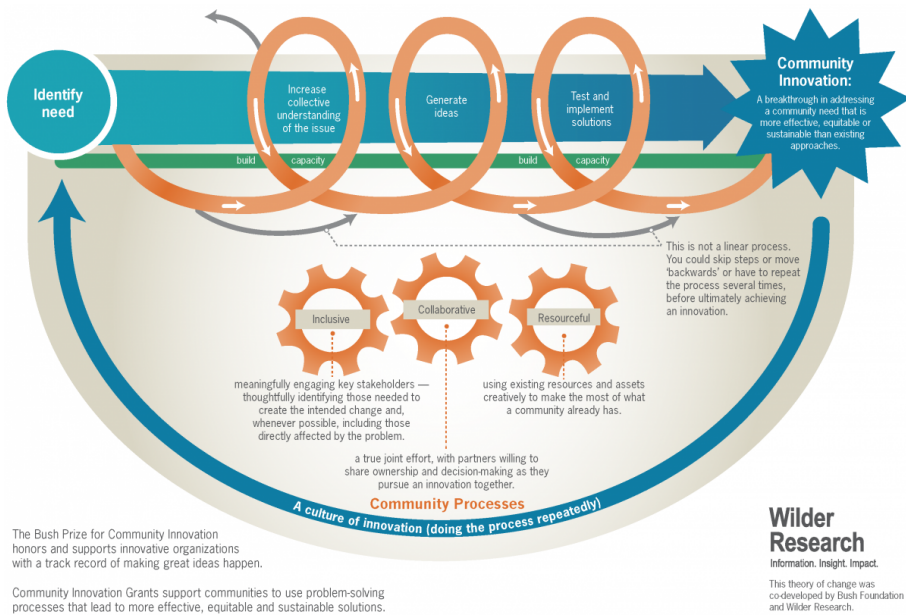
There are **no application deadlines** for our Community Innovation grants. Organizations are welcome to apply anytime using our online application system.

Learn more by [watching the recorded webinar](#) from 10/13/2016.

### WHAT WE FUND

There's a lot of work that happens in between identifying a community problem and implementing a new breakthrough solution, especially if you want to engage your community, make the most of existing assets and work collaboratively with other organizations along the way. Our Community Innovation Grants support that process - they fund the work that it takes to create a community innovation.

The Foundation provides Community Innovation Grants of \$10,000 to \$200,000. Community Innovation Grants of \$500 to \$10,000 are available from our intermediary partner organizations: [Headwaters Foundation for Justice \(MN\)](#), [The Consensus Council \(ND\)](#) and the [South Dakota Community Foundation \(SD\)](#).



## You define your community

We look to you to identify and define your community. This could be a geographic community, and it could be a community of common interest or racial/cultural identity.

## You define the issue

We do not prioritize specific issues and instead are open to projects that address all sorts of community needs.

Projects can be at various stages of the innovation process including identifying the need, increasing collective understanding of the issue, generating ideas, or testing and implementing solutions. Proposals can focus on one area or span multiple stages.

## ELIGIBILITY

- Community Innovation Grants may be awarded to 501(c)(3) public charities or government entities (including schools). Coalitions or collaboratives are eligible to apply, but only one organization may receive the grant.
- For organizations that do not have 501(c)(3) status, the Foundation accepts Community Innovation Grant applications from fiscal sponsors. The fiscal sponsor organization must submit the grant application and, if the grant is approved, becomes the grantee and receives the funds. Our [fiscal sponsorship overview](#) (PDF) provides additional information.
- Grants must be used for projects located in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota or the 23 Native nations that share the same geography.
- Grants must be used for a charitable purpose.

### RESOURCES

[Fiscal Sponsorship Overview](#)

## SELECTION CRITERIA

### Fit with Community Innovation Grant Program

- Does the project use inclusive, collaborative and resourceful processes to pursue an innovative solution to a community challenge?
  - **Inclusive:** meaningfully engaging key stakeholders - thoughtfully identifying those needed to create the intended change and, whenever possible, including those directly affected by the problem.
  - **Collaborative:** a true joint effort, with partners willing to share ownership and decision-making as they pursue an innovation together.
  - **Resourceful:** using existing resources and assets creatively to make the most of what a community already has.

- Is the process likely to lead to a community innovation - a breakthrough in addressing a community need that is more effective, equitable or sustainable than existing approaches?

## Implementation

- Is the project plan thoughtful, realistic and does it address the identified community need?
- Does the applicant have the capacity to execute the work effectively or have a plan to meet the needed capacity?

## Impact

- Is the project likely to make a significant, sustainable difference, now or in the future?
- Will the project inspire or inform others?

## Additional Considerations

We seek a final portfolio of Community Innovation grantees with balance across:

- Size of community
- Size of applicant organization
- Size of grant request
- Demographics of communities served
- Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and the 23 Native nations that share the same geography
- Type of issue addressed

At least 50% of Community Innovation grants will be for projects that address racial and/or economic disparities. *For the purposes of this grant program, the Bush Foundation defines this as proposals that seek to actively reduce structural and/or systemic gaps in access, outcomes, opportunities or treatment based on race/ethnicity or economic standing.*

## HOW TO APPLY

### For grants from \$10,000 - \$200,000

There is no application deadline for our Community Innovation grants. Organizations are welcome to apply anytime using our online application system. We strongly encourage all organizations to do the following before submitting an application.

- 1 Review the selection criteria with your community partners.
- 2 Learn more about the work of our recent [Community Innovation grantees](#).
- 3 Set up a phone call to discuss your proposal with a Community Innovation team member. You can use our [online scheduling system](#) to set up a call. The Community Innovation team is also available at [CommunityInnovation@BushFoundation.org](mailto:CommunityInnovation@BushFoundation.org) or call us 651-379-2266.

### RESOURCES

- [Info Packet](#) (pdf, 559 KB)
- [Sample Project Budget](#) (xlsx, 14 KB)
- [The Community Innovation Process](#) (png, 417 KB)

## APPLY NOW

### For grants from \$500 - \$10,000

We partner with the [Headwaters Foundation for Justice \(MN\)](#), [The Consensus Council \(ND\)](#) and the [South Dakota Community Foundation \(SD\)](#) to provide Community Innovation Grants for projects with budgets of \$500 - \$10,000. The program content and criteria for these grants is the same as the Community Innovation Grants offered here at the Bush Foundation. Interested applicants can apply directly to the state program most applicable for their project using the links above.

## SELECTION PROCESS

There are two stages in the Bush Foundation's Community Innovation grant selection process.

- 1 **Initial Review.** Members of the Community Innovation team will evaluate applications and select finalists on a rolling basis. We will communicate our decision via email approximately six to eight weeks from the date the application is submitted.

- 2** *Finalist Review.* A member of the Community Innovation team will schedule a phone call with finalists to discuss the application. We may also request additional information during this stage. The Community Innovation team then makes its final decision and notifies the applicant organization.

For most applications, we estimate the entire selection process – from the time we receive the application to when we make the final decision to award a Community Innovation grant – will take four months. Organizations can expect to receive their grant payment about one month following the final decision.

## WORKING WITH COMMUNITY INNOVATION GRANTEES

The Foundation hopes to build a supportive relationship with Community Innovation grantees by:

### Working Together

We'll create a grant agreement based on your proposal, including an agreed upon timeline for the project and use of funds.

We'll be responsive and direct in our communication with you, and will be available to you throughout your grant term. We hope to build a relationship that is supportive when you want us to be, without being in your way. We want you to be able to focus on what you do best.

### Learning and Evaluation

We want to know if we're making a difference, and will ask you to participate in our evaluation of the Community Innovation Grant Program. We will use what we learn together to improve this grant program over time.

We will ask you to share key lessons learned (successes as well as challenges) during our meetings and as part of your interim and final grant reports. Portions of these reports will be shared publicly on the Foundation's website.

We acknowledge that not all grant projects will lead to a community innovation. And, in fact, sometimes the path to an innovation includes unexpected or undesirable outcomes. Learning from these moments is an important part of creating new community solutions, and we look forward to doing that with you.

We'll invite you to participate in Foundation-sponsored events for grantees to meet one another, share the stories of your work and learn together.

### Sharing Your Story

We want to publicly recognize the good work that grantees are doing. We will ask you to provide basic content about your organization and project for the Foundation's website.

We may request that you share periodic, informal updates for the Bush Foundation to use in online media promotions.

## WE'RE HERE TO HELP

For more information, or to talk with someone on the Community Innovation Team, use our [online scheduling system](#) to set up a call or email [CommunityInnovation@BushFoundation.org](mailto:CommunityInnovation@BushFoundation.org).

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### Find related grantees

### RESOURCES

[Interim report - Sample](#)

(pdf, 186 KB)

[Final report - Sample](#)

(pdf, 197 KB)

