

e-town innovation grants

At the Evanston Community Foundation, we invest in great ideas and the people bringing them to life through our E-Town Innovation Grants. We want to support organizations to be bold and innovative in solving today's challenges, particularly as we all work to reimagine a more equitable Evanston in a post-COVID world.

~~This grant program began in 2021.~~

There are many pathways to be eligible for an E-Town Innovation Grant. Download the Grant Guidelines for the eligibility group that best describes your organization:

- **Community Institutions:** 501c3 orgs, 501c6 orgs, local schools, local government, community organizations with a fiscal sponsor
- **Community Grassroots Groups:** Any group of community members working together to address a community need – no 501c3 or fiscal sponsorship required.
- **Businesses with a charitable purpose** - Must fit at least ONE of these criteria:
 1. Meet a basic human need
 2. Provide a service not offered by the local nonprofit sector (or has a demand that exceeds availability)

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Commented [JVDV2]: Download link here for the Community Institution PDF guidelines

Commented [JVDV3]: Download link here for the Community Grassroot Groups PDF guidelines

Commented [JVDV4]: Download link here for the Business PDF guidelines

3. Broaden workforce development pathways to living wage careers for BIPOC-identifying community members

*Must be an Evanston-based business

purpose

These grants are focused on supporting new or expanded innovative programs that:

- Prioritize equitable opportunities and outcomes for Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color (BIPOC)
- Support organizations working together to solve community challenges and change systems
- Embrace creative solutions that address community needs in ways that are more effective, equitable, or sustainable than standard approaches

funding priorities

We want Evanston to thrive as a vibrant, inclusive, and equitable community. We fund projects that:

- Focus on advancing equity, in particular racial equity and intersectionality
- Meaningfully engage key stakeholders to identify problems and include those directly affected by those problems
- Are collaborative in nature

We fund projects that develop new ideas, expand or improve on existing work, or contribute to disrupting systems that exclude community members. A committee made up of Evanston residents decides the projects we fund.

how to apply

All application materials must be submitted through [GLM](#). Applications may be submitted at any time throughout the grant schedule. The grants committee will make funding decisions approximately one month after proposal submission. View the [Calendar](#) for application dates. If you need access to a computer or assistance submitting online [email ECF staff](#).

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who can apply

Any group or organization providing services to Evanston residents can apply for a grant. All proposals must address issues, concerns, or opportunities in the Evanston community. Additionally, applicants must fit in one of the following categories:

- **Community Institutions:** 501c3 orgs, 501c6 orgs, local schools, local government, community organizations with a fiscal sponsor
- **Community Grassroots Groups:** Any group of community members working together to address a community need – no 501c3 or fiscal sponsorship required.
- **Businesses with a charitable purpose** - Must fit at least ONE of these criteria:
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Commented [JVDV9]: Download link here for the Community Grassroot Groups PDF guidelines

Commented [JVDV10]: Download link here for the Business PDF guidelines

*Must be an Evanston-based business

New applicants, current grantees, former grantees, or previous applicants to any ECF grants program are eligible to apply. While your organization is only eligible for one E-Town Innovation grant per 12 month period, your organization may apply for other ECF grants during the same year.

funding parameters

- Grant amounts range from \$2,500 – \$20,000. Proposals should have a project budget appropriate to the scope of the project.
- Grant period will be for a 12-month period.
- Please note: these grants do not fund endowments, fundraising events or sponsorship of events, appeals for religious purposes (though faith-based organizations may apply for projects benefitting the general community), or individuals.

what the committee considers

Below are the main areas the committee of community members considers when deciding funding:

Evanston Service

- Project focus, serving Evanston
- # of people served and intensiveness of services
- Organization awareness and understanding of similar local projects

Plan and Impact

- Project plan
- Project impact on systems that have historically excluded community members

Equity

- Advancement of racial equity
- Systems change that creates more opportunities and equitable outcomes for Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color

Community voice

- Role of community voices
- Key stakeholders + their involvement
- Project's inclusiveness and collaboration

Collaboration

- Strength of collaborations, if applicable
- Roles of collaborative partners

Clarity of proposal

- Clarity of proposal
- Intended outcomes and plan to reach them

Financials

- Appropriateness of project budget and use of resources
- Organizational capacity

application materials

All applications — and their respective questions and materials — are accessible through our [GLM](#) online grants system. ~~Documents to submit include:~~ Please see below for the application materials you will need to submit depending on the eligibility group that best describes your organization:

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If you are a Community Institution, here are the documents you will need to gather :

- Total operating budget for current and prior fiscal years including revenue sources (if you have it)
- A project budget using the provided form in the application portal, including the total cost of project and sources of other funding received to date
- Budget Comparison: Include most recent annual budget comparing proposed budget to actual operating budget
- A brief budget narrative to address any significant variances in the annual operating budget or actuals (if needed only)
- Page 1 ONLY of two most recent 990s (for your organization or fiscal sponsor, unless your organization is brand new)
- Letters of support from any partners you are collaborating with on this project
- Overview of Board and staff demographics

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If you are a Community Grassroot Group, here are the documents you will need to gather:

• (If applicable) Total Group Operating Budget: Include current annual budget and previous year annual budget if available (Operating Budget template provided if needed)

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• Project Budget Form: Use form located in grant portal to provide a simple project budget

• Budget Comparison : Include most recent annual budget comparing proposed budget to actual operating budget

• (If applicable) Collaboration Letter of Support: Include a letter of support if working on a joint project (clearly defined roles, partner expectations, etc.) with another group

If you are a Business with a Charitable Purpose, here are the documents you will need to gather:

• Business Financials

• A project budget using the provided form in the application portal, including the total cost of project and sources of other funding received to date

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• Budget Comparison: Include most recent annual budget comparing proposed budget to actual operating budget

• Ownership Chart : Include each member's ownership share, as well as name, race, and city of residence. (Ownership Chart Template provided if needed)

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• (If applicable) Collaboration Letter of Support: Include a letter of support if working on a joint project (clearly defined roles, partner expectations, etc.) with another organization

Please note: For all narrative questions, tell us briefly and directly about your idea, those you will serve, and why your group is the best fit to make the project happen. Do not worry about phrasing things just right.

application questions

All applications — and their respective questions and materials — are accessible through our online grants system. [Please see the different application questions required for each eligibility group:](#)

Community Institutions – Application Questions

1. What is your organization/group's mission and scope of work?
2. What is the need or challenge your organization is designed to meet? How did you come up with the idea for this project? How do you know there is a need for this project?
3. How is this need being addressed currently in the community? How will your project add to already existing efforts?
4. Tell us about who you plan to serve with this project. About how many people? What percentage will be Evanston community members? What are the demographics of Evanstonians you plan to serve?
5. How will you encourage participation in your project? How will you break down any barriers to
6. participation?
7. Tell us how the voices of Black, Indigenous, and people of color are an integral part of your organization's overall decision-making processes. How do you engage program participants in determining your current and future programming?
8. What is your plan? How will you bring it to life? What is your anticipated timetable?
9. How will your idea be transformative? How will project advance racial equity in Evanston? How will you know if your project has been successful?
10. What percentage of staff leadership identifies as a Person of Color?

Community Grassroots Groups – Application Questions

1. Has your group been an Evanston Cradle to Career Community Building Grantee in the past? If so, tell us about that project. (If no, it will NOT affect your grant application).
2. What does your group do in Evanston and how does it uplift BIPOC Community members? BIPOC = Black, Indigenous, People of Color
3. How did you come up with the idea for this project? How do you know there is a need for this project?
4. How is this need being addressed currently in the community? How will your project add to already existing efforts?
5. What are the demographics of the Evanston residents you plan to serve through this project?
6. About how many people will you reach? If you're not sure, give your best to estimate.
7. How will you encourage participation in your project? How will you break down any barriers to participation?
8. Tell us how the voices of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color are an integral part of your group's overall decision-making processes. How do you (or plan to) engage program participants in your planning processes?
9. How will you know that this project has made a difference in the community?
10. Tell us about your project timeline. What will happen when? (**Note:** You must complete the project within 12 months of the grant award.)
11. Who is leading your efforts? Please share the names and demographics of your leadership and/or team members. Include name, race/ethnicity, and city where they live.
12. How much does your group have on hand (In a bank account or otherwise)?
13. About how much does it cost to run all your projects in a year? Tell us about how you raise money for your work.