

2026 COMMUNITY-LED GRANTS



Community Voices, Community Choices

These grants are selected by ECF's community-led committees to receive unrestricted operating support. Each reflects a strong commitment to equity and meaningful impact in Evanston. These grants are truly community-led, where community members who live or work in Evanston, some of whom are from divested communities, evaluate and rate our proposals.

TOTAL FUNDING - \$444,450

Accessible Essentials

Grant Amount: \$25,000

Accessible Essentials is a high-school student-led organization dedicated to providing access to free personal hygiene products for our Evanston neighbors. They source, pack, and distribute personal hygiene items through Evanston's Free Fridges.

ARTSIE INC

Grant Amount: \$25,000

Artsie Inc empowers children and families of color, providing free-of-cost arts and education programming at District 65 Schools and Fleetwood Jourdain Community Center. Their programming aims to bridge and strengthen communities with culturally sensitive and bilingual offerings. Their goal is to inspire creativity, improve literacy rates and building social-emotional skills.

Books & Breakfast

Grant Amount: \$25,000

B&B aims to provide a supportive and equitable educational environment for all students who have been impacted by systems of oppression. By offering a nutritious breakfast and homework assistance to students in need, B&B ensures that students are prepared for their academic journey. Their programming is committed to disrupting the impact of systemic racism on Black and Latino students and filling resource gaps for those who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

Childcare Network of Evanston

Grant Amount: \$25,000

Childcare Network of Evanston (CNE) provides high-quality early childhood education and care to families in Evanston, Illinois. CNE offers a range of services, including federally-funded Head Start/Early Head Start programs, Illinois State Board of Education-funded Preschool for All Program, and childcare subsidies from the Illinois Department of Human Services. The organization also provides therapeutic intervention on-site through the Learning Together program and city-wide scholarships for working parents.

Climate Action Evanston

Grant Amount: \$25,000

Climate Action Evanston is a non-profit organization dedicated to making Evanston a leader in climate mitigation and resilience. They advocate for strong climate policies, educate the public, and forge alliances across the community. Their initiatives include achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, securing 100% renewable energy for all properties by 2030, and promoting sustainable practices through programs like Go Evanston and Edible Evanston.

COMMUNITY-LED GRANTS CONTINUED



Connections for the Homeless

Grant Amount: \$25,000

Connections for the homeless is ending homelessness, one person at a time by targeting the systems of oppression that result in homelessness and housing instability that disproportionately affect Evanston's BIPOC and marginalized communities. Through critical homelessness prevention, shelter, and housing services, they address the root causes of homelessness and systemic inequities by advocating for affordable housing policies that center those most impacted by redlining, discrimination, and displacement.

Evanston ASPA

Grant Amount: \$25,000

Evanston ASPA is an organization dedicated to supporting the local Asian, South Asian, and Pacific Islander American community. Its mission is to provide resources and support, increase visibility, and representation of the Asian American diaspora in civic, cultural, and community spaces through the arts.

Evanston Grows

Grant Amount: \$25,000

Evanston Grows is dedicated to increasing healthy food access, promoting food literacy, and advancing health equity in the Evanston Community with an emphasis in the historically segregated 5th Ward. Their mission focuses on building a local fresh food system that is just, sustainable, and resilient, aiming to reduce food insecurity and improve health outcomes. The organization engages in urban farming education, distributes organic produce, and offers workforce development programs to empower community members.

Evanston Community Fridges

Grant Amount: \$15,000

Evanston Community Fridges provides a community-run mutual aid network to feed one another. Their mission is to expand access to free food through radical community care by serving neighborhoods within Evanston, improve existing sites, and stock fridges with nourishing, culturally-affirming food.

Evanston Scholars

Grant Amount: \$25,000

Evanston Scholars' mission is to improve college access and success for Evanston students, particularly those who are first-generation college entrants, students from low-income families, and students of color. They provide individualized and intensive college counseling, success and career readiness support along with crucial college affordability support to create a more equitable educational landscape, supported by a strong network of mentors and peers.

COMMUNITY-LED GRANTS CONTINUED



Family Focus, Inc.

Grant Amount: \$25,000

Family Focus Evanston is a community-based organization that offers a range of services including early childhood home visiting, Family Advocacy Center, after-school programs, and community partnership initiatives. The organization focuses on promoting early childhood development and providing support to parents, grandparents, and foster and adoptive parents. They also provide bilingual services and support for immigrant families and individuals.

Foundation 65

Grant Amount: \$25,000

Foundation 65 strengthens public education by investing directly in educators, eliminating opportunity gaps, enhancing student support and confidence, hence helping students achieve their full potential. F65 supports educator-led initiatives to respond where families and students need it most, working collectively to address racialized disparities. Their vision focuses on educational justice, addressing racial inequities through important conversations, and uplifting the entire District 65 community.

Infant Welfare Society of Evanston

Grant Amount: \$25,000

The Infant Welfare Society of Evanston (IWSE) focuses on the care and early education of infants and toddlers, as well as supporting their families to be effective parents and advocates in their child's learning and development. IWSE offers a range of services, including full-day child care, early education, home visiting, and family support services for infants and toddlers. The organization is committed to providing high-quality care and education, ensuring that children enter kindergarten ready to learn.

Interfaith Action of Evanston

Grant Amount: \$25,000

Interfaith Action of Evanston is dedicated to building a just community by addressing systemic issues such as poverty, unemployment, homelessness, and hunger. The organization works with diverse faith communities and individuals to promote interfaith dialogue and social justice. They provide essential services through initiatives like soup kitchens, warming centers, and the Overnight Shelter, while also engaging in advocacy to support those in need.

James B. Moran Center for Youth Advocacy

Grant Amount: \$25,000

The James B. Moran Center for Youth Advocacy in Evanston is dedicated to providing community-based legal, social work, and restorative services for youth and families. They advance a vision of a more just, racially equitable, and restorative society at the local, regional, and state levels. The center employs a holistic, healing-centered, client-driven approach to address the complex needs of youth and families, including legal, mental health, and restorative justice services. The center's work is deeply rooted in the community, aiming to dismantle systemic barriers and improve the lives of historically marginalized youth and families.

COMMUNITY-LED GRANTS CONTINUED



McGaw YMCA

Grant Amount: \$25,000

McGaw YMCA is an organization dedicated to youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. It provides a range of programs and services, including childcare, job training, and housing support, to individuals and families in the Evanston area. The organization is committed to diversity and inclusion, ensuring that everyone, regardless of their background, can access the resources and opportunities the YMCA offers.

Open Communities

Grant Amount: \$25,000

Open Communities mission aims to eradicate housing discrimination and protect neighbors' rights to fair housing and prevent homelessness in Evanston. They foster thriving, inclusive communities through housing counseling, education, outreach, and advocacy. By holding communities and institutions accountable for discriminatory policies, they look to end unjust systemic practices that perpetuate segregation and inequity. Their free services are offered in English and Spanish to increase accessibility.

Open Studio Project

Grant Amount: \$25,000

Open Studio Project (OSP) brings the transformative power of art therapy to individuals for personal growth, social emotional learning, and community well-being. They create a welcoming environment for people of diverse backgrounds and abilities with a particular emphasis of Evanstonians of color and historically segregated 5th ward. Through workshops, classes, exhibitions, and extensive community partnerships, OSP teaches participants how to use art-making effectively as a safe, powerful, and reliable medium for growth.

Purple Line Adventure Play

Grant Amount: \$25,000

Purple Line Adventure Play works with Ridgeville Park District to provide 6 weeks of twice weekly supervised child-directed play events for the children living around Elks Park at no cost. At these events, children enjoy all the benefits of play: creating their own world, making friends, figuring things out, developing confidence and agency, moving actively away from screens, and having fun along the way.

Women Initiating New Directions (WIND)

Grant Amount: \$15,000

Women Initiating New Directions (WIND) aims to inspire women with a history of incarceration or at risk of incarceration to design a thriving life journey using newly learned tools and strategies for success. WIND empowers women impacted by the criminal justice system to lead productive lives, making better choices and avoiding recidivism. Through providing educational programs, financial empowerment, workforce training, and trauma-informed support for justice-impacted women, WIND helps women heal and grow, contributing to their communities and achieving a fulfilling life.

2026 COLLECTIVE AND ENDURING GRANTS



Rooted in Partnership, Built to Last

Collective & Enduring Grants support long-term solutions through collaboration and multi-year investments. These grants fund partnerships between nonprofits and community stakeholders working together to tackle complex challenges and drive lasting, systemic change in Evanston. By supporting shared strategies over multiple years, ECF helps build stronger, more resilient systems that serve the community for the long haul.

TOTAL FUNDED : \$75 ,000

Northlight Theater

Grant Amount:\$50,000, \$25,000 each year for 2-years

Northlight's bold vision is to build a world-class theatre in Evanston, the vibrant community where Northlight began in 1974. Today, our intensely entertaining productions broaden perspectives and deepen compassion. Our education programs touch the lives of thousands of young people each year, and we enrich our community through audience engagement and creative partnerships. With a new theatre in downtown Evanston, we will entertain and inspire audiences with compelling new and existing work. We'll nurture and grow the next generation of theatregoers, expand our civic impact, spark economic development, and serve as a cultural hub for the entire community. The continued progress of our Next Act Campaign continues, following breaking ground in March 2025 and ongoing construction, which is well underway. The 2025-26 season is expected to be the final season in our current home at the North Shore Center for the Performing Arts, with an anticipated opening of our new home in Fall 2026.

Reparation Stakeholder Authority of Evanston (RSAE)

Grant Amount:\$50,000

This award will support a job-share Director position with the goal of strengthening Evanston's reparations infrastructure during a critical phase of implementation of the feedback. This shared role will provide dedicated leadership capacity to:

- Implement the RSAE reparations programs, including the delivery of direct and/or community-based benefits to eligible Evanston residents and organizations
- Ensure ongoing communication, transparency, and engagement with the Evanston community and reparations partners
- Coordinate public events in partnership with FirstRepair that support education, Black culture, empowerment, and community trust
- Support fundraising, systems development, and stewardship of reparative resources
- Strengthen the operational capacity of RSAE as a community-led companion to the City of Evanston Reparations Program

2026 CATALYST GRANTS



Where Bold Ideas Begin

Catalyst Grants are small but powerful seed investments that help bold ideas take root. Unlike our community-led grants, Catalyst Grants are directed by ECF to provide flexible, early-stage funding for emerging initiatives, professional development, and innovative projects that meet evolving needs in Evanston. These grants often support new or under-resourced efforts that, with the right spark, can grow into lasting community impact.

TOTAL FUNDED - \$30,000

Childcare Network of Evanston

Grant Amount: \$15,000

This grant supports two separate professional development opportunities for early childhood educators and professionals in Evanston. The first will take place in collaboration with Partnership for Resilience titled, "From Stress to Strength: Navigating the Ecosystem of Resilience." It will be an interactive, three-part workshop to discover how toxic stress impacts the developing child and the adults who care for them, and will include practical takeaways for educators that can improve the quality of their early childhood spaces. The second will take place in partnership with FirstDay Learning, an early learning professional development firm to provide their "Campfire Coaching" program - customized, small group coaching sessions focused on improving the effectiveness of classroom interactions.

Evanston Roundtable Media

Grant Amount: \$15,000

This grant supports Evanston RoundTable Media in entering its second year of partnership with Report for America (RFA), a national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on under-covered issues and communities.