



NONPROFIT CAPACITY BUILDING GRANT APPLICATION GUIDELINES

OVERVIEW

The Community Foundation of East Central Illinois (CFECI) will be awarding \$60,000 in grants to strengthen the nonprofit sector as part of its vision of raising the quality of life throughout the region it serves.

CFECI will provide grants of up to \$5,000 to eligible nonprofits for capacity building and technical assistance to improve an identified area of operations. These **Nonprofit Capacity Building Grants** require a 10% matching contribution.

PURPOSE

Nonprofit Capacity Building Grants strengthen nonprofits by increasing their core systems and operations. By improving infrastructure, these time-limited projects help nonprofits more effectively carry out their missions – now and into the future. This grant program focuses on projects that improve capacity in an identified area of organizational operations, including (but not limited to):

- Communications
- Data management
- Diversity, equity and inclusion
- Financial management
- Fundraising
- Governance
- Leadership
- Mission & strategy
- Program delivery
- Program evaluation

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible nonprofit organizations:

- Must be a charitable tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization with no less than 2 years of operation. Organizations with an annual budget size of \$1 million or less will be given priority in funding consideration.

- Must be located in and serve residents of CFECI's [service area](#) which includes Champaign, Piatt, Ford, Iroquois, Vermilion, Edgar, Douglas, Coles and Moultrie counties.
- Applications must be for one of the following eligible capacity-building activities:
 - Board training and education
 - Staff training and leadership development
 - Strategic planning
 - Succession planning
 - Technology/software
 - Other assessment, consulting, 1:1 coaching, or facilitation that improves an identified area of organizational capacity.

EXAMPLES OF CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Examples of capacity building projects include:

- **Leadership development:** supporting a leadership training experience for two or more members of the organization's leadership/ management team.
- **Planning activities:** including organizational assessments, strategic planning, fund development, communications/marketing, or business planning.
- **Board development:** may include activities such as leadership training, executive coaching, defining the role of the board, and strengthening governance.
- **Internal operations:** improvements to financial management, human resources or volunteer management.
- **Technology improvements:** IT capacity through upgrades to hardware and software, networking, websites, and staff training to optimize use of technology.

Applicants are encouraged to identify training, consulting and/or 1:1 coaching opportunities that best meet their organizational needs. Upon request, CFECI can provide a list of local consultants with various specialties in nonprofit capacity building.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The evaluation criteria are as follows:

- **Mission:** Is the organization's mission and programming valuable in raising the quality of life in the East Central Illinois community?
- **Impact:** Does the organization clearly identify one area of organizational capacity that the project will improve the organization's ability to fulfill its mission?
- **Readiness:** Does the organization demonstrate that this is a good time to undertake the project and show that it has a strong commitment from leadership, staff, board members and other stakeholders to assist with the project?

- **Project plan:** Is the capacity building project plan clear and achievable, with specific measurable goals?

GRANT AMOUNT

Applicants may request up to **\$5,000**, which requires a 10% matching contribution from the applicant organization.

The Community Foundation will award up to **\$60,000** in grants.

TIMELINE

- May 1, 2026 – **Application Opens**
- May 31, 2026 – **Application Closes**
- June 2026 – **Applicants notified of Application Status**
- July 1, 2026 – **Capacity Building Project Starts**
- By June 30, 2027 – **Project Ends**

INTERESTED IN APPLYING

Organizations that are interested in applying are asked to submit a Nonprofit Capacity Building Grant Application to CFECI by May 31, 2026 at 11:59 p.m. [Click here for the grant application portal.](#)

QUESTIONS?

Please contact info@cfeci.org or call 217-359-0125. For additional information about the Community Foundation of East Central Illinois, visit www.cfeci.org