

Nonprofit Capacity Building Program

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS



Capacity-building grants aim to invest in the health and sustainability of nonprofit organizations serving La Crosse County. La Crosse Community Foundation (LCF) has allocated \$300,000 this calendar year specifically for nonprofits who need investment in their internal infrastructure to create a more sustainable and effective organization. This year's capacity building grant opportunity will give preference to applicant organizations with missions aimed at reducing disparities for La Crosse County residents who identify with historically marginalized communities. Individual awards are expected to range from \$50,000-\$90,000 for a minimum of two consecutive years and will be paired with significant in-kind support through robust, ongoing technical assistance offered throughout the entire grant award period. This pilot grant program has limited capacity, and organizations must be invited to complete a full application. Organizations interested in applying will be required to attend an informational webinar and complete a Letter of Intent to be considered.

Purpose of this Grant

La Crosse Community Foundation is committed to investing in our community's nonprofit sector through evolving grant programs aimed at meeting needs identified by nonprofits during our recent nonprofit focus groups. We are also committed to building a more equitable and inclusive community by uplifting opportunities for area residents to build social capital across areas of difference.

La Crosse Community Foundation defines social capital as the trust individuals develop with one another through genuine, mutually beneficial relationships, most commonly called friendships. Individuals with high social capital have broad connections across areas of difference that help them endure difficult times and access better opportunities.

Nonprofits are a vital resource for diverse communities, expanding relationships and connecting them with essential services needed to build social capital and thrive. When the infrastructure of these organizations is strengthened, the communities they serve benefit, and our region moves closer to reducing disparities.

The specific purpose of the Nonprofit Capacity Building Program is to align financial support for both general operating and capacity building along with intense, on-going technical assistance to support nonprofits in achieving new levels of organizational strength and effectiveness.

Grantees will closely partner with La Crosse Community Foundation to meet defined goals and manage the tracking and reporting requirements of this grant; they'll also be asked to share lessons learned with other awardees through quarterly nonprofit networking sessions aimed to build new, trusting relationships across impact areas and organizations to help spur collaboration.

Organizational Eligibility

Organizations that are eligible to apply must meet the criteria defined below. This round, award preference will be given to organizations with missions aimed at reducing disparities for La Crosse County residents who identify with historically marginalized communities.

- 501(c)3 nonprofit organization with at least 1 paid staff (full-time or part-time)
- located in and primarily serve residents of La Crosse County
- has been consistently operating for at least 3 years
- filed an IRS Form 990EZ or 990 in 2023

- Participation in a 1-hour pre-application informational webinar and a one-on-one meeting with LCF's Impact Director to discuss needs
- Agreement to all Grant Awardee Requirements & Expectations listed below
- Organizations must comply with ["Appendix A" of LCF's DEIB Policy](#)

Organizations that are best suited for this opportunity will also identify with most of the indicators defined in the 'developing' column of the Nonprofit Organizational Lifecycle tool seen in Attachment A.

Eligible Use of Funds

Up to 70% of award may be utilized for ongoing operational expenses. This funding is intended to allow "breathing room" as organizations work toward capacity building efforts. A minimum of 30% of award must be dedicated to specific capacity-building activities including, but not limited to:

- **Planning Activities:** E.g., organizational assessments, strategic planning, fundraising assessment and development, communications/marketing, contingency/disaster planning, or business planning.
- **Board and Leadership Development:** May include activities such as leadership training, defining the role of the board, strengthening governance, assistance with executive transition, succession, expanding the diversity of the board and leadership, and search process.
- **Strategic Relationships:** Technical assistance/consultant support to help two or more organizations work through collaboration and strategic restructuring; positioning for merger or affiliation; or business planning for social enterprise and earned income.
- **Internal Operations:** Improvements to financial management, internal controls and chart of accounts, human resources, or volunteer management; onboarding new staff, training and technical assistance on quality improvement, or facility planning.
- **Technology Improvements:** IT capacity through upgrades to hardware and software, cybersecurity, networking, websites, and staff training to optimize the use of technology.
- **Developing New Sources for Earned Income:** Business planning, contracting, startup costs for a new program, legal services, accounting, or actuarial services.
- **Building Evaluation Capacity:** Consultants may be utilized to develop evaluation plans and train staff and board on outcome evaluation methods and metrics.
- **Evidence-Based Program Adaptation or Implementation:** Explore, modify, or adapt an existing evidence-based program or service not currently or previously offered. NOTE: Because of the small dollar amount and short duration of this grant opportunity, it is not intended for the development from scratch, or validation, of a new program or service. This opportunity is intended only for organizations to implement or adapt an existing evidence-based model that is new to the organization.

This is not an extensive list of activities that can be funded by this grant program. LCF will work with grant applicants to determine how and if their proposed activities fit within the eligible activities listed above. Applicants will be required to complete LCF's NPO Self-Assessment Tool in advance of their application to help direct them to their areas most in need of support. Results from the assessment must substantiate the need for the capacity building goals and activities defined in their grant application.

Application Timeline

RFP announced:	May 30, 2024
Informational webinar:	Option 1: June 11 at 3:30PM Option 2: June 17 at 10:00AM
Letter of Intent due:	June 21, 2024
One-on-One Meeting:	Scheduled individually with each applicant; no later than July 31, 2024
Full Application Opens:	July 15, 2024
Technical assistance:	Ongoing, schedule a time:

For system access or application support, call 608-782-3223 x29 or email ellen@laxcommfoundation.com

To discuss your project plans/application details, call 608-782-3223 x23 or email lauren@laxcommfoundation.com

Proposals due:	August 14, 2024
Applicant Interviews:	August 26 – September 6, 2024
Awards announced:	Week of September 16, 2024
Grant period begins:	October 1, 2024

Applying for a Grant

This process is anticipated to take 15-20 hours from start to finish, including all of the steps defined below.

Step 1: Attend a webinar. Two informational webinars will be held to review this RFP with interested organizations and to answer questions. Participation in at least one of these webinars is mandatory for an eligible application. Register for one of the two here:

- **Option 1: June 11th 3:00pm – [register here](#)**
- **Option 2: June 17th 10:00am - [register here](#)**

Step 2: Complete a Letter of Intent (LOI), must be submitted using the foundation's online grant portal including:

- How your organization's mission is uniquely positioned to help constituents build their social capital
- Brief summary of proposed capacity building activities
- Your organization's results from the NPO Self-Assessment Tool on the LCF website
- Three (3) years of organizational financial statements, including:
 - current year to date budget to actuals or income statement
 - two prior years' budget to actuals or income statement
 - current balance sheet
- Letter of Support from your current Board Chair/President

Please know all financial information will remain CONFIDENTIAL and will NOT be shared or utilized as a part of the evaluation process if invited to apply.

Step 3: Schedule a one-on-one meeting with Lauren to review assessment results and historical financial information, as well as discuss focus for grant application. <https://calendly.com/lauren-lcf/meeting-w-lauren-lcf>

Step 4: *If invited to apply* begin application – All grant applications must be submitted using the foundation’s online grant portal. The form will open July 15, 2024, and will close at 11:59pm on August 14th, 2024. No late applications will be accepted.

Step 5: Seek technical assistance as needed throughout the process. Technical assistance and primary grant program contact: Lauren Journot, Impact Director
lauren@laxcommfoundation.com | 608-782-3223 x23

Step 6: Submit complete application in online portal.

Step 7: Interview with evaluation committee. Interviews will be scheduled individually with each applicant. Interviews will occur between August 26 and September 6, 2024.

Letter of Intent form pdf (viewing only):

[“Click here to preview”](#)

Application form pdf (viewing only):

[“Click here to preview”](#)

Application Evaluation

While the La Crosse Community Foundation Impact Committee oversees the foundation’s competitive grantmaking, a separately recruited committee of current and/or former nonprofit leadership/experts will evaluate all applications and make award recommendations for approval by the Board of Directors. The evaluation committee is being recruited now and will be announced at a later date.

Applications will be evaluated utilizing the scoring rubric shared as Attachment B. All applicants will also be invited to meet with the evaluation committee to further advocate for their organization and address any questions or concerns.

Grant Awardee Requirements & Expectations

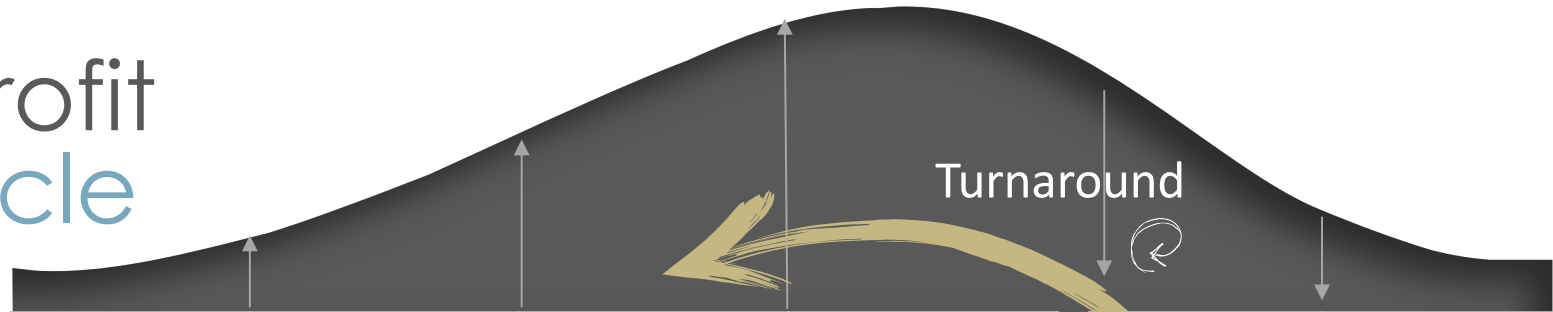
Nonprofit Capacity Building Program awards include fiscal support paired with ongoing technical assistance, in-kind training opportunities, and coaching for the organization’s leadership and governing body. Organizations accepted into the Nonprofit Capacity Building Program will be required to commit to the following engagement with La Crosse Community Foundation:

- Participation in the Certificate of Nonprofit Leadership Development program or ongoing participation in CNLD Level 2 Cohort for at least 1 member of the organization’s paid staff
- Participation of the organization’s Board of Directors in levels 1 & 2 of LCF’s Fundamentals of Board Governance training
- Participation in a minimum of two (2) annual coaching sessions for the organization’s core leadership staff person
- Participation in annual nonprofit self-assessment and strategic review

- Completion of survey following participation in the Nonprofit Capacity Building Program
- Other technical assistance and training opportunities as identified in partnership with grantee

Organizations accepted into the Nonprofit Capacity Building Program will work with LCF staff to set performance measurements that are realistic and appropriate for the organization's capacity building needs prior to executing the grant agreement. Final performance measure reports will be due upon completion of the grant period. Success will be defined by an organization's ability to transcend from the 'Developing' column to the 'Growth' column in the Nonprofit Lifecycle tool displayed in Attachment A.

Nonprofit Lifecycle



Lifecycle Stages		Idea	Developing	Growth	Maturity	Decline	Crisis
Organizational Elements	Impact	Informal – Need established, best practices integrated & pilot launched	Pilot successful – Lessons integrated into design / Measurement starts	Established in marketplace – Strong results, partner-of-choice & consistent delivery	Consistent results through robust evaluation / Focused on continuous improvement, scale & system-building	Need exists, but nonprofit isn't partner-of-choice / Market duplication from other nonprofits	Demand near zero / Intense competition for resources & energy
	Brand	Not utilized	First official marketing materials – Primary method of marketing is word-of-mouth	Build-out of marketing & communication needs, including public & media relations	Sophisticated marketing & communications plan using multiple channels / Everyone equipped to tell story	Decreased public interest / Issue area not discussed in the media	Unable to attract media or public attention / Messaging does not resonate with public
	Revenue	Most are in-kind	Limited financial resources – Lives hand-to-mouth	More diverse financial resources with established relationships with funders, but still unpredictable	High degree of financial diversity with established relationships with multiple funders / Endowment exists / Higher degree of financial predictability	Funders are not renewing contracts and not contacting organization / Low cash reserves / Decreasing donor retention & loyalty	Cash reserves insufficient to cover operating expenses / Long-time donors tapped out
	Operations & Culture	Entrepreneurial Founder using volunteer resources for guidance / Culture is defined by Founder	Flat organization – Decisions are likely made by Founder / Volunteers needed for hands-on support / Culture is action-oriented	Founder has hired or becomes Executive Director and is key decision-maker with Board guidance / Increased division of labor & accountability as staff is hired / Culture is results-oriented / Volunteers are used as resources	Leadership is often second or third generation from Founder / Clear division of labor & accountability among staff / Culture is well-defined and serves as a competitive advantage / Volunteers are seen as ambassadors	Increasing turnover of staff & volunteers / Decreased ability to attract top talent / Decreased transparency	Inability to fill key roles / High contention & division among staff / Mistrust of leadership
	Governance	Not yet developed	Formal governance starts – Most likely homogeneous group	Board expansion – More diversity with more focus on planning & oversight	Board is more policy- & strategy-focused / Delegates management to Executive Director	Board members hard to recruit, retain & engage / Low focus of strategic issues	Board not fulfilling fiduciary responsibilities

Nonprofit Capacity Building Program Grant Rubric 2024

Categories/ Questions	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL
	WEAK		AVERAGE		STRONG	
I. LOCAL IMPACT	Organization shared community impact, but are not clear about who or how impact is made	Organization shared single instance of impact but did not demonstrate impact on overall community need	Organization shared qualitative data; unclear if organization impacts marginalized communities	Organization shared data and identified the impact made to the overall community need	Organization shared qualitative data that showed direct impact on marginalized communities and overall community need	
II. SOCIAL CAPITAL ALIGNMENT	Does not advance social capital in our community	Has minimal impact on advancing social capital in our community; primarily through bonding	Has moderate impact on advancing social capital in our community; primarily through bonding	Advances social capital in our community; includes bonding & bridging or linking	Significantly advances social capital in our community; strongly through bridging or includes all 3 networks	
III. PARTNERSHIPS/ COLLABORATION	No partners/ collaborations demonstrated; no LOS	Minimal partners/ collaborations demonstrated; no LOS	Partners/ collaborations exist minimally; LOS provided	Partners/ collaborations are utilized; LOS provided to support engagement	Partners/ collaborations are meaningfully utilized to share capacity and resources; LOS demonstrates engagement	
IV. STRATEGY ALIGNMENT	Organization has current priorities that do not align with their proposed capacity building plan	Organization has current priorities that loosely align with their proposed capacity building plan; could lead to mission drift	Organization has current priorities that align with proposed capacity building plan; mission growth is not affected	Organization has current priorities that align with proposed capacity building plan; provides plan for mission growth	Organization has current priorities that align with proposed capacity building plan; clear expectations for mission growth	
V. USE OF FUNDS	Shows ineligible use of funds; does not align with self-assessment results	Shows eligible use of funds; does not align with self-assessment results	Shows eligible use of funds; aligns with self-assessment results; does not align with training opportunities	Shows eligible use of funds; aligns with self-assessment results; aligns with LCF training opportunities	Shows eligible use of funds; strongly aligns with both self-assessment results and LCF training opportunities	
VI. CAPACITY BUILDING	Organization has not identified barriers	Organization has identified barriers but no further plan is ready	Organization has identified barriers and has developed a plan without demonstrating realistic expectations	Organization has identified barriers and a developed plan with realistic expectations	Organization has identified barriers, developed a plan, and demonstrated realistic expectations	
					Total: _____ / 35	