



SOMOS COMUNIDAD FUND

2024 GRANT APPLICATION GUIDELINES

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

We invite you to consider applying for funding through the Somos Comunidad Fund at Grand Rapids Community Foundation. Guided by the voices of our Latinx* communities, we seek to reimagine philanthropy for ourselves. We recognize the vibrancy of our diverse cultures and the philanthropy that exists within our communities. This fund will serve to uplift and build on our legacy of giving, invest in efforts that allow for the transformation of Latinx communities by determining our own future, and tap into our potential to move our Latinx communities forward. The Somos Comunidad Fund launched in 2021, and this is its first competitive grant round. As support for Somos Comunidad grows, we look forward to being able to increase the available grant funds in the future. Your grant application must be submitted online through our [grant portal](#) by **Monday, October 28th, 2024 at 5pm.**

*While we honor the ways our community self-identifies, choosing to use the term Latinx allows us to expand beyond binary gender roles and nationalities to be inclusive of individuals' whole identity.

Included in these guidelines, you will find:

- 2024 Grant Application Timeline
- Background and Context
- Focus Areas
- Eligibility
- Submission Process
- Application Questions
- Evaluation Criteria
- Reporting Requirements
- Resources and Contact Information

TIMELINE SNAPSHOT





A more detailed timeline, including a link to the community listening report and registration for the application information sessions in [English](#) and [Spanish](#), is available at GRFoundation.org/SomosComunidad.

BACKGROUND and CONTEXT

Somos Comunidad Fund knows that building deep relationships with communities most impacted by inequity must be at the core of our work and seeks their guidance in identifying and implementing relevant solutions to address critical issues. In the summer of 2022, we began what will be ongoing engagement with a variety of folks in local Latinx communities, which informed the current request for proposals and application process. These voices reaffirmed the need for us to center work led by Latinx communities including Latinx youth, as well as to support community groups, projects, and movements that exist outside of traditional nonprofit structures and organizations.

Somos Comunidad Fund operates from a belief that Latinx communities are not a monolith. In the United States, people are impacted by oppressive systems based on race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language ability, documentation status, disability, class, age, and other forms of discrimination that intersect in ways as unique as each individual. Put another way, the experiences and challenges of an undocumented, white-passing Latino might be very different from those of a queer Afro-Latina from Puerto Rico, even though both might identify as Latinx. There are many groups and organizations already serving Latinx communities, and we seek to partner with those that align with the goals and values of both Somos Comunidad Fund and Grand Rapids Community Foundation as a whole. We recognize that our resources are limited, and we believe that meaningful community change can only be achieved through strong collaboration with organizations, community groups, and individuals representing a variety of intersecting identities.

Our work is also informed by a volunteer advisory committee that leads decision-making for the Somos Comunidad Fund, including recommendations for grant awards. This committee is made up of Latinx community members representing a range of ages, country of origin, and life and professional experience. You can view the list of committee members on [our website](#), and connect with us if you are interested in serving in the future.

We expect that our grantmaking approach will evolve as we continue to learn and grow, and we know that there will be moments where we fall short of our goals. We commit to actively and regularly seeking feedback on ways for us to improve our practice and better serve our community. Opportunities for engagement with Somos Comunidad Fund throughout this grant cycle are outlined in the timeline above.

Grand Rapids Community Foundation North Star

For West Michigan to grow and prosper, we must make sure that everyone can apply their talents and creativity to fuel our future. It is only by connecting across perspectives and overcoming inequities that we can build and sustain an inclusive economy and thriving community.



FOCUS AREAS

Up to \$100,000 is available, and may be distributed amongst multiple organizations/projects for this round of funding. The Somos Comunidad Fund is seeking proposals serving Latinx communities that:

- Reduce barriers (including documentation status, language, transportation, etc.) to accessing education and job training, legal services, physical and mental healthcare, and basic needs such as food, clothing, and housing for Latinx communities, especially those who are undocumented, or create alternatives through mutual aid spaces.
- Offer safe spaces and development opportunities for youth, including after-school and summer programs, tutoring, job shadowing and internships, and self-expression through the arts.
- Build or extend Latinx-led social or cultural organizations, groups, projects, or activities that strengthen support networks, provide a sense of belonging, and/or celebrate Latinx communities, particularly through the arts.
- Community organizing and/or advocacy efforts addressing immigration reform, community safety, gun violence, substance use, and/or environmental justice.

While consideration will be given to all eligible applications, priority will be given to proposals that:

- Come from Latinx-led organizations or community groups (defined as a majority in three or more of the following categories: founder, executive director, internal leadership team, staff, volunteers, and board of directors)
- Include Latinx communities who will be impacted in the creation, implementation, and evaluation of the proposed programming or services
- Demonstrate specific efforts to serve undocumented Latinx communities and/or Latinx youth
- Include collaborative partnerships among multiple organizations

ELIGIBILITY

Community organizations and groups, whether they are 501(c)(3) or applying with a [fiduciary](#), and government entities (including schools) may apply for grants for programs that benefit Latinx communities in Kent County. Eligible organizations do not discriminate in hiring staff or providing services on the basis of race, gender, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, age, national origin, or disability.

Proposed projects or programs should begin on or after January 1, 2025. Applications for projects up to two years in length (through January 1, 2027) are welcome. Applicants are encouraged to apply for up to two years of programming (2025 and 2026), as additional opportunities to apply for Somos Comunidad funding are not expected to be offered over the next two years. For example, grant requests expected to average from \$10,000 to \$40,000 annually can be requested at \$20,000 - \$80,000 total.

Up to \$100,000 is available and may be distributed amongst multiple organizations/projects for this round of funding. Applications will be accepted for up to \$100,000, including for collaborative projects. They will be reviewed in two categories as determined by request size: (a) applications under \$20,000 and (b) applications of \$20,000 - \$100,000.



SUBMISSION PROCESS

Your grant application must be completed online through [our grant portal](#). All applicants need to create a new account and review their Organization Profile, which requires a listing of board members, organization description, primary contact, as well as current and last year's annual budget amounts. Applications require a brief project description, project start and end dates, a project budget, racial and gender demographic information for clients, staff, board, and volunteers, and a total number for each group. Applications also require uploaded financial documentation. Examples of what you can provide include internal financial statements (balance sheet, cash flow statement, etc.), Form 990, or audited financial statements. You may submit a video to address the narrative application questions. If you choose a video submission, please state the application question you are addressing before giving your response. Video submissions may be up to six minutes in length. Please note that additional information may be requested after committee application review. You may choose to complete a traditional written application or to submit a video in English or Spanish.

We recognize that character and word limits create time-intensive labor for applicants required to reduce or feel pressured to stretch their responses to fit. We also recognize that there are those who appreciate some level of direction and want to be considerate of our volunteer committee members reviewing each proposal. As such, the word counts associated with each question are suggestions- we simply encourage you to explain your work as clearly and concisely as possible.

If you choose a video submission, please state the application question you are addressing before giving your response and note that you will still need to submit a budget, demographic information, and respond to Question 1 in our grant portal. Video applications under \$20,000 may be up to five minutes in length, and for more than \$20,000 up to eight minutes.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- 1) Grand Rapids Community Foundation is committed to creating a community that is working to eliminate inequities and is anti-racist. We seek partners who share in this commitment and demonstrate practices that disrupt the conditions that hold racism in place.
 - a) Is anyone excluded from services, employment, or volunteer participation based on their age, ability, economic circumstance, education, race, criminal record, ethnicity, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, religion, spiritual beliefs, marital status, national origin or veteran status? *(Yes or No)*
 - b) Does your organization have an equity statement that communicates your pursuit of anti-racist practices and aspirations toward equity? *(Yes or No)*
 - c) Is your organization led by people of color (defined as having people of color as a majority in three or more of the categories below)? *(Yes or No)*

Select the categories in which people of color are a majority at your organization: founder, executive director, leadership team, board of directors, volunteers, staff. *(check boxes)*



d) Is your organization Latinx-led (defined as having a Latinx majority in three or more of the categories below)? *(Yes or No)*

Select the Latinx-majority categories at your organization: founder, executive director, leadership team, board of directors, volunteers, staff. *(check boxes)*

- 2) Describe the proposed project or program, including which focus area it will address, specific Latinx communities served, and timeline. *(appx 300 words)*
- 3) How do you define success for this proposal, and what signals will confirm you have accomplished your goals? *(appx 200 words)*
- 4) How do you incorporate the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion into the operations of your organization? For example, do you include the perspectives of the communities you serve in program design and delivery, or do you have specific equity policies or hiring practices that inform your work? *(appx 200 words)*
- 5) If the proposal is not fully funded, will you carry out the project? If so, where will you find the funding? *(appx 300 words)*

Applications requesting more than \$20,000 - \$100,000 require responses to the following additional questions:

- 6) Does this proposal disrupt the root causes or underlying conditions (policies, practices, institutions, culture, and power) that hold inequitable outcomes for Latinx communities in place? If so, how? If the project or proposal doesn't demonstrate disruption of root causes or underlying conditions, in what other ways does your organization address this? *(appx 200 words)*
- 7) How have Latinx community members been engaged in creating the proposed project or program, and what leadership role will they play throughout implementation and evaluation? *(appx 150 words)*
- 8) We believe that collaboration strengthens work through the diversity of thought, creativity, and relationship-building it facilitates. Please describe the roles of your partners, and if they are confirmed or tentative for the current proposal. If you do not currently collaborate with other groups or organizations, please share why. *(appx 150 words)*

Optional Question: Is there any other information or feedback you would like to share with us?

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Somos Comunidad Fund Advisory Committee will use a [scoring rubric](#) to evaluate the applications. The following criteria will be considered: focus area alignment, impact, representation, feasibility, and past partnerships. Additionally, requests of more than \$20,000 will be evaluated on how they disrupt root causes and demonstrate collective responsibility. **While high scoring will be considered, it does not guarantee funding.** Funding decisions also consider budget constraints, alignment with strategic priorities, and overall impact.



REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

We seek to minimize extractive reporting burdens on our grant partners. You may complete a traditional written report or participate in a 30-minute meeting with a program officer and/or Our Somos Comunidad Fund committee members within two months of the end of your grant period. Both options require the submission of a final budget through our grant portal. Written and meeting reports include sharing the successes and lessons learned throughout the grant period (recognizing that conditions may be different than when you applied and that your definition of success may have shifted) and feedback about the grant process as a whole. You will also be invited to share photos, videos, or other visual materials if they are available as a way for us to celebrate and amplify your critical community work. To build transparency and community accountability, summaries of your work will be made available throughout our ongoing engagement processes.

NEED HELP?

We want to ensure that you feel supported in the process of applying for grant funding at Grand Rapids Community Foundation. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us!

- For questions related to the content of your proposal, eligibility requirements, or identifying a fiscal sponsor, contact Chantal Pasag, program officer, at 616.284.4924 or CPasag@grfoundation.org
- For technical assistance with the online application, call Keri Jaynes, grants manager, at 616.284.4911 or email KJaynes@GRFoundation.org
- For more information about Grand Rapids Community Foundation and Our Somos Comunidad Fund, please visit GRFoundation.org/SomosComunidad.