

Community Development Fund
2025 Grant Guidelines
Updated 05-12-25

OUR MISSION

The Princeton Mercer Regional Chamber of Commerce's Community Development Fund (The Chamber's Fund) contributes to the strength and vitality of our communities by actively supporting organizations that contribute to the economic and workforce development interests of the region. The Fund partners with regional nonprofits to meet specific needs within our community.

OVERVIEW

The Chamber's Fund was established in 2013 at the Princeton Area Community Foundation with a gift of \$500,000 from the Princeton Mercer Regional Chamber of Commerce Foundation. Grant recipients are chosen by an advisory committee of Chamber members and confirmed by its Board of Directors with assistance from the Princeton Area Community Foundation. Last year, the fund awarded \$30,000 to one local organization.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

The Princeton Mercer Regional Chamber of Commerce supports the Community Foundation's commitment to improve the quality of life of the most vulnerable in our regional footprint and collaborate with community organizations that embrace diversity as a value and practice. Achieving diversity requires an enduring commitment to inclusion, fully expressed in the organizational culture, values, norms and behaviors. We will support a commitment to diversity in all its forms, encompassing but not limited to age, race, gender identity, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, national origin, and disability.

WHAT WE FUND

One-year grants:

Projects / programs from organizations that play a critical role in the following areas:

- Education
- Economic Opportunity and Workforce Development

Education: We support innovative programs that help low-income and at-risk students succeed in school and prepare for post-secondary education and/or entry into the workforce. Priority is given to programs that reach a broad number of students, bring together community resources, support curriculum innovation, and could be replicated if successful.

Economic Opportunity and Workforce Development: We support the creation of economic opportunity through grants to nonprofits that foster economic development including programs that support small business development and expansion, commercial revitalization, job creation, work-entry programs, specific skills training, and transportation.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

An applicant must have tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Service Code, be a publicly supported charity under Section 509, and be registered with the NJ Division of Consumer Affairs as a charity in good standing.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.njconsumeraffairs.gov/charities/Pages/FAQ.aspx>

To check your status, you may visit: <https://njconsumeraffairs.state.nj.us/public-charity-search-results>

Applications will be accepted from organizations that operate and provide services within the Chamber's geographic area which includes the following municipalities:

- Municipality of Princeton
- West Windsor Township
- Plainsboro Township
- Montgomery Township
- South Brunswick Township
- City of Trenton
- Hamilton Township
- Ewing Township
- Lawrence Township
- Hopewell Borough
- Hopewell Township
- Pennington Borough
- East Windsor Township
- Hightstown Borough
- Robbinsville Township
- Monroe Township
- Cranbury Township
- Borough of Allentown
- Franklin Township
- Borough of Rocky Hill
- The Village of Kingston

Please note the geographic area for the Chamber's Fund is distinct from the geographic footprint of the Princeton Area Community Foundation. Nonprofit organizations may apply for a grant from Princeton Mercer Regional Chamber of Commerce regardless of whether they have applied for funding from the Community Foundation's other grantmaking programs.

WHAT WE DO NOT FUND

- Services outside the above stated geographic region
- Statewide organizations unless:
 - The organization maintains a physical office presence within the Chamber's geography; and
 - All Princeton Mercer Regional Chamber of Commerce funds will only be used within the Chamber's geography; and
 - It is abundantly clear the proposed initiative can be restricted to the Chamber's geography.
- Endowment-building campaigns
- Fundraising appeals, events, and routine expenses associated with fundraising
- Fraternal and religious activities
- Lobbying and other political activities
- Nonprofits that support terrorist activities or discriminate based upon race, color, region, national origin, gender, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or veteran status.
- Pre-college-level private schools, veteran or fraternal organizations, religious programs or activities unless funds support direct community benefit.
- Proposals from colleges or universities
- Scholarships and individual sponsorships
- Sponsorship for field trips or sports activities
- Organized sports teams or sports leagues
- Sponsorship of conventions
- Tax-supported and government-operated basic programs and services (e.g., core curricular school activities or essential police and fire services)

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Your electronic application must include the following:

1. Requested amount
2. Organization's mission, accomplishments, and challenges
3. Organization's operating budget
4. Project description
5. Priority area: Education or Economic Opportunity and Workforce Development
6. Dates for the project
7. Project budget
8. Municipalities served
9. Target population and reach
10. Proposal summary and rationale about the need/impact in the community
11. Collaborators and supporters
12. Measures of success
13. IRS Form 990
14. Fiscal Sponsor Agreement (if applicable)

You must file your application online by 12:00pm on the deadline date, June 18, 2025. Applications received after the deadline will not be reviewed. You will receive an automated email confirmation that your proposal has been received and an approximate timeline for the review process. All required documents can be uploaded into your online application. **Your application is considered incomplete and will not be reviewed if any of the required information is not received by the 12:00pm deadline.** It is very important for you to check your application thoroughly.

SELECTION CRITERIA

- The project fits within the PMRCC Community Development Fund at PACF's mission.
- The proposal contributes to economic development in the region. For example, an investment in job training provides future benefits for the individual and the community.
- The grant's rationale is clear and compelling.
- The proposal has a meaningful impact as demonstrated by measurable outcomes.
- The organization leverages partnerships for greater reach.
- The proposal aligns with the mission of the organization.

Grant Information Session(s): There will be a virtual Grant Information Session on **Thursday, May 29 from 12:00pm – 1:00pm**. Applicants are encouraged to attend and ask questions. This session highlights key aspects of the grant guidelines and application process. Attendance is not a prerequisite to apply for a grant; however, to attend the information session, registration is required and only granted to organizations eligible to apply. To register, please visit the [Princeton Mercer Regional Chamber of Commerce Community Development Fund at PACF](#) webpage.

Award Decisions: Grant awards are funded by the Princeton Mercer Regional Chamber of Commerce Community Development Fund at the Princeton Area Community Foundation. They are distinct from discretionary or other grants awarded by the Community Foundation. The Princeton Mercer Regional Chamber of Commerce grant awards are recommended by the Chamber Fund's Committee for approval to the Board of the Community Foundation. Grantees are notified of the decisions via email by Community Foundation staff. Grantees are encouraged to publicize their awards through press releases, newsletters, websites, and annual reports, and to acknowledge support of the *Princeton Mercer Regional Chamber of Commerce's Community Development Fund at the Princeton Area Community Foundation*.

Use of Grant Money: Grant money must be used exclusively for the purposes and activities specified in the grant application. Grantees may be required to return grant funds not used in the manner described in their grant proposal. Grantees should notify the Community Foundation as soon as possible if their needs or circumstances change.

Reporting Requirements: Grantees are required to submit a brief end-of-grant narrative highlighting lessons learned, future changes, and any unintended consequences. We seek to learn about the impact nonprofit partners can have with this funding. Partner feedback and context about results achieved helps us to determine how to best align future funding. Missing grantee narratives impact our ability to consider new requests for funding.

Non-Discrimination: The Community Foundation supports projects that promote inclusiveness and that do not discriminate based on race, gender, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, national origin, disability, or any other characteristics protected by law.