



## **Community Development Fund**

### ***2026 Grant Guidelines***

#### **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 \$28,500 in total.

#### **WHAT WE FUND**

##### **One-year grants:**

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

**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

- Applicants must be tax-exempt and recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a public charity as described in sections 501(c)(3) and 509(a)(1), (2), or (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.
- Applicants also should be registered with the NJ Division of Consumer Affairs as a charity in good standing. For more info, please visit their Frequently Asked Questions webpage [here](#). To check your status, you may visit [click here](#).

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	Ewing Township	Robbinsville Township
West Windsor Township	Lawrence Township	Monroe Township
Plainsboro Township	Hopewell Borough	Cranbury Township
Montgomery Township	Hopewell Township	Borough of Allentown
South Brunswick Township	Pennington Borough	Franklin Township
City of Trenton	East Windsor Township	Borough of Rocky Hill
Hamilton Township	Hightstown Borough	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 The Community Development Fund 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 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, sponsorships, and routine fundraising expenses
- Festivals, conventions, field trips or sports activities

- Fraternal and religious activities
- Lobbying and other political activities
- Nonprofits that support terrorist activities or discriminate based upon race, color, religion, national origin, gender, age disability, marital status, sexual orientation or veteran status.
- Organized sports teams or sports leagues
- Pre-college-level private or independent schools, veteran or fraternal organizations, religious programs or activities unless funds support direct community benefit
- Scholarships for higher education
- Proposals from colleges or universities
- 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:

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| 1. Requested amount  | 12. Proposal summary and rationale about the need/impact in the community      |
| 2. Organization's mission, accomplishments, and challenges | 13. Priority area: Education or Economic Opportunity and Workforce Development |
| 3. Organization's operating budget                         | 14. Collaborators and supporters   |
| 4. Mission   | 15. Measures of success  |
| 5. Organization updates                                    | 16. IRS Form 990   |
| 6. Accomplishments and challenges                          | 17. Fiscal Sponsor Agreement (if applicable)                                   |
| 7. Project description                                     |  |
| 8. Dates for the project                                   |  |
| 9. Project budget  |  |
| 10. Municipalities served                                  |  |
| 11. Target population and reach                            |  |

You must file your application online by 12:00pm on the deadline date, **Wednesday, June 10, 2026**. Applications received after the deadline will not be reviewed. You will receive an email confirmation that your proposal has been received. 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.**

## SELECTION CRITERIA

- The project fits within these grant guidelines.
- 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 21 from 2:00pm – 3:00pm**. 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. 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. These grant awards are recommended by the Chamber Fund's Committee for approval to the Board of the Community Foundation.

**Grant Announcements:** The Community Foundation first notifies all applicants of its decision by email and then posts a full listing on its website. Grantees are encouraged to publicize their awards through press releases, social media, 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**. For assistance or advice in how best to acknowledge grants, please contact Michelle Sahn, VP of Communications, at [MSahn@pacf.org](mailto:MSahn@pacf.org) or at (609)219-1800.

**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 impacts 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.