Project Connect: Civic Life & Belonging Grants
Grant Guidelines

GRANT OVERVIEW

Welcome to the Project Connect: Civic Life & Belonging Grant application. Please be sure to read the grant process and guidelines before applying.

Program Goals:
These grants are designed to ignite creative, community-driven initiatives that bring people together. Funding is available for projects in Lewis, Mason, and Thurston counties that help strengthen civic life, connection, and belonging. We're looking to support new efforts that bring people together—especially those who might not normally interact—help neighbors get to know each other and create opportunities to work on something meaningful.

To accomplish this goal, the grant supports projects that focus on one or more of the following:

- Bring people together across differences to build understanding and connection
- Create new opportunities for civic participation and locally driven solutions
- Celebrate and strengthen a sense of community and shared purpose

Successful initiatives will result in greater connections and better relationships across our community, making it a healthier, more connected place for everyone.

Grant Details and Timeline:
- Grant amounts will range from $1,000–$5,000 per project
- We expect to award up to 15 grant awards averaging around $3,000 each in 2025
- Timeline:
  - Applications open June 17
  - Applications due by July 31
  - Grant review period: August 1 – September 25
  - Funds awarded by October 31
- Applications must be received through our online grants platform by 11:59 pm on July 31st

Examples of potential projects include
- Efforts to improve or activate shared public spaces—such as community clean-ups, small upgrades, or events that utilize community space and make them more welcoming
- Collaborative public art, murals, or performances that represent diverse community voices
- Dialogues or workshops that bring together people from different perspectives—across age, faith, or lived experience—to build understanding around a shared issue
- Youth-led civic or service projects focused on local challenges

- Community storytelling circles or oral history projects that connect people across generations, cultures, or backgrounds

PROCESS AND SELECTION CRITERIA

Eligible applicants include organizations with a valid IRS determination letter confirming their 501(c)(3) status, Native American tribal agencies, public institutions, religious organizations, and projects with an approved fiscal sponsor. Individuals with project ideas may also be eligible by partnering with one of these entities to carry out a project under the organization's umbrella.

Selection Criteria:

A wide variety of projects could fit these parameters, but preference will be given to ideas that:
- Clearly state how they will meet one or more of the following goals:
  - Bring people together across differences to build understanding and connection
  - Create new opportunities for civic participation and locally driven solutions
  - Celebrate and strengthen a sense of community and shared purpose
- Clearly identify a specific and relevant need, locale, and audience in Lewis, Mason, or Thurston County
- Build on community strengths or offer innovative solutions to address local challenges
- Present a realistic, achievable plan for project implementation
- Bring diverse people together, especially those who may not normally interact
- Are supported and led by trusted, recognized, local community connectors and leaders

What Won't Be Considered for Funding:
- Projects that engage in discrimination based on age, race, national origin, ethnicity, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation, political affiliation, religious belief, or any other discriminatory reason
- Purchases for personal use (e.g., rent, car payments, laptops) — equipment purchases or contract labor may be considered in some cases
- General operating, program, or capital needs of established nonprofits
- Projects that don't clearly explain how the funding will be used, how the project will be implemented, and how it will benefit the community
- Recurring events or fundraisers
- Capital building endeavors
- Individual scholarships

We will consider applications that:
- Are complete and in the requested format.
- Clearly describe proposed activities and plans.
- Demonstrate reasonable financial health and basic capacity.
- Demonstrate how programs will be created, improved, or expanded due to grant funding.
- Commit to documenting and submitting outcomes due to grant funding.
- Align with Project Connect: Civic Life & Belonging Grant selection criteria.
- Serve Lewis, Mason, and/or Thurston Counties.

Additional Notes:
- Each organization may submit one application per cycle. Applications are reviewed by Community Foundation staff—in consultation with a community volunteer review committee—with final approval by the Community Foundation Board of Directors.

- Grantees will be asked to share a photo with permission for use on the Community Foundation's website and social media.
- Grantees will be required to submit a brief grant report within 8-12 months of the award date.

Online Grants Platform:

The Community Foundation of South Puget Sound uses an online grants platform. The platform compiles information and support materials for all the Community Foundation's grant programs.

If you are new to our online grants platform, you will need to create an account in our system. At the time of registration, you will be asked to enter the following information:

- A username that is an email address
- Your contact information
- Your organization's information, including the EIN/Tax ID number (required)
- Contact information for the organization's Executive Director or CEO

NEED HELP?

If you have any questions or accessibility concerns, need help with language translation, or have any trouble with the online grants platform, please contact Heidi Oehler (she/her) for assistance at heidi@thecommunityfoundation.com or by phone at 360.705.3340.

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