

# Grant Funding Report

Grant Funding Report: Knoxville, TN





# A Growing City Rooted in Community

Knoxville, Tennessee combines Appalachian heritage with a dynamic urban core and strong civic pride. Known for its leadership in environmental stewardship, historic preservation, public health, and poverty alleviation, Knoxville's nonprofit sector is essential to community well-being and regional development.

The city's funding landscape includes robust local and regional foundations, corporate giving programs tied to major employers, and state-administered funds. Competition for grants is significant, requiring nonprofits to demonstrate measurable impact, collaborative approaches, and alignment with Tennessee's equity, health, and economic priorities.



# Key Local Grantmakers & Programs

## City of Knoxville Community Development Department

Administers HUD's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME funds  
Supports affordable housing, public services, and neighborhood revitalization

## East Tennessee Foundation

The largest regional foundation serving 25 East TN counties  
Offers competitive grants with focuses including health, education, arts and culture, conservation, and community development  
Emphasizes place-based impact and local leadership

## Haslam Family Foundation

- Private foundation of the Haslam family (Pilot Corporation, former Governor Bill Haslam)
- Supports education, youth, faith-based initiatives, and community development projects

## Tennessee Arts Commission

- Provides project support grants, arts access grants, and capacity-building funding
- Prioritizes programs expanding arts participation, especially for underserved groups

## Truist Foundation (regional)

Offers funding for nonprofits advancing economic mobility, career readiness, and small business development in Knoxville and surrounding areas

# Most Competitive Grants in 2025

## East Tennessee Foundation Competitive Grants:

Broad eligibility but highly competitive due to regional coverage and emphasis on community-driven outcomes

## City of Knoxville CDBG Funds

Requires detailed compliance, community input, and performance measurement

## United Way Community Impact Grants

Demands strong alignment with identified community priorities and measurable systems change

## Haslam Family Foundation Grants

Selective funding decisions with a focus on transformational, sustainable community projects

# Macroeconomic Trends Impacting Knoxville Nonprofits (2025)

## Affordable Housing & Homelessness:

Rapid growth and rising rents intensify the need for housing and homelessness services

## Substance Use & Mental Health

Opioid crisis and behavioral health challenges remain critical community issues

## Workforce Development

Increased emphasis on skills training, employment pipelines, and economic mobility programs

## Environmental Resilience

Urban sustainability, green spaces, and Tennessee River watershed conservation are rising priorities

## Food Insecurity

Ongoing gaps in food access, particularly among children and seniors

# Best Practices for Competing in Knoxville's Grant Landscape

## Center Community Voice and Equity

Use inclusive language and demonstrate how programs empower diverse populations

## Demonstrate Local Collaboration

Funders prioritize partnerships with other nonprofits, schools, public agencies, and businesses

## Use Regional Data + Personal Stories

Combine Tennessee or East TN data with compelling human narratives to show urgency and impact

## Prepare for Compliance

Government grants require strong fiscal management, reporting, and evaluation systems

## Attend Funder Briefings and Webinar

East Tennessee Foundation, United Way, and state agencies often hold informational sessions and Q&As

## Build Cross-Sector Partnerships

Partner with health systems, housing authorities, educational institutions, and local governments

## Steward Relationships Proactively

Regularly update funders on program milestones, challenges, and successes — even outside grant cycles



# Grant Readiness Checklist:

## Knoxville Nonprofits

### Organizational Docs

- IRS Determination Letter (501(c)(3))
- State of Tennessee charitable registration
- Board roster with affiliations
- Audited or reviewed financials
- Operating and program budgets
- Proof of insurance coverage

### Program Materials

- Logic models or theories of change
- Evaluation plans, data collection tools
- Testimonials or impact case studies
- Regional or county-specific data supporting your mission

### Community Engagement

- Letters of support from partners, city council, or county officials
- MOUs for collaborative initiatives
- Community surveys or needs assessments



## Grant-Specific Prep

- Templates or past funded applications
- Systems for grant tracking and compliance reporting
- Internal calendar and grant review team in place

## Post-Award Capacity

- Financial reporting systems and dashboards
- Programmatic data collection and evaluation capacity
- Fundraising and sustainability strategy

## Relationship Building

- Attend local funder briefings and nonprofit networking events
- Maintain ongoing communication with current and past funders
- Share regular impact updates and success stories

# Strategic Considerations for Knoxville Nonprofits

## Diversify Revenue

Balance grants with individual donors, events, corporate sponsorships, and earned income

## Invest in Capacity

Skilled grant writers, development staff, and data analysts are essential

## Raise Visibility

Share your work through local media, forums, and online channels to build community trust and recognition

## Join Coalitions

From homelessness response to environmental stewardship, collective impact is increasingly favored

# Conclusion: Resilience Starts with Readiness

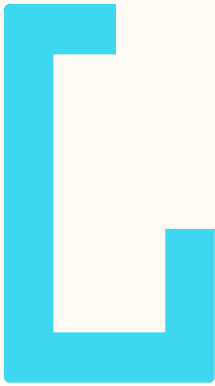
Knoxville's grant environment is competitive but rich with opportunities for nonprofits that are community-connected, strategic, and transparent. By aligning your programs with local needs and partnering with the right funders, your organization can increase its impact and sustainability.

**Harness** offers end-to-end grant support—strategy, writing, and post-award services—for nonprofits ready to grow.



**Schedule a free grant readiness assessment:**

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