



1900 Union Ave · Memphis, TN 38104 · t (901) 728-4600 · cfgm.org

Responsive Grants 2027 Guidelines

The Community Foundation of Greater Memphis continues our long-term commitments to Reforming the Housing and Justice Systems and Community Solutions, while also responding to the changing needs of nonprofits across our region. Responsive Grants were created after we paused to listen directly to local nonprofits about the conditions affecting their work. More than 100 organizations across the region responded to our survey, describing growing community needs alongside budget pressures, staffing challenges, and uncertainty in public and private funding. Since then, many nonprofits have continued to navigate these pressures while also experiencing increased demand for services, funding reductions or delays, rising operating costs, workforce strain, and changing public policies and funding requirements.

What we heard continues to shape this grant opportunity:

- Some nonprofits are managing the cumulative effects of funding reductions, interruptions, policy shifts, and rising costs that have required difficult operational or service decisions.
- Others continue to operate with limited or unstable resources while responding to increasing or changing needs in the communities they serve.
- Flexible, general operating support remains critical, as organizations work to sustain services, support their workforce, adapt to changing conditions, and remain present for their communities.

Responsive Grants continue that response by providing flexible support grounded in the realities nonprofits and the communities they serve are navigating.

ABOUT RESPONSIVE GRANTS

The Community Foundation of Greater Memphis is offering general operating support to stabilize nonprofits responding to both long-standing and emerging threats especially those serving communities that have been historically under-resourced, overlooked in public funding, or excluded from traditional philanthropic investment.

These grants are intended to help organizations continue essential services, sustain core operations, and maintain stability in a time of uncertainty. While we recognize that every nonprofit is navigating pressures, this opportunity is designed to support organizations working with and within the communities most impacted by harmful policy shifts, funding reductions, and widening public sector gaps.

There is approximately \$500,000 available for 2027. The average Responsive Grant is expected to range between \$20,000 and \$25,000.

APPLICATION EVALUATION CRITERIA

Because funding is limited, applications will be prioritized according to the urgency of the organization's context and alignment with the purpose of this grant round. For funding consideration, an organization must demonstrate that it is either under threat, serving communities facing heightened risk, or working in ways that make visible the voices, needs, and experiences of those often ignored or erased.

Additional consideration will be given to organizations showing signs of organizational stamina and are doing what it takes to hold steady in uncertain conditions, especially those maintaining strong connections to the communities they serve.

Applications will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- **Risk / Threat:** The organization or the community it serves is facing significant challenges such as funding cuts or interruptions, rising costs, increased demand for services, harmful policy changes, increased scrutiny, or a history of exclusion from public and philanthropic investment.
- **Voice / Visibility:** The organization is elevating the stories, perspectives, or lived experiences of communities that are often overlooked or erased in the public sphere.
- **Stamina:** The organization demonstrates persistence and reliability in sustaining its work, adapting as needed, and staying present for its community despite unstable conditions.
- **Services to Communities with Great Need:** The organization's mission and work are deeply connected to communities experiencing significant or growing barriers or inequities, with strong relationships and trust built over time.

If you are unsure whether your organization aligns with the goals of this grant opportunity, please contact Brianna Harrington, Director of Community Impact, to discuss your eligibility or application approach.

ELIGIBLE ORGANIZATIONS

To be eligible for a Responsive Grant, your organization must have an *in-progress* profile on [LIVEGIVEmidsouth](#). This profile must be published by the grant award date and maintained for the duration of the grant period. The in-progress LIVEGIVEmidsouth profile of eligible applicants will demonstrate that the organization:

- Has operated as a 501(c)(3) agency for the last two consecutive years or longer
- Operates in the Community Foundation's service area: west Tennessee, northern Mississippi, and/or eastern Arkansas
- Is permitted by the Tennessee Secretary of State to solicit funds
- Has the last two years of 990's and audits, if required
- Operates under sound financial management and is financially stable
- Has at least one paid staff member and stable, demonstrated board leadership
- Provides significant community impact in, has solid relationships with, and reflects the makeup of the communities it serves

The following organizations are NOT eligible to apply for funding:

- Individuals, for-profit entities, private foundations, and religious organizations.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Grant Timeline	
September 3 9:00 a.m. in person September 9 4:00 p.m. virtual	Attend an optional pre-application information session
September 8	Application opens online
September 25	Deadline to have a LIVEGIVEmidsouth profile in progress OR updates to an existing profile
October 7	Deadline to submit application online via GranteeView
October	Applicants notified via e-mail whether they are invited to continue in the grant process by participating in an interview with the grant committee
October, November	Grant committee interviews with second round applicants
December 18	Applicants notified of funding decision via e-mail
January 1 – December 31, 2027	Grant term

A complete application includes an in-progress LIVEGIVEmidsouth.org profile and application submitted via the Community Foundation's online grant portal, GranteeView. To access the grant portal, [click here](#).

All eligible applications are reviewed by a Community Foundation grant committee to determine which applicants are invited to move forward in the process and host an interview. (If your organization is invited to host an interview, further information and instructions will be provided upon notification.) Members of the committee then attend applicant interviews, before making funding recommendations to present to the Community Foundation's Board of Governors.

EVALUATION BY COMMITTEE

The [Strengthening Nonprofits Committee](#) is composed of 22 members who reflect our community and/or serve on the Community Foundation's Board of Governors. Committee members have significant nonprofit leadership experience, other deep industry experience, and/or are engaged donors to the foundation. A core value of our Community Investment Principles (see below) is inclusion. Therefore, it is expected that the membership of this committee goes beyond subject-matter experts to consider other parts of the community and other lived experiences that may be affected by the work of this committee and the Board of Governors. All members understand the grant requirements and are given a grant evaluation tool by which to guide their decision making.

HOW ARE APPLICATIONS PRIORITIZED?

All else being equal, the grant committee gives funding priority to the following.

Applications that:

- Demonstrate a clear and current organizational or community-level threat, such as active funding cuts, policy changes, increased scrutiny, or other destabilizing conditions.
- Have an annual operating budget under \$1 million.

- Serve communities facing heightened risk or historical underinvestment, with strong connections and trust within those communities.
- Show strong connections to and involvement from the population(s) served in leadership, staff, or board roles.

The committee may also consider examples of effective collaboration, partnership, or resource sharing, particularly when such efforts strengthen service delivery or address systemic challenges. This includes instances where organizations have explored or pursued strategic mergers, shared staffing, or other forms of operational alignment to increase impact.

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT PRINCIPLES

This grant process incorporates and upholds the Community Foundation's Values for Investing, [detailed here](#). These values guide our grantmaking as we strive to carry out our vision for the Mid-South to create a just and equitable region.

For questions regarding your LIVEGIVEmidsouth profile, please contact Randy Truong, Community Impact Program Manager, at (901) 722-0039.

For questions regarding your grant application, Brianna Harrington, Director of Community Impact, at (901) 722-0027 or brianna.harrington@cfqm.org.