Lancaster Thrives Together

Last year, the Lancaster County Community Foundation celebrated 100 years of emboldening extraordinary community in Lancaster County. Through our Shaping Tomorrow Awards, we activated more than $1,000,000 for forward-thinking, innovative projects that are advancing work in four areas: Creative Expression, Well-Being and Vibrancy, Next Generation, and Our Planet. We were honored to support 27 projects that propel us boldly into our next 100 years.

At the same time, we work closely with our community to respond to local needs and leverage opportunities emerging today. Knowing the challenges our community faces are complex and ever-changing, we evolve our grant strategy using current data and information.

The Lancaster County Racial Equity Profile indicates that while many Lancaster County residents enjoy a sense of comfort and prosperity, the poverty rate here is 10%. According to UnitedForAlice.org, an additional 27% of people have difficulty affording the increasing cost of living. With so many people affected by economic hardship, our grant opportunities in 2025 will prioritize upstream solutions addressing these challenges.

Lancaster Thrives Together is a $375,000 competitive opportunity for community benefit organizations (CBOs) serving Lancaster County, PA residents. These organizations will provide innovative services helping individuals and families achieve economic stability.

Lancaster Thrives Together grants will support upstream solutions designed to address the root causes of poverty and the diverse needs of both unemployed and ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) populations, to help level the economic playing field among our neighbors, while promoting long-term self-sufficiency. Preference will be given to projects that promote economic stability in underserved communities, recognizing the disproportionate challenges these communities face.

Knowing it will take a holistic approach to ensure our most vulnerable striving neighbors thrive, we will accept applications for initiatives demonstrating leadership, systems change, and innovation across a range of service areas, including, but not limited to:

- Financial literacy
- Adult education, skills development, and job training and placement
- Housing assistance and homelessness prevention
- Access to healthcare, including mental health and substance abuse services

- Childcare and early education

- Legal services

- Supportive services for incarcerated/formerly incarcerated individuals

- Supportive services for refugees and immigrants

Grants range from **$10,000 – $50,000**.

Virtual Office Hours

Our Programs Team will offer office hours live via Zoom to address any additional questions you have. Feel free to join us! The dates and registration links are listed below.

March 26, 10:00 – 11:00 am → Register Here
April 16, 10:00 – 11:00 am → Register Here

Eligibility Requirements

Applicant organization must:

- Serve Lancaster County residents without discrimination.

- Have current 501(c)(3) designation from the IRS.

- Be registered with the Pennsylvania Bureau of Charitable Organizations unless otherwise exempt per the Institutions of Purely Public Charity Act.

- Complete IRS Form 990 annually.

- Have an annual audit or a financial review by an independent CPA within the last 12 months.

- Be in good standing with all existing awards and contracts with the Lancaster County Community Foundation.

- Provide organizational Non-Discrimination Policy meeting all federal requirements as it applies to your type of organization (FAQs).

- Be aware of the Community Foundation's Anti-Hate Policy.

Visit our website for additional information about eligibility: Eligibility Requirements

Application Process

STAGE 1: Submit a Letter of Intent through our online grant portal at LancFound.org/grants. You will be asked to submit basic organizational information

and a brief description of your proposed project. Please note Stage 1 deadlines are different for organizations that desire feedback on an application draft (see below).

STAGE 2: After Community Foundation staff approve the Stage 1 application, your organization will be invited to complete the more robust Stage 2 application through the same portal. If your organization would like staff feedback on a completed application draft, the draft must be submitted four (4) weeks or more prior to the application deadline. We will aim to provide comments for your consideration two weeks or more before the final deadline.

Timeline

- **Wednesday, March 12** – Stage 1 grant application opens.
- **Friday, June 13** – Deadline to submit Stage 1 draft application to receive staff feedback (optional).
- **Friday, June 20** – Deadline to submit Stage 2 draft application to receive staff feedback (optional).
- **Friday, July 11, 11:59 pm** – Final deadline to submit Stage 1 application for organizations *not* desiring feedback.
- **Friday, July 18, 11:59 pm – Final deadline to submit Stage 2 application.**
- **Friday, September 19** – Award notifications issued. Grant funding period begins.
- **September 19, 2025 – September 19, 2026** – Duration of grant funding period.
- **Monday, October 19, 2026** – Grant completion report due.

Stage 1 Application Questions

- **Eligibility Questions:** In addition to basic organizational and contact information, you will be asked to provide documents such as recent audit or financial review, IRS Form 990, board of directors roster, and organizational nondiscrimination policy.
- **Narrative Question:** Describe your proposed project at a high level, including the vision for how your project can bring transformational change for Lancaster County's most vulnerable residents. Include the dollar amount you will likely request, who your partners are, generally how the funds will be used, and what goals you expect to achieve. Describe the innovative nature of your project and how it will level the economic playing field for Lancaster County's residents. *(2,500 characters)*

Stage 2 Application Questions

- **Vision** – What is your project idea and what problem does it solve for Lancaster County's most vulnerable residents? If the idea works, how will it be transformative and change systems? (2,000 characters)

- **Plan** – What's your project or initiative plan? Be as specific as you can here. As part of your answer, provide a list of steps you intend to take, what your goals are, and how you will evaluate your success. (3,000 characters)

- **Spending** – Instead of asking for a budget, we want to get a general sense of how you'd use the grant funds. Provide a short description of the kinds of things you would spend these funds on. (2,000 characters)

- **Innovation** – How does your strategy go beyond doing business as usual in Lancaster County to create more impact? (2,000 characters)

- **Underserved Communities** – How are you creating a level playing field for our residents? How does this project address issues identified in Lancaster's Equity Profile? (2,000 characters)

Evaluation Criteria

Community grant reviewers will use the following questions to evaluate and score applications:

- **Vision** – To what extent does the application demonstrate a vision for change in the community? (1-4 points)

- **Plan** – To what extent does the plan inspire confidence the organization will achieve its intended results? (1-4 points)

- **Spending** – To what extent does the proposed use of funds put community resources to the best and highest use to serve residents? Please keep in mind that some overhead expenses may be necessary to run a successful program. (1-4 points)

- **Innovation** – To what extent does the application demonstrate new thinking needed to be effective in the long-term? (1-4 points)

- **Underserved Communities** - To what extent is the organization committed to creating a level economic playing field for all residents, and have they considered the Lancaster Equity Profile? (1-4 points)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is ALICE?
ALICE is an acronym that stands for "Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed."
According to the United Way of Pennsylvania, it represents the 27% of Lancaster County
residents who work but still struggle to survive. ALICE folks earn more than the Federal
Poverty Level, but not enough to comfortably afford basic essentials. For more
information, visit https://www.uwp.org/alice/about-alice/.

What is the Lancaster Racial Equity Profile?
In 2021, many local funding and social service agencies sponsored the National Equity
Atlas, a partnership between PolicyLink and USC Dornsife Equity Research Institute, to
complete an equity profile of Lancaster County – the very first county-wide racial equity
profile in Pennsylvania. The report contains a wealth of information about our
demographics, and how segregation and unequal opportunities persist. Please read the
report and consider how your organization might address some of the problems that have
been identified at https://www.equityprofilelancaster.com/.

Why is the Community Foundation focusing on "underserved communities?"
Recognizing that some of our neighbors have historically not been included and
represented in many past projects, we are doing our part to ensure future projects create
meaningful opportunities for all residents, particularly those who bear the brunt of
disproportionate economic prosperity.

Does the proposed project need to be new, or can it be an existing project?
Our preference is to fund brand new ideas that will bring systems change for Lancaster
County. We will accept concepts that have been tried in other regions and are being
brought to Lancaster County for the first time. We will also accept applications for existing
projects, if it can be demonstrated that the organization is adapting the project for long-
term success in a meaningful way.

Are there specific start dates for projects?
By default, grants will have one year duration, beginning September 19. If your organization
would need more time to complete the project, please contact us and we will be happy to
work with you on a timeline that better suits your project.

How many awards do you anticipate making?
This initiative has a budget of $375,000. It's likely that we will be able to make 12-18 grants.

Is funding renewable?
Funding is a one-time award and not renewable.

Will the Community Foundation be looking for letters of support from project partners?
No. Rather, we encourage you to describe partnerships in Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the application itself.

Can project partners be located outside of Lancaster County?
Yes. We don't require that any of the organizations (applicant or partners) be physically headquartered in Lancaster County. However, the proposed project activities must primarily benefit Lancaster County's residents.

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