

CREATIVE COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS LESSONS LEARNED

North Dakota's Community-Based Grantmaking Program

In early 2022, the Bush Foundation announced Strengthen ND as one of its four partners to develop, implement, and evaluate a new funding initiative: Community-Based Grantmaking Programs. Our goal with this opportunity is to eliminate current inequitable and ineffective systems involved in philanthropy by increasing the accessibility and flexibility of available charitable dollars. As a part of our efforts to continually learn and improve, we are offering our One-Year Lessons Learned & Reflections to the broader grantmaking field in North Dakota and to inform past, current, and future applicants.

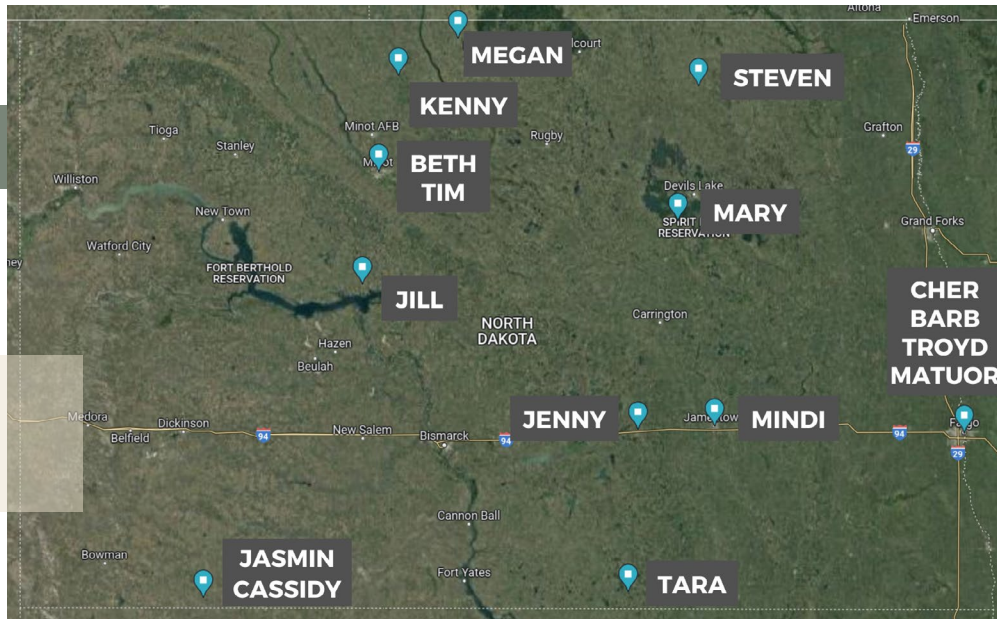


StrengthenND[®]

Where We Have Been

Design Process

The funds from the Bush Foundation are meant to be distributed “in the spirit of Community Innovation”. According to the Bush Foundation, a cornerstone of the Community Innovation process is to continuously develop and test ideas to solve problems and create opportunity, and then spread the best ideas across organizations and communities.



To design the grantmaking program, Strengthen ND assembled a committee of individuals from across North Dakota, representing various sectors and backgrounds. The committee’s charge was to identify guidelines, criteria, and processes that would best support the equitable distribution of funds, as well as to create the best possible environment for innovation.

Through a guided conversation, the committee members were able to identify potential barriers and opportunities that may occur when different kinds of North Dakota communities try to access funds. These conversations and great work by the committee informed the grantmaking philosophy, approach, guidelines, and application process.

The philosophy behind this grantmaking program is for it to be as accessible and user-friendly as possible; meaning, the Creative Community Solutions Grantmaking Committee is looking for just that: creative community solutions. The Committee has purposefully left the application guidelines open to allow for creative community solutions of all scopes and sizes.

In general, the Creative Community Solution Grantmaking Committee reviews and assesses the merit of each individual project by evaluating:

1. To what extent the project aligns with the pillars of innovation (developing, testing, and spreading);
2. To what extent the project is achievable, sustainable (if applicable), or financially viable;
3. To what extent the project may lead to transformational change or influence systems; and
4. To what extent the project is resourceful, collaborative, and inclusive.

2022 Grantmaking Results

Round 1 (June 30, 2022 Deadline)

Through its inaugural grantmaking round for the Creative Community Solutions grantmaking program, 10 organizations were selected to receive \$2,275,000 to develop, test, and spread community-driven solutions to some of the state's most critical needs.

The following are the inaugural projects selected:

- **Carrington Rainbow Gardens (Carrington, ND):** \$300,000 to re-establish a historic Japanese garden, associated cultural programming, and landmarks.
- **Communities Acting Together for Change & Hope (CATCH; Anamoose, ND):** \$300,000 to develop a program of advocacy and facilitation to pilot communities to demonstrate rural places can grow their communities by recruiting newcomers to live and work there.
- **Forest River Hutterite Colony (Near Fordville, ND):** \$33,125 to develop a pictorial database of Hutterite ancestry and appropriately copy sacred texts.
- **Kirat Cultural Society (Fargo, ND):** \$151,370 to perform and conduct cultural programs to promote social harmony, peace, and healthy relationships among all communities in the Fargo-Moorhead area.
- **Long X Arts Foundation (Watford City, ND):** \$300,000 to establish, research, connect, and execute the “Cultural Connections” as an incubator for community building and the creative sector.

- **Nyeri Ma'di Cultural Dance Group (Grand Forks, ND):** \$85,968 to teach financial literacy through cultural dance and programming.
- **North Dakota Full-Service Community Schools Consortium (Minot, ND):** \$300,000 to strengthen and scale the full-service community schools model across rural North Dakota.
- **South East Education Cooperative & Child Care Aware (Fargo, ND):** \$220,000 to create a shared services model for child care providers and programs in North Dakota.
- **Standing Rock Community Development Corporation (Fort Yates, ND):** \$284,976 to document elder stories, recipes, and audio of the Lakota and Dakota Languages, which will then be written into a cookbook for language education.
- **Upper Missouri Ministries (Epping, ND):** \$300,000 to leverage hydroponic technology with the Camp Umm community to provide fresh food for northwest North Dakota and test a diversified financial model.

Round 1 Quick Stats		
Investments in BIPOC-Led Organizations	\$522,314	22.95%
Investments in Rural Approaches	\$1,818,101	79.90%
Investments in Urban Approaches	\$237,338	10.43%
Investments in Statewide Approaches	\$220,000	9.67%
% of BIPOC-Led Orgs Applied vs. Funded	3 of 6	50%
% of Non-BIPOC-Led Orgs Applied vs. Funded	7 of 22	31.82%
% of Finalists are BIPOC-Led	3 of 10	30.00%
% of Finalists are Non-BIPOC-Led	7 of 10	70%
Total Number of Applications & Request Amount: 28; \$7,500,000		

Round 2 (September 30, 2022 Deadline)

Through its second grantmaking round for the Creative Community Solutions grantmaking program, 5 organizations were selected to receive a total of \$1 million to develop, test, and spread community-driven solutions to some of the state's most critical needs.

The following are the inaugural projects selected:

- **Ka Joog (Fargo, ND):** \$300,000 to spread and scale *The Takeoff*, a culturally-attuned 4-H program, in Fargo.
- **Newburg United Public School (Newburg, ND):** \$150,000 to develop a regionally-designed and collaborative STEM education incubator and associated programming for rural youth.
- **Sheyenne GRIT (Sheyenne, ND):** \$150,000 to develop and test housing and economic development solutions for new neighbors and existing businesses to ensure a healthy and sustainable future for the community.
- **The Journal (Crosby, ND):** \$100,000 to scale and spread Kids News Scoop across North Dakota, as a strategy for increasing literacy and democracy.
- **South Sudanese Foundation (Fargo, ND):** \$300,000 to test and spread family-support strategies to increase the number of women in the workforce.

Round 2 Quick Stats		
Investments in BIPOC-Led Organizations	\$600,000	60.00%
Investments in Rural Approaches	\$300,000	30.00%
Investments in Urban Approaches	\$600,000	60.00%
Investments in Statewide Approaches	\$100,000	10.00%
% of BIPOC-Led Orgs Applied vs. Funded	2 of 9	22.22%
% of Non-BIPOC-Led Orgs Applied vs. Funded	3 of 27	11.11%
% of Finalists are BIPOC-Led	2 of 5	40.00%
% of Finalists are Non-BIPOC-Led	3 of 5	60.00%
Total Number of Applications & Request Amount: 36; \$9,750,000		

Rounds 1 & 2 Combined

Rounds 1 & 2 Quick Stats		
Investments in BIPOC-Led Organizations	\$1,122,314	34.26%
Investments in Rural Approaches	\$2,118,101	64.67%
Investments in Urban Approaches	\$837,338	25.56%
Investments in Statewide Approaches	\$320,000	9.77%
% of BIPOC-Led Orgs Applied vs. Funded	5 of 15	33.33%
% of Non-BIPOC-Led Orgs Applied vs. Funded	10 of 49	20.41%
% of Finalists are BIPOC-Led	5 of 15	33.33%
% of Finalists are Non-BIPOC-Led	10 of 15	66.67%

Where We Are Going & Lessons Learned

We have learned quite a bit after a full year of the program's implementation, and we are working now to implement programmatic adjustments for 2023 and beyond. Our entire team appreciates the grace and willingness of applicants and grantees to provide ongoing feedback so the Creative Community Solutions grantmaking program can fully meet its mission.

Lesson 1: Guideline Clarity

The grantmaking philosophy and criteria for the program have always been clear; however, additional work needs to be done by our internal program team to ensure that the way in which the criteria are described on our website and other digital and printed materials are clearer. We anticipate greatly revising our existing Creative Community Solutions landing page on our website with tangible examples of developing, testing, and spreading great ideas to solve community problems across our state, and to be more clear about the few restrictions (no operating grants and a 2-page limit to applications).

Lesson 2: Turnaround Time & Due Diligence

Initially when this program was designed, the number of applicants per round was anticipated to be between 10 and 15. With both grantmaking rounds that took place in 2022, these numbers were greatly exceeded, with 30 organizations applying in round 1 and 36 applying in round 2. This volume significantly impacted and otherwise nullified our 30-day turnaround time goal. To account for this, our new goal is a 45- to 60-day turnaround time for each round. Additionally, the volume of applications received also highlighted areas of improvement for our due diligence process. To account for this, two or more program staff will be engaged in each due diligence call to allow for greater capacity to capture nuance and detail, while also allowing for a greater capacity to think about additional information to be requested.

Lesson 3: Grantmaking Cadence Shift

The Creative Community Solutions grantmaking program is designed to provide grants twice per year. With the incredible volume and quality of applications that we received and were able to fund in 2022, the grantmaking committee has decided to forego the spring grantmaking round (deadline April 30th, 2023). Grantmaking will then commence for the fall grantmaking round (deadline September 30th, 2023).

Lesson 4: Avenues for Reflection

To continue learning and improving this program, Strengthen ND is soliciting feedback from all engaged organizations to complete a satisfaction survey. This survey was launched in mid-January to all applicants and grantees. All individual and identifying information will be kept confidential.

Overall, our inaugural year was extremely positive. Our applicants were from many underserved communities, and our Grantmaking Committee learned a tremendous amount about the state's diversity, rural communities, and the serious process of allocating funds. We are very proud of the work of this group, and their ability to work in harmony and through excellent consensus building effort. It certainly supports the theory of "community-based grantmaking" as a more equitable process.