



2026 Annual Grant Awards Grant Applicant FAQs

Pre-Application and Application Information

- Who can apply for an Annual Grant?
 - Only organizations that have 501(c)(3) status, have a fiscal agent with 501(c)(3) status, and governmental entities.
 - Applicants must provide programs and services that are consistent with the Foundation's mission of addressing unmet needs and expanding opportunities for all Highland Park and Highwood residents.
- We are not headquartered in Highland Park or Highwood. Can we still apply for a grant?
 - Yes, as long as the program for which funding is provided directly serves residents of Highland Park or Highwood.
- Do you accept unsolicited applications?
 - Yes, but you must submit a [letter of interest](#) in applying for an Annual Grant by 5 PM Central time on April 15, 2026, if your organization is applying for an Annual Grant for the first time, your organization's last application for an Annual Grant was denied, or if your organization has not received an Annual Grant within the past three years.
- When are applications due?
 - Annual Grant applications must be complete in all respects and submitted [online](#) by 5 PM Central time on July 15, 2026.
- Can multiple organizations apply for funding to support a collaborative project?
 - Yes. If the organizations are also applying for funding for their own programs, they should jointly submit a separate application for the collaborative project.
- Will we have the opportunity to meet with a Board Member?
 - Yes. Each Annual Grant applicant is assigned a Board Member liaison who meets with and becomes familiar with the organization.
- Should we attend the Board meeting on June 10, 2026? Is this meant to be an opportunity for an organization to make a public statement of its case for support? Will questions be answered?
 - The beginning of the meeting will be open to the public to be transparent about our process and to let applicants and community members provide comments for the Board's consideration about a program or service for which funding will be requested, which are not addressed in the application. There is no need to attend the meeting unless you have something to share with the Board, which you have not included in your written application or discussed with your Board liaison. Attendees' questions will be answered.

Areas of Annual Grant Funding

- What do you provide funding for?
 - HPCF provides Annual Grants to address unmet needs in the following 5 main categories: education, human services, services for individuals with disabilities, senior services, and the creative and cultural arts. If your organization addresses a need outside of these funding categories, we encourage you to [contact us](#). You may still be eligible to apply for an Annual Grant.

- In general, HPCF provides funding support only for specific programs and services. It does not provide grants for operating expenses, debt reduction, pass-through grants, interim or bridge funding, fundraising activities or events, endowments, private foundations, or political activities.
- We have heard that HPCF prefers to fund programs and services, not print materials. Will we be at a disadvantage if we are applying for a grant to fund a publication?
 - Not necessarily. In some cases, producing a print publication is the program or service the organization provides.
- Can we apply for funding for more than one program?
 - Yes. The Annual Grant application accommodates requests for more than one program or service. You will not need to submit multiple applications.

Review Criteria

- How are funding decisions made?
 - Board Members review all applications. Serving as liaisons to the applying organizations, each Board Member meets with 2-4 applicants to discuss their needs and grant requests. In August and September, Board Members meet in groups to discuss the applications. They then collectively meet to make final funding decisions, adhering to the Board's Conflict of Interest Policy.
 - A number of different factors are considered in reviewing the applications. These include:
 - The completeness and clarity of the grant request
 - The need(s) to be addressed, the population(s) to be served, and the likely impact the proposed program or service will have on the individuals to be served and our community as a whole
 - The applicant's organizational strength, record of success, and likelihood of effectively executing their stated proposal
 - The financial strength of the applicant and the extent to which funding will give the applicant the opportunity to leverage other resources or financial support
 - For returning applicants, adherence to HPCF's grant requirements and the amount of funding previously provided
 - These factors are not exclusive, and HPCF reserves the right to use its own best judgment when making funding decisions.

Annual Grant Awards

- What size grants do you award?
 - Annual Grants generally fall in the \$1,000 to \$50,000 range and depend on the funds available for distribution in any given year as well as the nature of each request. If you received an Annual Grant in the prior year and intend to ask for more than you previously received for the same program or service, you should support your new larger request with significant data or reasons to support the increase.
- If our organization submits an application, is it possible that we will receive less money than requested?
 - Yes, Annual Grant requests may be denied in whole or part.
- Does the Foundation limit the dollar amount of awards to first-time applicants?
 - Annual Grants awarded to first-time applicants are typically in the \$1,000-\$3,000 range.

- When will we know if our organization has been awarded an Annual Grant?
 - HPCF's Board will make its award decisions in September. Organizations receiving Annual Grants will be invited and are encouraged to attend a Grants Distribution event that will take place on October 28, 2026. Applicants who are not awarded grants will receive a personal call from a member of HPCF's Grants Committee to discuss the Board's decision not to fund the organization's request.
 - All grants will be issued via ACH transfer. Grant recipients will be required to provide their ACH account information for the processing of their awards.

Annual Grant Requirements

- Grants are expected to be used for their intended purpose within 12 months. If for some reason a grant will not be used for its intended purpose or within 12 months of its distribution, the organization receiving the award must let us know.
- Are there reporting requirements?
 - We require all Annual Grant recipients to submit an Interim Grant Report. A Report Form will be sent to you once you have been awarded your grant.
- Are there other requirements?
 - We ask all Annual Grant recipients to submit 3 to 5 hi-resolution photos of the programs for which they receive funding. Exceptions are made when this is not possible for privacy or other reasons.
 - We also require all Annual Grant recipients to adhere to our Publicity Guidelines, which will be emailed with the Interim Grant Report Form.

Communications

- How should we send something to HPCF?
 - All printed materials and photos should be submitted electronically.
 - Emails should generally be sent to our Executive Director, Terri Olian, at terri@hpcf.org.
 - If you need to send something by postal mail, please send just one copy to: Highland Park Community Foundation, P.O. Box 398, Highland Park, IL 60035.
- Who should I contact if I have a question about our grant application, grant, or something else that comes up during the year?
 - Please always feel free to contact Terri at terri@hpcf.org or call 847-433-4100.

Needs Related to the 2022 Highland Park Shooting

- Is HPCF still awarding grants to address needs related to the Highland Park Shooting?
 - Effective January 1, 2025, HPCF has integrated support for recovery-related services into its Annual Grants Program. Additional information and details about the grants HPCF provided through the Highland Park Shooting Response Fund and the Highland Park Shooting Recovery Fund to address shooting-related needs can be found on HPCF's website [here](#).