



St. Croix Valley Foundation Nonprofit Capacity Building Grant Guidelines

Nonprofit Capacity Building Grant Program

Nonprofits in the Valley are carrying enormous responsibility amid rising community needs and limited resources. In today's challenging environment, they're being asked to do more with less — all while navigating staffing shortages, leadership transitions, technology gaps, board development needs, and constant fundraising pressure.

That's why the St. Croix Valley Foundation is launching the **Nonprofit Capacity Building Grant Program** — an investment in the people, systems, and strategies that help nonprofits across our six-county region become stronger and more resilient for the long term.

The **Nonprofit Capacity Building Grant Program** was created in direct response to what we heard from nonprofit leaders — through focus groups, surveys, and conversations across the region. These grants are designed not just to help organizations survive, but to thrive — by investing in leadership development, future-focused planning, updated systems, and sector-wide collaboration.

For the purposes of this program, **capacity building** means *investing in an organization's ability to grow, sustain impact, and adapt — whether through refinement, expansion, collaboration, or even sunseting — in service of its mission and the greater good.*

Eligible applicants must be:

- 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations that:
 - Have been in existence for at least five years
 - Have a current submitted IRS Form 990
- Located in the St. Croix Valley Foundation service area including Chisago and Washington counties in Minnesota and Burnett, Polk, St. Croix and Pierce counties in Wisconsin.

Ineligible applicants/activities:

- Private foundations, government entities, sectarian religious programs/organizations, and fiscally sponsored programs.
- Capital projects.
- Organizations with offices located outside our service area currently delivering programming in or looking to expand into SCVF's six-county service area.

Overview

Nonprofit Capacity Building Grants are available across four distinct yet complementary funding avenues: **Experiences, Planning, Implementation, and System-Wide Infrastructure**. Applicants may apply to one or more of these avenues, depending on their needs, stage of development, and organizational readiness. To ensure thoughtful pacing and equitable distribution of resources, **applicants may only have one active application under review at a time**. A brief close-out report is required before reapplying.

1) Experiences – *To support the learning, growth, and connection of nonprofit professionals.*

Funding Range: Up to \$10,000

Eligible Activities May Include:

- Executive coaching or mentoring
- Professional associations or networks
- Participation in leadership or management training programs
- Peer learning cohorts or facilitated communities of practice
- DEIB learning journeys
- Conference attendance

Ideal For: Organizations looking to grow leadership capacity or deepen staff expertise.

2) Planning – *To help nonprofits understand their challenges, identify opportunities, and make informed decisions about future capacity investments.*

Funding Range: Up to \$25,000

Eligible Activities May Include:

- Organizational assessments
- Strategic or business planning
- Succession planning
- Technology or financial systems evaluations
- Exploration of mergers, restructuring, or sunseting
- Fund development or communications strategy
- Hiring or contracting temporary staff or consultants

Ideal For: Organizations that need space, support, or expert guidance to chart a path forward.

3) Implementation – *To support the execution of a clearly defined capacity-building initiative.*

Funding Range: Up to \$100,000

Eligible Activities May Include:

- Hiring or contracting *temporary* staff or consultants
- Launching a new CRM or financial management system
- Upgrading operational processes
- Expanding outreach, communications, or fundraising efforts
- Rolling out DEIB initiatives or evaluation frameworks
- Covering professional services related to organizational change (e.g., legal, accounting, or lease transition costs)

Ideal For: Organizations that have a plan and are ready to act.

- 4) **System-Wide Infrastructure:** *To build, expand, or sustain shared tools, platforms, or collaborative efforts that strengthen the nonprofit sector as a whole.*

Funding Range: Up to \$250,000

Eligible Activities May Include:

- Development of shared data systems or referral networks
- Creation and implementation of sector-wide evaluation tools or frameworks
- Collaborative advocacy or training platforms
- Regional knowledge-sharing initiatives
- Joint back-office, HR, or financial services
- Design and implementation of shared administrative systems or employee benefits packages

Ideal For: Backbone organizations, collaboratives, or intermediaries serving a network of nonprofits

Application Timeline

- **Applications Open:** October 13, 2025
- **Deadline:** There is no fixed deadline — applications will be accepted on a rolling basis.
- **Review Schedule:** Submitted applications will be reviewed quarterly. To be considered in a review cycle, applications must be received by:
 - **November 30** (notifications sent in **December**)
 - **February 28** (notifications sent in **March**)
 - **May 31** (notifications sent in **June**)
 - **August 31** (notifications sent in **September**)
- **Grants:** Awards will be processed shortly after notifications are sent.

Note: *This grant opportunity will remain open on a rolling basis for up to three years. However, funding is limited and will be awarded in the order applications are received, while funds remain available. **We strongly encourage organizations to apply as soon as they are ready**, as the opportunity will close once all funds have been allocated.*

Additional Guidance

- Organizations of all sizes are encouraged to apply, including those with smaller-scale funding needs. We understand that effective capacity-building work can vary greatly depending on the organization's size, scope, and context.
- Organizations may apply to multiple funding avenues, but only **one** application may be submitted at a time. If awarded, grantees must complete a brief report on the previous grant when applying for additional support.
- Collaboration is strongly encouraged — both within organizations (across teams or departments) and across organizations. Collaborative applications are especially welcome in the **System-Wide Infrastructure** category; a lead organization must be identified to manage grant expenses and reporting.
- Funding may be used for staff time, consultant fees, technology or materials, and other direct costs that support the proposed capacity-building activities.
- Grants are intended to support capacity-building efforts, not ongoing program operations or emergency funding needs.
- General operating support is not available through this funding opportunity, unless it is directly tied to a time-limited, capacity-building initiative.

Resources

- [October 2 recorded webinar featuring Propel](#). The session, ***Nonprofit Life Stages: Anticipating and Leading Through Change***, is designed to guide you as you [assess your organization's stage of development](#) – and consider how a capacity building grant could support what's next.
- **October 16** recorded webinar featuring St. Croix Valley Foundation staff providing an overview of the Nonprofit Capacity Building Grant Program.
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's). Please note that this is a living document and will be updated regularly as we receive additional questions from nonprofit partners.
- **Consultant Office Hours**: A small group of experienced consultants will offer **office hours** for nonprofit organizations that may benefit from early-stage guidance as they develop their grant applications or project ideas. Consultants will provide light-touch, one-on-one or small-group support to help organizations frame needs, explore potential capacity-building pathways, and/or assess readiness to apply. Please visit the St. Croix Valley Foundation website to learn more.
- **Nonprofit Capacity Building Resource Guide**: Prepared in partnership with Strategic Consulting & Coaching, this guide includes a curated list of local consultants, resource and training organizations, as well as informal support networks and coalitions.
- We encourage potential applicants to review the above available resources before contacting staff; if your question is not addressed, please visit the St. Croix Valley Foundation website to schedule time with the Community Impact Team.

Nonprofit Stability Collaborative Fund

The Nonprofit Stability Collaborative Fund was established at the St. Croix Valley Foundation in April 2025 by Valley Funding Partners (with lead gifts from the Fred C. and Katherine B. Andersen Foundation and Hugh J. Andersen Foundation) as a strategic response to a pivotal moment in the nonprofit sector.

The funding partners acknowledge that the landscape is shifting — in how organizations operate, how communities engage, and how funding flows. The Nonprofit Stability Collaborative Fund was created in direct response to this shift, and from a shared commitment to support nonprofits in imagining a stronger, more resilient, and more connected sector. This moment calls for new thinking, bold collaboration, and sustained investment in the people and organizations that hold our communities together. The Nonprofit Stability Collaborative Fund exists to help nonprofits not only adapt but lead with creativity and resilience.
