



Environment & Land Use Cycle

Purpose and Process

Revised 12/22/25

The mission of the Charlevoix County Community Foundation (C3F) is to enhance the quality of life for all citizens of Charlevoix County, now and for generations to come. The Community Foundation helps people make a difference close to home by accepting contributions of all sizes. Each year, the Community Foundation makes grants to organizations, schools, and municipalities to make positive change in Charlevoix County.

What is the purpose of the Environment and Land Use Cycle?

The Environment and Land Use Cycle aims to support environmental education, protection, restoration, and sustainability initiatives in Charlevoix County and the Lake Charlevoix Watershed, and the organizations that make that work possible. Individuals, couples, families, and businesses who advise funds at the Community Foundation (donor advisors) may choose to make grants through the cycle as well.

Eligible applicants include:

- 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organizations
- All units of government
- All educational institutions (preschool through college)
- Organizations described above that serve Charlevoix County residents
- Organizations that do not discriminate in hiring of staff or the provision of services

Eligible organizations must be current with follow ups for all previous grant awards from C3F and be in good standing with the IRS.

When is the application deadline?

The Environment and Land Use Cycle deadline is March 1 by 11:59 PM (Eastern), regardless of whether this is a weekday or weekend. The application will be available annually at www.c3f.org beginning in early January.

What kinds of projects or programs are most likely to receive grant funding?

The Environment & Land Use Cycle aims to support environmental education, protection, restoration, and sustainability initiatives in and around Charlevoix County and the Lake Charlevoix Watershed. Recreation initiatives that provide access to natural resources may also be considered.

Successful requests may include any of the following characteristics: demonstrate collaboration, address new needs or try new approaches for existing needs, encourage people to help themselves, focus on prevention of problems, and/or avoid duplication of services.

Environment & Land Use grant proposals will additionally be evaluated on the following specific criteria:

- Degree to which grant work aligns with environmental education, protection, restoration, and sustainability in Charlevoix County and/or the Lake Charlevoix Watershed
- Inclusion in a city, township, county, or regional community plan
 - (i.e. master plan, recreation plan, strategic plan, watershed management plan, etc.)
- Organization's impact and relevance in the community they serve
- Organizational capacity (leadership, staffing, planning, etc.), and solvency
- Degree to which funds will help strengthen the organization and/or the community the organization serves
- Comprehensiveness of the proposal, including degree to which proposed activities are well-planned and address the need identified
- Duration of impact in the community served

Organizations should ask for what they need. The Community Foundation will neither limit the size nor the scope of a request. Rather, applicants will determine those factors for themselves, based on their needs. Successful grant proposals will clearly identify the need and make a strong case for the proposed activities or course of action in relation to the need(s). Grant review committees will prioritize grant requests that score best on the criteria listed above.

What kinds of grants are generally not funded?

The Community Foundation's grant cycles generally do not fund annual fundraising campaigns, political campaigns, deficit spending, sectarian projects, or services normally supported by tax dollars.

All grant applications require a cash contribution. How much is necessary?

It depends on the topic and scope of the project, but the expectation is that nonprofit partners will contribute to the budget of the project or program.

What size grants are available in the Environment & Land Use Cycle?

This cycle encourages grants of all sizes. The request size should reflect the organization's need for the project or program. Donor Advisors may also decide to contribute through

their Donor Advised Funds. Community Foundation staff can provide additional guidance and information, if needed.

How does the Community Foundation make grant decisions for the Environment & Land Use Cycle?

The Environment & Land Use Advisory Committee will review grant applications and recommend funding to the Board of Trustees. The Community Foundation will also share these opportunities with donor advisors, who may choose to make grants through this cycle.

When will grant funding decisions be announced?

Community Foundation staff will notify grant applicants following approval from the Board of Trustees by early April.

Are there any other requirements?

- The governing board of the organization is responsible for appropriate use of funds and project implementation.
- Applicants must be current with follow ups for all previous grants in order to apply.
- Proposals from faith-based organizations must address community needs and
 - Have a clearly demonstrated public benefit
 - Be fully accessible to all people regardless of religious beliefs and lifestyle choices
 - May NOT proselytize, (i.e. require anything in return for services provided. Examples: attending services or prayer groups and/or volunteering, etc.)

What happens after the award?

The grant period is one year. A follow up summary is required to be completed once the grant work has been done and the grant award spent, or within 12 months of the grant award, whichever comes first. If the grant work is delayed or cannot be completed within the time period, the organization's representative should call the Community Foundation.

How to Apply for an Environment & Land Use Grant

Step 1: Contact Ashley Cousens to discuss your eligibility. If your organization's need is a good fit for the Environment & Land Use Cycle, you will receive an access code for the online grant application. To get started, [use this link to schedule time directly on Ashley's calendar.](#)

Step 2: Visit our [Apply for a Grant](#) page and click on the “Grant Portal” link.

- If you have an account already, you may log on and proceed to the application using your access code.
- If you do not already have an account, you will need to create one (each user needs their own username (email address) and password) before proceeding to the application using your access code. The user who starts the application has editing rights for the application going forward. This person can invite others to contribute to the application once started.

Step 3: Complete the online grant application. You may save your work and return at any point prior to submitting your application. The application can be shared with others who may be sharing the responsibility of writing the grant proposal and completing the application. To utilize this feature, click on “collaborate” at the top of the application and enter the email address of the person needing access. Contact Ashley Cousens if you need help troubleshooting this feature. Once you submit your application, you will receive immediate confirmation via email. You may be contacted with further clarification questions regarding your application and/or eligibility.

Step 4: The Community Foundation will share your applications with donor advisors to encourage grant support.

If Funded...

Step 1: The Community Foundation will share news of the grant decisions by phone after the C3F Board of Trustees approves recommendations from the Advisory Committee. Applicant organizations will also receive an award letter detailing the funding decision.

Step 2: Receive the grant check. The grant check will be mailed to your organization following the notification phone call from C3F staff. Usually, checks are mailed out within 2 weeks of the decision.

Step 3: We’d love to see your work in action! If you would like to have a site visit with C3F staff, please let us know. Your grant award letter will include a link to a form to fill out indicating what would work best for your organization.

Step 4: Provide a summary of the grant work within one year of the grant award or whenever the work is completed. All grant recipients will need to complete a few short steps in the online system after their grant is complete, even if a site visit has occurred. Providing photos is always encouraged. More information about grant follow up will be provided to grant recipients at the time when a grant is awarded.

