



CommunityWorks

EDUCATION. ENVIRONMENT. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.

\$100,000 Available for Education, Environment, and Workforce Development

The Heart of Illinois Community Foundation (HICF) is accepting online submissions from established nonprofit organizations and schools in our service area seeking grant awards from the CommunityWorks Endowment Fund. Total available funding for this grant program in 2026 is \$100,000 with maximum requests per organization totaling \$20,000 (\$5,000 minimum request).

The overall purpose of CommunityWorks is to provide a coordinated, systems-based approach toward the achievement of community aspirations. Grants support three main areas: education, environment, and workforce development, based on the belief that by improving these areas, we can directly impact the quality of life in our community.

Qualified organizations are able to access the HICF Grant Portal online via an established user account* at <https://bit.ly/HICFGrants> - all submissions related to the CommunityWorks Grant Program must be received by established deadlines via the grant portal.

For this grant program, funding is restricted to programs that prioritize one of the specified funding areas. Organizations pursuing one of these grants must submit a proposal for a new program or further development of an existing program for the chosen funding area - included below are some sample projects and guidelines:

- **Education**

- Increase access to quality, affordable education
- Expand availability of quality childcare facilities and early childhood development
- Strengthen educational programs and management capacities, aimed at student success

- **Environment - Land Use/Protection**

- Protection and restoration of natural lands and waterways
- Development of clean renewable energy and prevention of pollution
- Expansion/connection of preserved natural lands
- Land use management and strategies that promote economic vitality and environmental health
- Public education related to the above issues

- **Workforce Development**

- Job creation or job retention and career advancement; clear workforce pathways
- Access/transportation options to jobs
- Adult literacy and skill development

*For questions related to the HICF CommunityWorks Grant Program and grant portal account establishment for organizations and qualified users, please contact Andrea Gerhard, Director of Scholarships & Grants, at agerhard@heartofillinois.org or 217.429.3000.

In 2005, the Community Foundation was one of only 18 initial foundations selected to receive a CommunityWorks grant from the Grand Victoria Foundation to establish an endowment fund. Through the years, generous donors have added to the fund stewarded at the Community Foundation to meet challenge matches required by that foundation.

HEART OF ILLINOIS COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

101 SOUTH MAIN STREET, SUITE 400 | DECATUR, ILLINOIS 62526 | 217.429.3000

HEARTOFILLINOIS.ORG



CommunityWorks

EDUCATION. ENVIRONMENT. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.

GRANT PROGRAM OUTLINE

Grant Program Eligibility

- Organization must have 501(c)3 status from the Internal Revenue Service or be a qualified charitable or government organization with priority given to established public, operating nonprofit organizations.
- Organization must demonstrate current state registration and annual filings (IRS Form 990) and compliance.
- Organization must have an active, independent Board of Directors.
- Organization must be located in Macon, Moultrie, or Piatt County in the State of Illinois.

The grantmaking process of the Heart of Illinois Community Foundation prioritizes 501(c)3 organizations that are recognized by the IRS as operating public charities for a minimum of 3 years. Additionally, we prioritize organizations that demonstrate a commitment to racial and economic equity.

CommunityWorks Grant Process Timeline for 2026

- Phase One of the Grant Process **opens** on **August 4, 2026** within the HICF Grant Portal (<https://bit.ly/HICFGrants>) with the **Letter of Intent (LOI)**.
- Organizations may submit the **Letter of Intent** via the online HICF Grant Portal (as outlined) through **August 21, 2026** (5:00 PM).
- All completed Letter of Intent submissions received by the end of Phase One (8/21) will be reviewed in a timely manner following the close of the process. Organizations who submitted an LOI that meets the criteria of the program and demonstrates feasibility will be invited to submit their full application by September 23, 2026 for consideration by the CommunityWorks Grant Committee for a grant award.
- Following application evaluation and review, awarded organizations will be contacted regarding the acceptance and distribution of their grant award (early October 2026).

For more information and helpful resources, connect with us in the following ways:

Heart of Illinois Community Foundation Website

<https://heartofillinois.org>

Heart of Illinois Community Foundation Grant Portal

<https://bit.ly/HICFGrants>

Andrea Gerhard, Director of Scholarships & Grants

agerhard@heartofillinois.org or 217.429.3000

HEART OF ILLINOIS COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

101 SOUTH MAIN STREET, SUITE 400 | DECATUR, ILLINOIS 62526 | 217.429.3000

HEARTOFILLINOIS.ORG