

Moonshot Grant Opportunity Request for Proposals

Launch the Future: A \$1M Investment in What's Possible

Background

The Hendricks County Community Foundation (HCCF) is excited to introduce a rare, one-time opportunity to “shoot for the moon” and dream boldly to solve our community’s most significant challenges. Made possible through the Giving Indiana Funds for Tomorrow (GIFT) IX Community Support Grants Program offered by Lilly Endowment Inc., this initiative reflects an extraordinary investment in our future: of the \$3 million awarded, \$1 million has been set aside to fund a single, transformational project or program capable of changing the trajectory of Hendricks County.

As a trusted community partner in understanding needs, aligning resources, and empowering people to address today’s priorities and create lasting impact together, HCCF is committed to enhancing quality of life by tackling the most pressing issues and opportunities we face. Grounded in extensive community needs assessments and ongoing engagement, we recognize that meaningful, lasting change requires bold thinking, strong partnerships, and the courage to pursue ambitious ideas.

This Moonshot Grant Opportunity is designed to inspire visionary leaders and organizations to imagine what is possible when significant resources are united behind a single powerful vision—one that moves us closer to our shared aspiration: Hendricks County, where everyone has the opportunity to live a fulfilling life and has the tools to build a stronger future together. We recognize that bold ideas carry inherent uncertainty and are open to thoughtful, well-reasoned risk.

Purpose

We are challenging organizations to think big:

“If you had \$1 million, how would you make our community better?”

We seek proposals that balance:

- Bold, forward-thinking ideas
- Realistic implementation
- Clear alignment with demonstrated community need

Our vision: Hendricks County is a place where everyone has the opportunity to have a fulfilling life and the tools they need to build a stronger future together.

Transformational proposals may create new systems, remove longstanding barriers, build community-wide infrastructure, establish scalable models, or significantly improve outcomes for large populations or historically underserved groups.

Total Funding Available - \$1,000,000

HCCF intends to award one (1) grant of \$1,000,000

- HCCF reserves the right to:
 - Award less than \$1,000,000 to a single proposal, or
 - Fund a combination of proposals totaling \$1,000,000

Applicants are encouraged to request the amount needed to fully realize their vision.

Allowable Use of Funds

Funding may support a wide range of project types, including:

- Programmatic expansion or innovation
- Capital or infrastructure investments
- Operating support tied to the project including fundraising costs associated with the project/program

Funds may NOT be used for:

- Endowment building
- Debt relief
- Covering prior deficits
- General operating expenses unrelated to the project

Grant Period

- Projects may span 1 to 3 years
- Funds will be made available beginning March 2027
- Payment structure (lump sum or installments) will be negotiated
- Implementation should begin between March 2027 and January 2028
- Funds should be spent by November 30, 2030
- Applicants are encouraged to consider how this one-time investment can create a lasting impact beyond the funding period

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Sustainability & Long-Term Impact

HCCF recognizes that this is a one-time investment, and there should be no expectation of ongoing funding beyond the grant period. At the same time, applicants are encouraged to consider how their proposed work will create lasting value for the community.

Sustainability does not require guaranteed long-term funding. Instead, we are interested in how the project may:

- Create impact that extends beyond the grant period (e.g., systems change, infrastructure, or capacity building)
- Generate momentum or adoption by partners, institutions, or the broader community
- Provide a model, learning, or framework that others can replicate or build upon
- Leverage this investment as a catalyst for future investments
- Represent a strategic one-time investment with long-term community benefit

Applicants may also describe potential future funding pathways, if applicable, but this is not required and will not disadvantage proposals that do not include it. Strong proposals will demonstrate thoughtful consideration of long-term impact, while remaining realistic about the evolving funding landscape.

Eligibility

Eligible applicants include:

- 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations (strongly preferred)
- Government entities
- Parks, trails, and other outdoor, publicly accessible spaces
- Coalitions or collaborative groups
- Organizations utilizing a fiscal sponsor (MOU required)

The applicant:

- One organization must serve as the lead applicant
- Organizations may collaborate on multiple proposals, but may submit only one Letter of Intent (LOI) as the lead applicant

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High-quality organizations demonstrate:

- Proven track record of successful programming
- Strong financial management
- Capable leadership and staffing
- Ability to execute complex initiatives
- History of collaboration and community trust

HCCF recognizes that innovative ideas may emerge from organizations building capacity and encourages partnerships or sponsorship structures where appropriate.

Additional requirements:

- Projects must primarily benefit Hendricks County
- Organizations outside the county may apply if the primary project is located within the county
- Schools/school corporations may not apply independently, unless:
 - The project includes collaboration across districts, or
 - It is a replicable pilot intended for broader adoption
- Collaboration (cross-sector collaboration is strongly encouraged)
 - Collaboration may range from:
 - Letters of support
 - Coordinated partnerships
 - Shared implementation or funding structures

Strong Proposals

We recognize that no proposal will be perfect at the LOI stage; however, strong LOIs will:

- Be grounded in credible, data-informed need
 - Frame a compelling community challenge that others can rally around
- Reflect best practices, proven models, or visionary approaches
 - Identify the key insight that makes the solution effective or different (“why this, why now”)
- Demonstrate the ability to create significant, lasting impact
- Demonstrate meaningful collaboration (not solely symbolic)
 - Proposals that “go it alone” will not be competitive
- Show a clear path to implementation at scale

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Letter of Intent (LOI) Requirements

Submission Format

- Maximum 2 pages (narrative)
 - Title: *Moonshot LOI – [Lead Applicant Organization Name]*
- 1 additional page for a high-level estimated budget
- 1 additional page for a high-level timeline of the proposal, including important milestones

LOI Content

Applicants should address the following:

- *Community Need*
 - Define the problem or opportunity, and frame the need as a clear, compelling community challenge
 - Include at least one credible data source (local data preferred)
 - You are not required to, but may utilize the [2025 HCCF Community Needs Assessment](#)
- *Proposed Solution*
 - Describe the concept and approach
 - Explain what makes it bold, innovative, or transformational
 - Identify whether it is a new concept, adaptation, or proven model
- *Collaboration*
 - Identify key partners (confirmed or exploratory)
 - Describe their roles and contributions
 - Describe how collaboration strengthens the proposal
- *Impact*
 - Describe expected outcomes and how you plan to measure them
 - Address scale of impact (breadth and/or depth)
 - Include potential for systems change, if relevant.
 - Explain how the project will create meaningful change
- *Estimated Budget (Page 3)*
 - High-level budget including major cost categories
 - Identification of any leveraged or additional funding sources *(if applicable)*
- *Proposed Timeline for Implementation (Page 4)*
 - Key phases of the project
 - Major milestones and expected timing
 - Alignment with projected start (March 2027–January 2028)

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Full Application Requirements

The Full Application will mirror the Letter of Intent in scope but will require more detail, explanation, and backup information. You can expect questions around the following categories:

- Organization Contact Information (reviewed through GLM)
- Organizational Capacity (narrative)
 - Demonstrate experience managing programs and resources
 - Highlight ability to execute at this scale
- Organization Finances (attachments)
 - Audited/Unaudited Financial Statements
 - Current Full Year Operating Budget
 - Last Full Year Budget to Actuals
- Examples of Prior Funding at this Level/Expectations for Grant Management
- Title of Application
- Brief Synopsis of Application (200 words or less)
- Defined Community Need and Sources (narrative)
- Proposed Solution to Need (narrative)
- Community Engagement (narrative)
 - Explain how the community has been or will be involved in both development and implementation
 - Demonstrate responsiveness to community voice and those impacted by the work
- Collaboration, Partners, & Roles (narrative)
- Expected Outcome (consider logic model)
 - Inputs & Activities
 - Outputs & Outcomes
- Measurement & Evaluation (narrative)
- Sustainability (narrative)
 - Describe how the project may create lasting value beyond the grant period
 - This may include durability of impact, adoption by partners, or broader learning
 - Long-term funding (real or potential) is not required but may be considered
- Implementation Budget (attachment)
 - Expected Income
 - Committed/Received Income
 - Expected Expenses
- Implementation Timeline (1-3 years)
 - Important Milestones
 - Major Expense Points

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- Additional Attachments (as needed)
 - Letters of Support
 - Memoranda of Understanding
 - Supporting Data
 - Sample Marketing Materials
 - Quotes and/or Invoices, etc.

HCCF anticipates working collaboratively with invited applicants during the full application phase to strengthen concepts, clarify implementation plans, and refine partnership structures.

Evaluation Criteria

LOIs and Final Applications will be evaluated based on:

- *Alignment with Community Need*
 - Demonstrates a clear, data-informed understanding of a significant issue
- *Boldness and Vision*
 - Reflects “moonshot” thinking with potential for transformational impact
- *Collaboration*
 - Demonstrates strong, meaningful partnerships (required)
- *Feasibility*
 - Realistic approach with clear implementation potential
- *Scale of Impact*
 - Ability to affect a large portion of the community or create lasting change

Additional metrics for Final Applications:

- *Organizational Strength*
 - Capacity and track record of the lead organization
 - Reflect capacity to manage a significant investment
- *Community Engagement*
 - Engage the community both in solution design and implementation
 - Incorporates community voice and participation
- *Sustainability*
 - Demonstrates thoughtful consideration of impact beyond the grant period, potential ongoing support, or possibility of replication
- *Leveraged Resources (if applicable)*
 - Projects that attract additional funding or resources will be viewed favorably

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Full Moonshot Grant Timeline

	Milestone	Date
Letter of Intent (LOI) Timeline	LOI Open	August 12 – September 15, 2026
	Optional LOI Feedback Sessions	August 25–26, 2026
	Committee Review - LOI	September 16 – October 7, 2026
	Committee Meeting - LOI	October 8, 2026
	Board Reports Due - LOI	October 15, 2026
	Board Meeting – LOI Decisions	October 22, 2026
Full Application Timeline	Full Application Period	October 28, 2026 – January 26, 2027
	Committee Review – Full App	January 27 – February 9, 2027
	Possible Presentations	February 15–18, 2027
	Committee Meeting – Full App	February 18, 2027
	Board Reports Due – Full App	February 18, 2027
	Board Meeting – Full App Decisions	February 25, 2027
	Announcement & Implementation	March 2027

Submission Process

Letter of Intent

- Submit LOIs in PDF format via email to Eric Hessel, HCCF VP of Programs, at eric@hendrickscountycf.org by 3pm on September 15, 2026
- Subject line: *Moonshot LOI – [Lead Applicant Organization Name]*

Full Application

- Submit Full Applications through the Community Foundation’s online grant portal (GLM) by 3pm on January 26, 2027

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Review Process

- LOIs will be reviewed by HCCF staff and a community review committee
- 4–6 organizations will be invited to submit a full application
- Feedback may be requested during each stage of the application and following notification decisions

Reporting Process

HCCF uses a grantee-centric approach to reporting that prioritizes learning, transparency, and partnership while minimizing administrative burden.

Progress Check-Ins

The recipient will participate in quarterly check-in conversations with HCCF staff.

These discussions will:

- Review progress toward milestones
- Surface key successes and challenges
- Identify adjustments or pivots
- Highlight partnership and community engagement

A simple set of guiding questions will structure each conversation. Formal written reports are not required until the grant is completed.

Grantees are encouraged to share candidly about progress, challenges, and lessons learned. We recognize that bold work involves uncertainty. We view reporting as a shared learning process rather than an evaluation of perfection.

Financial Check-Ins

Grantees will provide high-level financial updates every six months, including:

- Spending to date compared to the budget
- Any anticipated changes or reallocations

Budgets may be adjusted in partnership with HCCF as projects evolve.

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Final Reflection

At the end of the grant period, grantees will provide a final reflection on:

- Outcomes and impact
- Key lessons learned
- Future opportunities or community benefit

Format will be determined jointly (written, presentation, or other appropriate format).

Reporting processes may be adjusted in partnership with the grantee to best support the success of the work.

Non-Discrimination and DEI Policy

Organizations or projects that discriminate based upon race, sex, age, color, religion, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, citizenship status, genetic information, military service/veteran status, or any other category protected under state or local law are considered ineligible.

HCCF is dedicated to nurturing a diverse, inclusive, and accessible community. We will encourage peaceful and productive dialogue, authenticity, and the celebration of cultures. Our vision is that Hendricks County is a place where all feel welcome and confident in their ability to belong, connect, and grow. We will demonstrate what is possible when community members come together.

Note on AI Usage

Applicants are encouraged to use available tools, including AI, to support the development of their proposals.

At the same time, submissions should:

- Reflect the authentic voice and perspective of the organization
- Be grounded in the realities of Hendricks County
- Represent the organization's capacity to implement the proposed work
- Include verifiable and reliable data sources

Applications that rely heavily on generic or unsupported content, or that do not clearly reflect the applicant's unique context and capabilities, will be less competitive.

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Final Note to Applicants

This opportunity is about more than funding—it is about possibility.

We invite you to bring forward ideas that:

- Challenge the status quo
- Unite partners around a shared vision
- Deliver meaningful, community-wide, and lasting impact
- Demonstrate a bold idea grounded in insight and designed to create impact beyond the initial investment

Think boldly. Plan realistically. Inspire widely.

Applicants considering participating in this opportunity are encouraged to contact HCCF Vice President of Programs, Eric Hessel, at any time during the process.

Primary HCCF Contact

Eric Hessel, HCCF Vice President of Programs

eric@hendrickscountycf.org

317-268-6240

Schedule an appointment at your convenience: [Virtual or Phone](#) / [In-person](#)

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