

Operating Grants

Overview

Pinellas Community Foundation offers two-year operating grants to local nonprofit organizations that support our community's needs. These grants are available to direct human services organizations, as well as those that support arts and culture in Pinellas County. These unrestricted funds can be used for operational expenses required to implement projects and programs.

The awards in this process are distributed in two equal installments at the beginning of the calendar year.

The application window for the **2026-27 Operating Grant Cycle** opens on July 14, 2025. Eligibility criteria, award amounts, application details, and supplemental resources are described below. Please review this document, our Operating Grants webpage, and our online FAQs before reaching out to the team, as your question may be addressed in those spaces.

For technology assistance or other questions, please reach out to the PCF Grants team at grants@pinellascf.org.

Eligibility and Track Details

Direct service and arts and culture organizations are eligible for this award. There are two tracks in the application process – direct community services and arts and culture. Each track is further segmented to reflect the different needs of small and large organizations. PCF understands that some organizations operate a mix of programming and encourages you to reach out if you are unsure which category your organization falls under.

Eligibility Criteria

Organizations are eligible to apply for this award if all of the following criteria are met:

- Have 501(c)(3) public charity status under the code of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and has had such status for one calendar year at the time of application
- Have a physical presence in Pinellas County
- Will only spend awarded funds within Pinellas County
- Fits within the funding priorities identified by the PCF Board of Governors (listed below)
- Is a direct service provider or arts and culture organization
- Have been operational AND providing direct services/programs for at least 1 year prior to application

Funding Priorities

PCF's Board of Governors has identified the funding priorities below. We encourage you to review this list and consider how the services you already offer align with the broader areas listed here. Your organization may offer services in several areas, or only one.

Improving health

- Access to healthcare
- Access to behavioral healthcare

Enhancing quality of life

- Aging
- Access to affordable housing
- Financial assistance programming
- Food security
- Homelessness
- Access to justice
- Access to resources
- Trauma

Advancing education

- Providing scholarships
- Outreach and community education
- Educational programming
- Literacy
- Early learning

Promoting arts and culture

- Improve cultural awareness
- Enhance public access to arts

Ineligible Organizations

- Hospitals
- Schools and school-affiliated groups (including colleges, universities, and booster clubs)
- Vocal and musical ensembles
- Animal welfare and environmental organizations
- Houses of worship
- Governments
- Continuing care retirement communities
- Private foundations and grantmaking foundations (if an organization files a Form 990-PF, it is ineligible to apply)

Other Considerations

- Organizations with multiple programs or sub-organizations may only submit one application.
- Fiscally-sponsored organizations may apply, provided the fiscal sponsor does not also submit a funding request.

Please email our grants team at grants@pinellascf.org if you have any questions about your organization's eligibility.

Track Details

By providing funding for both direct services and arts and culture organizations, PCF is able to support critical and cultural needs in Pinellas County. The application process is the same for both types of organizations, but the application questions reflect the differences in programming. Please read the below details carefully to determine which track your organization qualifies for.

Direct Services

Organizations fit in this category if their programming focuses on resolving individual and community needs, or bettering the community, through direct services. Examples include food banks, nonprofit behavioral health providers, free health clinics, and literacy programming.

Arts and Culture

Organizations fit in this category if their programming focuses on encouraging clients to create original works of creative expression, fostering an appreciation of the arts locally, or helping educate audiences on specific types of creative works. Examples include museums, arts education programming, nonprofit performing arts venues, and arts alliances.

If your organization operates an arts and culture festival as part of its programming, your organization must have a year-round presence in the community, have the arts as its primary purpose, spend the majority of its budget on arts activities, hire professional artists, and include education and outreach programs. PCF does not intend to fund arts organizations whose primary programming is a singular event or festival.

Award Amounts

Award amounts are determined based on the size of the operating budget serving Pinellas County. This does not include major one-time or non-routine capital expenditures.

Annual Expenditures in Pinellas County	Maximum Annual Amount	Maximum Two-Year Total
Small (Under \$500,000)	\$15,000	\$30,000
Medium (\$500,000 - \$2.5M)	\$20,000	\$40,000
Large (Over \$2.5M)	\$25,000	\$50,000

The awards in this process are distributed in two equal installments at the beginning of each calendar year. For example, if your organization is awarded \$30,000, the first installment of \$15,000 will be distributed in January 2026 and the second installment of \$15,000 will be distributed in January 2027 (pending completion of all grant requirements).

Due to the extremely competitive nature of operating grants, some applicants will not move forward from the Letter of Intent stage (see below for more details). Awarded organizations may not receive the full amount of their request.

2026-27 Application Details

We have designed this application process intentionally, with transparency and accessibility in mind. If you have any questions, please review the FAQs on our website before contacting our team. A bulleted timeline of important dates is provided below – please read the following carefully. Our team is available for questions if anything is unclear.

It is important to note that we will not accept any late submissions. We strongly encourage early completion of both the letter of intent and the full application, to avoid missing either deadline.

During the Letter of Intent (LOI) Window, PCF staff will only be able to answer technology- and eligibility-related questions. We are offering two webinars to help support applicants during the LOI period, a general overview on July 10 and a deeper dive on July 31, where we discuss outcomes and what the LOI reviewers will be looking for. You can register for these webinars, or view the recordings, on the Operating Grants webpage.

Once the full application window opens on September 2, we'll present a webinar reviewing the resources available and the application itself. We will also offer office hours with a member of the PCF Grants team to address specific questions about your organization's application.

If your organization is invited to submit a full application, it will require the submission of:

- the story of a client served,
- financial documents such as a Form 990 and audit (if available),
- board information, and
- demographic details of your organization and clients.

For applicants not invited to move forward, the PCF Grants team will offer an opportunity to review your LOI and provide feedback.

Review Criteria

There are two evaluation stages during this process – the Letter of Intent and the Full Application.

The Letter of Intent review process is conducted by PCF's internal team and assesses each application's eligibility, alignment within the Funding Priorities, and clarity of community impact.

Members of PCF's Board of Governors chair the Full Application review committees, which also utilize the volunteer efforts of community members who bring a variety of experiences, expertise, and perspectives to the process. The reviewers will examine the overall strength of the organization and the effectiveness of the organization in delivering impactful services or programming.

Direct Services Organizations

For direct community service nonprofits, Letters of Intent will be evaluated by the strength of organizational programming and outcomes.

Full applications will be reviewed using the following criteria:

Clear Story
PCF uses a unique storytelling application to better understand <i>who</i> is served by your organization and <i>how</i> . We want to make sure we understand your clients' challenges, and your organization's role in helping.
Solution-oriented
Demonstrating that your organization has strong leadership, clear and measurable outcomes, and a reasonable plan to implement your mission allows us to understand if you are effectively meeting your clients' needs. You can use internal data or research to show the impact of your work.
Need
Your request for funds must clearly support services delivered in Pinellas County. We want to understand how this award from PCF will help you achieve your mission and which programs or services will benefit.
Financials
We want to be sure that all proposed projects are financially sound. Strong applications will have a reasonable, cost-sensitive budget with achievable outcomes that display all sources of funding. If there are budget variances, they should be explained.

Arts and Culture Organizations

For arts and culture organizations, Letters of Intent will be evaluated by a clearly defined audience for programming and the strength of the outreach to that audience.

Full applications will be reviewed using the following criteria:

Clear Story

PCF uses a unique storytelling application to better understand who is served by your organization and how. We want to make sure we understand your mission and how you support arts and culture in Pinellas County.

Community Impact

Demonstrating that your organization has strong leadership and engages in the local artistic community allows us to understand how you are supporting engagement in the arts. You can use internal data or research to show the impact of your work.

Need

Your request for funds must clearly support arts programming delivered in Pinellas County. We want to understand how this award from PCF will help you achieve your mission and which programs or services will benefit.

Financials

We want to be sure that all proposed projects are financially sound. Strong applications will have a reasonable, cost-sensitive budget with achievable outcomes that display all sources of funding. If there are budget variances, they should be explained.

Grant Conditions

PCF values the opportunity to highlight the important work of our grantees and the impact of PCF funding on the community. If awarded an operating grant during this cycle, your organization agrees to:

- Complete two reports during the grant period, reflecting the work done by your organization as a result of the awarded funds. These reports should include internal data and photos from the supported programs/services.
- Properly accredit PCF through use of the most recent logo on:
 - Your organization's website with our logo and a link to <https://pinellascf.org>
 - Collateral, letterhead, and other external marketing material that feature sponsors (where appropriate)
- PCF may request the following of select organizations:
 - A visit with your board of directors regarding partnerships and further opportunities with PCF
 - Provide up to 3 PCF board members and/or staff with a tour of facilities once during the grant period

Any deviation from the above must be agreed upon in writing before the Letter of Intent window closes. If awarded a grant, failure to meet these obligations may negatively impact your organization's future applications for other funding opportunities at PCF.

Timeline

Important Dates

- July 10, 2:00p – WEBINAR – Operating Grants Overview and Letter of Intent Walkthrough
- July 14 – Letter of Intent Window Opens
- July 31, 11:00a – WEBINAR – Outcomes
- August 11, noon – Letter of Intent Window Closes
- September 2 – Letter of Intent Decisions Shared with Applicants
- September 2 – Full Application Window Opens
- September 3, 11:00a – WEBINAR – Full Application Walkthrough
- October 14, noon – Full Application Window Closes
- January 2026 – Awards Distributed

****PCF is closed for the holidays on September 1 and October 13****

Support Windows

Letter of Intent Window

PCF staff will be available for technology assistance* from **9:30a on July 14** through **12:00p on August 11**.

Full Application Window

PCF staff will be available for technology assistance* from **9:30a on September 3** through **12:00p on October 14**.

PCF staff will be available for specific application support** from **September 8** through **September 30**.

***Technology assistance** is defined as assistance related to navigating the grant portal, accessing resources, or clarifying concerns related to eligibility and document uploads.

****Specific application support** is defined as assistance related to answering questions in the full application. A scheduling link will be provided once the full application window opens on September 2. Specific application support is not provided during the Letter of Intent window.

Applicant Resources

Grant Portal

All applications must be submitted through PCF's grant portal. Many organizations already have accounts in our grant portal, while some may be starting from scratch. We recommend creating a login or checking that your existing username and password is accurate as soon as possible.

If you are unsure about your account status, or need assistance, please reach out to PCF staff as soon as possible.

[Link to Login to PCF Grant Portal](#)

[Link to Create New Account](#)

We use our grant portal to communicate directly with applicants via email – please ensure that the email address listed in your account is a monitored account and that you have added administrator@grantinterface.com to your organization's safe list. We recommend checking your spam filter at least weekly during the application process, and on the important dates noted above.

Webinars

All links to register for or review the recording of the webinars are on the Operating Grants webpage.

These webinars will provide insight into PCF's funding philosophy for operating grants, what to expect during each phase of the process, guides on how to navigate the grant portal, and explanations for each question in the LOI and full application. Once delivered live, the recording for each webinar will be added to our website within 2 business days.

- July 10, 2:00p – Operating Grants Overview and Letter of Intent Walkthrough
- July 31, 11:00a – Outcomes
- September 3, 11:00a – Full Application Walkthrough