



2026 Catalyst Grants Information & Application Guidelines

TIMELINE Applications accepted April 15, 2026-March 14, 2026

Online Information Sessions (Optional):

- **2026 Grant Opportunities:**
 - Thursday, April 16, 2026, 1 pm
 - Tuesday, April 28, 10:30 am (Optional)
- **Catalyst Grant Applicants:** Tuesday, April 21, 9:30-10:30 am

Decisions and Award Notifications: Decisions will be completed by the beginning of June, and grant funds will be distributed by the end of June 2026.

ELIGIBILITY Catalyst Grants are reserved for 501(c)(3) public charities that reside in and entirely serve Barnstable County, Massachusetts; have been in operation for at least 3 full years; have an operating budget size of \$100,000 or greater; and have received and been good stewards of previous Cape Cod Foundation discretionary grants. National or statewide 501(c)(3) public charities are eligible to apply only if they have a local chapter/affiliate based in and entirely serving Barnstable County, Massachusetts. Prior recipients of the Foundation's Targeted and Comprehensive Capacity Building Grants are eligible to apply. Executive Director participation in peer learning network meetings and activities to support The Cape Cod Foundation to evaluate the impact of the program will be required.

REQUESTS \$50,000 in general operating support over 3 years, subject to annual renewal.

APPLY All applications will be submitted through The Cape Cod Foundation's online [grant management system](#). Please [click here](#) to learn more about using our system prior to completing an application.

INTRODUCTION

The Cape Cod Foundation was established in 1989 to improve community life on Cape Cod through philanthropy and grantmaking.

Since inception, the Foundation has distributed more than \$113 million in grants and scholarships throughout the community. Our grantmaking process promotes the advancement and sustainability of our community's resources and supports the organizations that make a true impact on our community.

One way we accomplish this mission is by developing permanent and flexible endowment funds. We use these funds to create grant opportunities (sometimes called “discretionary grants”) to respond to the existing and emerging needs of the community. Each year’s grant offerings are based on these needs and the availability of funds, which can vary in any given year.

All applicants should note that it is never our intent to use discretionary funds as a continuous source of annual revenue for any one program or organization. Grantees should not rely on receiving another grant in subsequent years.

The Cape Cod Foundation’s grant programs are highly competitive. For 2026, we continue our focus on engaging with and strengthening nonprofits.

CATALYST GRANT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Even the strongest nonprofit organizations face challenges that make it difficult to strengthen and expand their ability to fulfill their missions. Helping nonprofit organizations survive and thrive has never been more needed—especially as the demand for their services has grown.

We seek to strengthen nonprofit organizations and their leaders through multi-year, flexible, unrestricted general operating support focused on capacity building. The Foundation defines nonprofit capacity building as: the ongoing process of evolving an organization’s ability to learn, adapt, and deliver on its mission over time by strengthening its general operations.

The Foundation defines general operating support as: a grant made to further the general mission and work of an organization, rather than for a specific purpose or project. General operating support, by design, gives nonprofits flexibility to direct their spending where it is needed most and allows greater focus on achieving an organization’s mission. Through this, we aim to support nonprofit organizations in their iterative, strategic process rather than for a functional, tactical need. We are trust-based grantmakers. We know our nonprofit leaders know how to deploy funding best. We provide them with flexibility to engage in a process that *catalyzes* their ability to strengthen their organization.

We seek to engage in meaningful partnerships to support nonprofit organizations reach the next level of strength, effectiveness, and stability.

Catalyst Grants are typically \$50,000, over 3 years:

- Year 1: \$20,000
- Year 2: \$20,000
- Year 3: \$10,000

Catalyst Grants will support grantees to further their mission and organizational health. Funding is intentionally flexible, empowering recipients to determine how best to sustain critical core operations, address emerging community and organizational priorities, and position themselves for stronger future impact. Organizations will be working toward strengthening their capacity. Examples include but are not limited to: financial health and sustainability; strategy & organizational development; leadership, governance and staff development; operations, administration and systems; overall programmatic impact, evaluation and reach; technology and infrastructure; and/or community and stakeholder engagement.

Executive Director participation in peer learning network meetings with a cohort of other grantees via attendance at the following meetings below is required. The peer learning network aims to increase relationships, collaboration, and knowledge sharing among organizations. This will include:

- 1.5-hour grantee award launch meeting in Fall 2026
- (1) 1.5-hour mixer between Catalyst Grantees and alumni of the Foundation's Capacity Building Grant Programs, scheduled approximately every other year
- Up to (5) 2-hour peer learning network meetings hosted on a rotational basis at grantee sites when possible between Fall 2026 and Fall 2027
- (2) 2-hour peer learning network meetings, one in 2027 and one in 2028, as a follow-up check-in
- Executive Director participation in activities to support The Cape Cod Foundation to evaluate the impact of the program. This will include but is not limited to: pre/post surveys, an annual report, post-grant impact report and/or virtual or phone check-in(s).

Optional, 30-minute site tours at each peer-learning network meeting will also be offered. The total estimated time commitment per Executive Director to participate in peer learning meetings is up to 13 hours in the first year and up to 3.5 hours in the second and third years respectively.

Catalyst Grants are reserved for 501(c)(3) public charities as of the date of submitting an application that:

- Reside in and entirely serve Barnstable County, Massachusetts
- Have been in operation for at least 3 full years
- Have a budget size of \$100,000 or greater
- Have received and been good stewards of previous Cape Cod Foundation discretionary grants

Prior recipients of the Foundation's Targeted and Comprehensive Capacity Building Grants are eligible to apply. National or statewide 501(c)(3) public charities are eligible to apply only if they have a local chapter/affiliate based in and entirely serving Barnstable County, Massachusetts.

In addition to the above criteria, applicants should also already have the following:

1. Board Approved Strategic Plan and/or Theory of Change
2. Evidence of results and articulated approach to how impact is measured
3. Use of learning and data to adapt to changing circumstances and opportunities
4. Stable leadership with expectation of continued stability
5. Active and engaged governing board
6. Sound financials, financial management, and controls
7. Leadership and staff reflect and/or are accountable to the communities served
8. Practices demonstrate commitment to accessibility and cultural responsiveness
9. Clear articulation of how multi-year funding may be used
10. Transparency around key risks, if any (e.g. leadership, funding concentration, growth pace, etc.)

LIMITATIONS

These grants are for General Operating Support (GOS) with the expectation that each annual installation of funds can be expended within that corresponding year. Though GOS offers few restrictions, please note that The Cape Cod Foundation does not intend to fund the following types of work. If your use of funding fits mostly into one of these categories, the Catalyst Grant is not the right fit.

- Debt reduction
- Past costs for work completed substantially prior to the time of the grant award
- Capital campaigns or capital reserves
- Fundraisers or event sponsorships
- Endowment/Reserve-building
- Monuments and memorials

Fiscally-sponsored organizations, public schools, private K-12 and post-secondary schools and governmental organizations are not eligible for Catalyst Grants. Regional and national organizations are also not eligible unless they have a local chapter/affiliate based in and entirely serving Barnstable County, Massachusetts.

Organizations may receive only one Catalyst grant in 2026. However, receiving a Catalyst grant does not preclude organizations from applying for other 2026 discretionary grant programs, depending on specific eligibility requirements of each. All grant opportunities are listed on the website.

EVALUATION

The Cape Cod Foundation's staff initially screens applications for eligibility and completeness, following our Board-approved due-diligence policy. Most grants are then evaluated by an appropriate committee, comprised of Foundation staff, and sometimes supplemented by community or Board members. The Foundation seeks guidance from content experts, as necessary. All grant recommendations are reviewed by The Cape Cod Foundation's Board of Directors for final approval. Grants will be evaluated based on the following:

- Clear understanding of the applicant's mission, goals, and impact
- Community need
- Organizational health: capacity of the organization, staff, and volunteer leadership
- Financial health: a diverse and balanced funding plan appropriate to the organization size/scope
- Connection to The Cape Cod Foundation's programmatic priorities
- Organization's ability to leverage other resources if indicated.
- Involvement of collaboration and cross-sector partnerships

REPORTING

It is our intent to minimize the work organizations must complete for this Catalyst Grant opportunity. Grantees will be asked to complete a brief report at the conclusion of the first, second, and third grant year. A final written impact report will be due no later than December 2028. Sample questions to assess impact may include: What capabilities do you have now that you didn't have 12-18 months ago? In what ways have decisions or processes become more efficient? Where do you expect the impact of this investment to show up next?

An email reminder will be sent ahead of the due date if no report has been filed. All grantees can request an optional conversation with The Cape Cod Foundation at any time during or after their grant period, and/or we may check in informally during the year. From time to time, we may request additional, optional feedback to learn more about needs and opportunities on Cape Cod, as well as the impact of the grant on your organization.

APPLICATION PROCESS

[Submit your application](#) through the Foundation's online grant management system. Remember that you can save and come back to your application as a draft, before hitting submit.

You can find specific instructions for establishing an account [HERE](#).

You can find general application tips [HERE](#).

If you have not previously used this system, please [watch this tutorial](#) video in advance. If you have previously used our grant management system, you do not need to create a new profile or organization.

Detailed information on the application process and grant portal is available in the [Resources for Applicants](#) section of the website, and in the [FAQs](#).

PUBLICITY

As part of our responsibility to be transparent funders, we announce a summary of our grantees, including 2026 Catalyst Grantees and their corresponding grant amounts.

Typically, we derive the organization name from the application. If any changes to what is provided in the grant application occur post-award, or if you have questions about how we will use your organization name on the website, please contact the Foundation as soon as possible.

From time to time, the Foundation also highlights grantee profiles in our newsletter. The Foundation will contact a grantee in advance to request permission to do so and confirm content prior to any publicity of this nature.

GETTING IN TOUCH WITH US

For information about this grant opportunity, visit the [“Nonprofits” page of the website](#). From there, you can review FAQs, see other grant opportunities, view past grantees, and sign up for optional e-information sessions.

Keep an eye on your email. Emails may be delivered through the Foundation’s online grant management system via the email address administrator@grantinterface.com. We recommend that you add this email to your contact list to prevent messages from being delivered to your spam folder.

For help logging into the portal, or accessing your account, review the FAQs and tutorial, and then if you still have questions, contact info@capecodfoundation.org, 508-790-3040.

If you have reviewed the materials and continue to have questions, you can email Caitlin Buckley, Senior Program Officer at cbuckley@capecodfoundation.org.

Thank you in advance for your partnership.