



Organizational Capacity Building
Strengthening Organizational Capacity and Effectiveness
Open from April 20 to May 18, 2026 at 5PM EST

What We are Funding

Dogwood recognizes that strong organizations are essential to strong communities. Community-based organizations play a critical role in responding to local needs, building trust and advancing solutions that improve wellbeing across the region. At the same time, many organizations face challenges related to staff development, systems, planning and operational infrastructure that can limit their ability to grow, adapt or sustain their work over time.

Investments in internal capacity help organizations improve their leadership, systems, planning and community relationships so they can operate more effectively, adapt to challenges and sustain their work over time. This grant opportunity supports organizations working in Western North Carolina to strengthen their internal capacity so they can more effectively advance work related to affordable housing, education, economic opportunity and/or health & wellness.

These grants are intended to support organizational development rather than the direct delivery or expansion of programs. Funding is designed to help organizations improve internal practices such as planning, leadership development, governance, operational systems, evaluation, communications or community engagement.

By investing in organizational capacity, Dogwood aims to help community partners build stronger organizational foundations that support effective, responsive work across Western North Carolina.

Funding must be used for clearly defined internal development efforts that strengthen an organization's ability to achieve its mission and improve its effectiveness, systems or organizational practices.

Eligible activities include:

- Strategic planning and/or other planning efforts
- Staff, leadership or board development
- Operational improvements such as HR, finance or IT systems
- Community engagement or increasing access to programs/services
- Policy and advocacy efforts
- Resource or funding development
- Learning and evaluation
- Communications and/or marketing

Average grant awards typically range from \$15,000 to \$30,000. Applicants may request a minimum of \$10,000 and up to \$50,000. Funds are generally paid within a 12-month period, and proposed projects may span 12 to 24 months depending on the scope and timeline of the work.

As we anticipate a high volume of requests, not all applicants will receive a grant and/or award amounts may vary from the amount requested.

Funding priority:

All eligible organizations are welcome to apply. For this cycle, Dogwood expects to prioritize funding for small and mid-sized organizations, particularly those with annual operating budgets under \$500,000. We are especially interested in supporting community-based organizations that are deeply connected to and led by the communities they serve.

Eligibility:

Eligible applicants include 501(c)(3) nonprofit public charities serving the Qualla Boundary and/or the 18 counties of Western North Carolina; fiscally sponsored organizations; government, quasi and non-governmental organizations; faith-based organizations; or K-12 schools, colleges and universities. Please refer to [our FAQs for a comprehensive list of the 18 qualifying counties](#).

Eligible organizations should have an annual operating budget of at least \$50,000. Dogwood typically does not fund more than 25% of an organization's annual operating budget within a single year.

Who and what is not eligible:

This funding opportunity is intended to support organizations seeking to strengthen their own internal capacity. Requests to provide capacity-building services, consulting or technical assistance to other organizations are not eligible for funding.

Requests for program delivery or expansion of programs are not eligible for funding.

Requests for staffing are generally not supported through this opportunity. In limited cases, staffing requests may be considered if the role is directly tied to one of the eligible capacity-building activities listed above and includes a clear plan for how the position or responsibilities will be sustained after the grant period. General staffing support is not eligible.

Organizations that do not have an established presence in or ongoing work serving the Qualla Boundary or the 18 counties of Western North Carolina are not eligible.

Individuals and for-profit businesses are not eligible.

Current Dogwood grantees with active capacity building grants may *not* apply.

Application Process

Applications are accepted from April 20 to May 18, 2026. All applications must be submitted through the Dogwood Health Trust website at dht.org/grantmaking.

Criteria and Review Factors:

We support organizations whose work aligns with our [Purpose, Values and Guiding Principles](#) and [Commitment to Equity](#).

We are interested in organizations whose work, approach and presence in the region reflect a strong fit with Dogwood's long-term vision. We also consider the broader context, including community needs, the organization's role within the local ecosystem and what we have already committed to in the region.

Proposals will be reviewed based on the following factors:

Clear purpose for strengthening organizational capacity

Applicants should clearly identify the area of organizational capacity they want to strengthen and explain why it matters for their effectiveness. Proposals should describe a focused effort to improve internal

practices, leadership, governance, planning or operational systems that support the organization's mission.

Connection to mission and community impact

Organizations should demonstrate how strengthening their internal capacity will help them carry out their mission and core work more effectively and support work related to affordable housing, education, economic opportunity or health & wellness in Western North Carolina.

Community-based leadership and relationships

We are especially interested in organizations that are rooted in and accountable to the communities they serve. Strong applicants demonstrate a clear understanding of who they serve and maintain meaningful relationships with community members, partners or stakeholders.

Intentional progress and readiness to learn

Applicants should demonstrate readiness to undertake the proposed organizational strengthening effort and a clear understanding of what they hope to improve or change through the process. Strong proposals show a willingness to learn, reflect and strengthen organizational practices over time.

Contribution to regional wellbeing

We are interested in organizations that demonstrate how their work contributes to a Western North Carolina where people and communities can live, learn, earn and thrive with dignity and opportunity. Strong applicants show a meaningful connection between their mission, the communities they serve and broader efforts to improve wellbeing in the region.

Established presence in Western North Carolina

Organizations should demonstrate an established presence and ongoing work serving the 18-county region of Western North Carolina and/or the Qualla Boundary. Organizations headquartered outside the region may apply if they have a sustained presence and track record of work in the region.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

The following questions are asked as part of the Capacity Building application. They are included here as a preview. All applications must be submitted through Dogwood Health Trust's website at dht.org/grantmaking.

1. Tell us about your organization's core work and the role your organization plays in the communities you serve. In your response, describe the primary activities that advance your mission and how this work contributes to a Western North Carolina where people can live, learn, earn and thrive with dignity and opportunity.
2. From the list below, please select up to three areas your organization would prioritize for a capacity building investment over the next 24 months. This helps us understand what your capacity building needs are. The areas you choose to prioritize have no bearing on the strength of your application.
 - Strategic planning and/or other planning efforts
 - Staff, leadership or board development
 - Operational improvements such as HR, finance or IT systems
 - Community engagement or increasing access to programs/services
 - Policy and advocacy efforts
 - Resource or funding development
 - Learning and evaluation
 - Communications and/or marketing
3. Considering the area(s) of capacity building you selected, describe the purpose of your request. *In your response, please address the following:*

Capacity Building Project Details: For each selected area, briefly describe the key activities of this work and how you would use capacity building funding to strengthen your effectiveness and deepen your impact.

Mission Alignment: Describe how this project fits within your organization's mission and priorities.

Prioritization and Timing: Explain why the area(s) of capacity building is a priority for your organization at this time. In addition, please share why your organization is prepared to undertake this effort now. You may describe relevant planning, leadership commitment, partnerships or prior work that has positioned your organization to move forward.

4. Which of Dogwood's strategic priority areas of housing, education, economic opportunity and/or health & wellness does your organization's work most closely align with?
5. Please describe who you serve and how your organization understands and stays connected to the people and communities you serve. In your response, explain how community perspectives inform your work and decision-making.
6. If this capacity building effort is successful, what will be different about your organization in the next one to three years? How will the proposed work allow your organization to more effectively

carry out its mission or better serve the community? (e.g. how this effort will improve internal practices, leadership, or systems; how it will strengthen your organization's sustainability or effectiveness; how it will allow your organization to better deliver its core work or engage with communities you serve.)

7. Please describe how you will know that your efforts have been successful and have strengthened your organization. Include the three to five specific indicators of success you will use to understand whether this project is successful. (e.g., participation metrics, measurable quality improvements, or other related numerical measures.)