



## **Rural Impact Investment Fund Grant Guidelines and Eligibility Criteria Published on September 10, 2025**

### **Rural Impact Investment Fund (RIIF): Overview**

The Rural Impact Investment Fund (RIIF) is a collaboration between Central Texas Community Foundation, Central Texas Health and Wellbeing Network, and HEAL Alliance in partnership with the St. David's Foundation. This community-led regranting initiative aims to strengthen the nonprofit ecosystem and sustainability of rural grassroots leaders who are improving the health and well-being of individuals and families navigating economic hardship as well as marginalized and historically underrepresented communities and groups in Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, and Williamson Counties. Grounded in equity-centered and trust-based philanthropy, the Fund aims to shift power and resources to those closest to the challenges and solutions in rural communities. RIIF invests in rural grassroots leaders and small under-resourced nonprofits through flexible, unrestricted general operating support grants, capacity building grants, and leadership development grants that will provide resources to strengthen organizations and impact communities.

### **Our “Why”**

RIIF was created to correct longstanding gaps in traditional philanthropy by investing in those often left out – small rural nonprofits and grassroots leaders with deep community knowledge but limited access to institutional support. Through a community-directed model, RIIF is designed to invest in small under-resourced rural nonprofits and grassroots leaders with flexible, capacity-building funds—not for direct services or programming, but for unrestricted operating support, and leadership development.

RIIF isn't just about funding, it's about transforming how resources flow, who gets to decide, and how we build rural equity and resilience from the ground up.

### **Our Commitment to Rural Communities**

We are committed to ensuring that all rural communities and community members have fair and consistent access to opportunities and resources. We recognize that some communities face greater challenges in achieving health, economic stability, and overall



well-being, and we strive to expand opportunity and strengthen resilience across rural areas.

Through our grantmaking, we aim to:

- Listen to and include the voices of all community members.
- Support local organizations and grassroots leaders who know their communities best.
- Direct resources in ways that increase opportunity and stability across rural regions.
- Build relationships based on transparency, accountability, and respect.

### **What does this Fund support?**

Funded proposals will build organizational capacity, provide leadership development to grassroots leaders, and/or provide unrestricted general operating support funds to support the core operations of nonprofits. These grants will focus on rural grassroots leaders and small, rural nonprofit organizations with annual operating budgets totaling \$250,000 or less. Additional capacity-building resources are available without receiving a grant. Here is more information about the RIIF Strategic Priorities:

#### **1 - Organizational Capacity Building**

Grants to help rural leaders build stronger nonprofit organizations or start new 501(c)(3) nonprofits focused on health and well-being. Start-up funding can include first-year compensation for new leaders.

Existing and new nonprofits can request funds for, but are not limited to, legal services to form a nonprofit, board development, leadership and staff development trainings, strategic planning, fund development, financial management, operational infrastructure such as computers, software, and equipment; program development and evaluation; communications and community relations; partnerships and collaborations such as coalition or network-building activities, shared services, joint advocacy and/or policy change efforts.

## **2 - Community Leadership Development**

Grants to support emerging grassroots leaders and help experienced grassroots leaders mentor new ones. Community leadership requires different skills and values than organizational leadership.

Applicants may propose, but are not limited to, programs designed to cultivate the skills, confidence, and effectiveness of current and emerging leaders within rural communities. Examples include leadership training and workshops; participation in coaching and peer mentorship programs; assessment and feedback tools; financial literacy; and cohort-based community of practice or leadership institutes.

## **3 - General Operating Support**

Unrestricted general operating support grants can be used for any purpose that supports the nonprofit's mission, giving the organization the flexibility to allocate funds where they are most needed.

These grants are particularly valuable because they allow nonprofits to strengthen their core capacities, weather uncertainties, and pursue strategic opportunities.

These grants cannot exceed 10% of the annual operating budget for the organization. For example, a nonprofit with an annual operating budget of \$250,000 may request up to 10% of this amount, which is \$25,000.

### **Eligibility Criteria**

All applicants must:

- **Be working to improve the health and well-being of individuals and families navigating economic hardship** as well as marginalized and historically underrepresented communities and groups in Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, and Williamson Counties. Marginalized and historically underrepresented communities and groups and individuals are encouraged to apply.
- **Have a physical address in at least one of the four rural counties:** Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, and Williamson Counties.



- **Be tax-exempt under IRS Section 501(c)3, and in good standing in the state** in which they are incorporated. Organizations without 501(c)(3) status may still apply through a fiscal sponsor that is a 501(c)(3) in good standing with the State.
- **Have an annual operating budget of \$250,000 or less.**

In addition to the above criteria, eligible applicants include:

- **Collaborations, coalitions, or partnerships** of two or more nonprofit organizations or a **network of organizations** (one of which must be a 501(c)3 charitable organization).

### **Funding Details**

- Total Funding Available: \$250,000
- Minimum award is \$1,000
- Maximum award is \$25,000
- One 12-month grant per nonprofit or grassroots leader with a fiscal sponsor

Grants will be awarded for one 12-month term with a maximum amount of up to \$25,000 awarded per grant for nonprofit organizations or fiscally-sponsored entities. Lesser amounts may be awarded based upon the proposal review process. Applicants may apply for as many of these grant opportunities as they wish. However, an applicant can only receive one grant from the Rural Impact Investment Fund per grant cycle.

### **Grant Cycle Timeline**

- Applications open: October 1, 2025
- Deadline: October 31, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. CST
- Grant period begins: February 2026

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### **RIIF Key Concepts and Definitions**

**Capacity building (leaders & nonprofits):** Strengthening skills, systems, and resources to improve impact and sustainability. Examples: leadership training, technical



assistance, financial management, communications, coalition-building, mentorship, or strategic planning.

**Fiscal sponsor:** A 501(c)(3) that provides oversight and administration for an organization or project without its own tax-exempt status. Fiscal sponsors typically charge 5–15% of the grant for administrative costs. A written agreement (MOU or contract) is recommended.

**Small, under-resourced nonprofits:** 501(c)(3) organizations with annual operating budgets of \$250,000 or less, often with limited staff and infrastructure.

**Grassroots leaders/organizations:** Community leaders or groups serving their communities without robust organizational support or 501(c)(3) status. Often rely on volunteers and minimal budgets.

**Health and well-being:** Non-medical factors that influence health outcomes, including access to healthcare, education, economic stability, and community support.

**Marginalized and historically underrepresented communities:** Groups systematically excluded from resources, opportunities, and power due to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, disability, or geography.

**Trust-based philanthropy:** An approach that emphasizes unrestricted funding, transparency, streamlined processes, feedback, and partnership.

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## Questions?

We are here to support you. Contact us at:

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