

NMF's 2026 Otto Bremer Trust Community Responsive Fund Grant Guidelines

Northwest Minnesota Foundation (NMF) is partnering with the Otto Bremer Trust (OBT) to deliver \$525,000 to Northwest Minnesota organizations through the 2026 Community Responsive Fund grants. Funding priorities and eligibility criteria for Community Responsive Fund grants through NMF are set by OBT.

Grants awards will be up to \$75,000 to support operations, programming, and/or capital projects. Partial funding may be awarded.

Award period: One-year

Maximum grant amount: \$75,000

Available funding: \$525,000

Eligibility Criteria

Eligible applicants:

- 501c3 nonprofits
 - Must have IRS determination from the IRS
 - Must have had 501c3 status and been in operation for the past 5 consecutive years
 - Organization's last fiscal year's actual expenses must have been \$2 million or more, excluding in-kind expenses
- Healthcare organizations (including affiliated 501c3 foundations)
- Colleges and universities including affiliated foundations
- Private schools
- Must have a physical location in and/or serve NMF's region which includes
 - Red Lake Nation and White Earth Nation
 - Beltrami, Clearwater, Hubbard, Kittson, Lake of the Woods, Mahnomen, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake, and Roseau counties.

Ineligible applicants:

- Government entities, public agencies, including public schools
- Government-owned hospitals or joint powers healthcare systems
 - Affiliated 501c3 hospitals and healthcare foundations may be eligible
- Organizations may not apply as a coalition and consolidate their finances to be eligible.
- A fiscal sponsor with expenses more than \$2 million cannot apply on behalf of a smaller organization
- The organization may not have an open Otto Bremer Trust strategic grant.
Note: *This is a grant directly from Otto Bremer Trust and does not include a 2025 Community Responsive Fund grant*
- Organizations that have received a Community Responsive Fund grant for 3 consecutive years cannot be awarded

Northwest Minnesota Foundation is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Funding Guidelines

- The amount awarded may not exceed 10% of the organization's previous fiscal year's public philanthropic financial support.
 - Public philanthropic financial support includes dollars raised through private fundraising (individuals, businesses, foundations, etc.), giving campaigns, fundraising events, United Way awards, and so forth. Public philanthropic support excludes government grants and contracts, earned income, investment gains, and so forth. In-kind contributions are also excluded.
- For requests for operating support, no more than 10% can be used for administrative/indirect costs.
 - Administrative expenses include Management and General Expenses and Fundraising Expenses, as is consistent with Form 990.
 - Administrative expenses through the OBT Community Responsive Fund are not additional expenses beyond traditional indirect expenses.
- Grant funds must be used within one year of receiving funds.

Funding Priorities

- **Food.** Organizations and programs that directly operate meal sites and food pantries to meet basic daily needs. (Large, region- and state-wide food bank activities **are not** included)
- **Shelter.** Organizations and programs that provide short-term and emergency shelter beds for people who are housing insecure or facing homelessness.
- **Low-income healthcare clinics.** Organizations and programs that primarily provide affordable medical, dental, and mental health services to people with limited financial resources or who are uninsured/underinsured.
- **Disability services.** Organizations and programs that support people with physical/cognitive disabilities.
- **School-based mental health.** Organizations and programs that have established school-based mental health services.

Ineligible Projects/Expenses

- Work to influence public policy
- Sponsorships, one-time, or annual events
- Fiscal sponsorships
- Regranting
- Animal welfare, animal-based therapy*
- Medical research
- Sports*
- Religious programs
- Arts*
- Environmental appreciation, enhancement, or preservation*

**Applications in priority areas may include programs involving sports, arts, animal therapy or the environment*

Evaluation Criteria

Applications for the 2026 OBT CRF grants will be evaluated using the following criteria.

Purpose Statement

- The purpose statement is clear and concise.
- The request is directly connected to the proposed project or program.

Community Context

- The applicant explains why the project is needed.
- The description shows an understanding of local conditions, needs, and service gaps.
- Information is provided on how the need was identified (e.g., data, feedback, assessment).

Activities + Partnerships

- Partnerships are clearly identified and documented (e.g., MOUs, agreements).
- Collaboration roles and responsibilities are defined.
- The project timeline is realistic and aligned with the proposed activities and budget.
- Activities are directly connected to the identified need.

Participation + Access

- Plans encourage meaningful involvement and participation.
- Services are accessible (e.g., transportation, affordability, language).
- Efforts are made to reduce barriers that may prevent participation.

Outcomes + Impact

- Outcomes align with the stated activities and context.
- The proposal describes how the work will contribute to long-term community benefits or capacity.
- The approach is practical and results-focused, with clear and realistic outcomes.

Budget

- Line items are clearly connected to the proposed project activities
- Other funding, in-kind support, or resources are identified where applicable.

Reporting

A final grant report will be due within one year of receiving funds.

Timelines and Key Dates

Application Window

April 20th – June 1st

Decision Notification

By September 30th

Payment Disbursed

October 2026

Steps to Apply

Applications for the 2026 OBT Community Responsive Fund grants through NMF are by invitation from NMF staff. If you feel you meet the outlined criteria, please contact Chloe Keprios, Operations Coordinator, at chloek@nwmf.org.

- **Review Funding Priorities:** Make sure your proposed work, program, or project aligns with one or more of our funding areas.
- **Utilize the Applicant Resource Folder:** Check out the [OBT Applicant Resource Folder](#) and bookmark this link as it will not change. If you have trouble accessing the link, send an email to grants@nwmf.org or visit the [NMF website](#) to view or download any of the tools and resources that are available on the grants page.
- **Prepare Your Application:** Use the guidelines and evaluation criteria to strengthen your proposal. These materials and more can be found in the Applicant Resource Folder.
- **Submit Online:** Complete and submit the online application via the [NMF Web Portal](#) by **11:59 PM on the final day of the application window**. Please note that first-time users of the web portal may need to be manually approved; this can take up to 24 hours or 1 business day. Web portal instructions are included in the Applicant Resource Folder and on the NMF website. If you experience technical difficulties, send an email to grants@nwmf.org.
- **Review Process:** All applications are reviewed by a committee of staff and community advisors using the considerations stated above.
- **Award Notification:** Applicants will be notified of decisions by the dates listed above.

Need Help?

We encourage applicants to reach out with questions or request support at any time throughout the application period. Language assistance and accessibility accommodations are available upon request.

Contact

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