

NMF’s 2026 Otto Bremer Trust Community Responsive Fund FAQs

What is the Community Responsive Fund?

The Community Responsive Fund is a grant opportunity supported by the Otto Bremer Trust (OBT) and administered locally through intermediary partners, including the Northwest Minnesota Foundation (NMF). It provides funding to organizations delivering essential, direct services that meet basic needs in their communities. Guidelines and eligibility requirements are set by OBT.

What types of work are eligible for funding?

Funding is focused on five priority areas:

- Food access (meal sites, food pantries)
- Shelter (emergency or short-term housing)
- Low-income healthcare clinics
- Disability services
- School-based mental health

Who is eligible to apply?

To be eligible, organizations must:

- Be a 501(c)(3) nonprofit
- Have at least five years of operating history
- Have \$2 million or more in annual expenses
- Serve communities within the eligible geographic region
- Provide services aligned with one of the funding priorities

Are government entities or schools eligible?

- Government entities (including public schools): Not eligible
- Private schools: May be eligible if they meet all other criteria

Can smaller organizations apply through a fiscal sponsor?

No. Fiscal sponsorships are not eligible for this grant.

Do we need to be located in the region to apply?

Not necessarily. Your organization can be based outside the region, but your services must directly benefit people within the eligible service area.

How much funding can we request?

- Grants are up to \$75,000
- Requests cannot exceed 10% of your organization’s previous year’s philanthropic support
- Partial funding may be awarded

What can grant funds be used for?

Funds may support:

- Operating expenses
- Program costs
- Capital projects

The majority of funds should go toward direct services.

Are there limits on administrative costs?

Yes. No more than 10% of the grant can be used for administrative or indirect costs.

What types of projects are NOT eligible?

Ineligible uses include:

- Influencing public policy
- Events or sponsorships
- Regranting funds
- Fiscal sponsorships
- Religious programming
- Most arts, sports, or environmental projects (unless clearly tied to a priority area)

Are applications open to everyone?

No. This is an invitation-only process. If you believe your organization is a strong fit, you are encouraged to contact Chloe Keprios, Operations Coordinator at chloek@nwmf.org.

When will we hear back about funding decisions?

- Applications open: Mid-April
- Decisions: Late September
- Awards distributed: October

How long do we have to use the funds?

Grant funds must be used within one year of receiving the award.

What reporting is required?

Grantees must submit a final report within one year, including:

- A narrative summary of the work
- Financial reporting on how funds were used

Can organizations receive funding multiple years in a row?

Organizations may receive consecutive grants, but after three consecutive years, they must take a one-year break before applying again.

Who can we contact with questions?

Reach out to the program officer listed in your invitation or guidelines. They're your guide through the maze and genuinely want to help you determine fit. If you believe your organization is a strong fit, you are encouraged to contact Chloe Keprios, Operations Coordinator at chloek@nwmf.org or 218-558-5326.