

Native Youth Wellness Grant

Grant Overview & Guidelines

07.13.2026



Grant Purpose:

The Native Youth Wellness Grant is held within the Northwest Minnesota Foundation's (NMF) Children and Families Program. This funding serves as an opportunity to address youth wellness, and mental health in Indian Country. There is a need to address the mental health and cultural wellness of the youth, living within the White Earth Nation, the Red Lake Nation, and Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe. This is due to a lack of social trust, multigenerational trauma, and high suicide rates disproportionately experienced by Indigenous youth.

The Northwest Minnesota Foundation will release approximately \$500,000 in funding allocated to tax exempt organizations, local non-profits, and tribal governments serving the following tribal nations: the Leech Lake Band Ojibwe, the Red Lake Nation, and the White Earth Nation. The average project funding will be approximately \$25,000-\$75,000. The maximum/minimum award amount will be reviewed on a per-proposal basis.

The key audience of these funds are youth and young adults aged 0-24 years old, including children, youth, and families. This includes youth, families, and young adults that are both registered tribal members, and non-registered tribal members that self-identify as Indigenous.

Based on key learnings, NMF has chosen a participatory grant-making approach to funding community-led solutions. This approach includes a youth-led decision-making model that helps determine funding priorities and informs recommendations to the NMF staff. By forming a youth-led Learning Cohort, NMF can empower community members & youth leaders to help shape the systems that serve them. In June 2025, NMF staff convened the Learning Cohort, which includes tribal leaders, liaisons, and local youth with equitable representation from the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, the Red Lake Nation, and the White Earth Nation. The cohort is named "Noojimo'iwewin," which translates to "we are all moving toward healing" or "you are healing the spirit."

Key Grant Details:

- Grant applications will be open beginning **12:00 PM August 19th- 11:59 PM September 20th, 2026.**
- Open Office Hours & Grantee Q & A Session: **Thursday, August 27th, 4:00 PM- 5:00 PM**
 - Come and meet with program officers, ask questions, and get support with the application portal

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- This session will be recorded and posted on NMF's website
- **Register in advance here:**
<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/P452OZEiQsGjn4F7cXrwYQ>
- Application decisions will be made no later than mid-October
- Performance period will begin November 1st, 2026, with grant end dates based on individual project timelines/needs. Project timelines should be clearly defined in each application, and applicants must include the anticipated project end date in their proposal.

Eligible Applicants:

501c3 nonprofits, tribal governments, and tribal organizations located within the Northwest Minnesota Foundation's service area that includes the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, Red Lake Nation, White Earth Nation are eligible to apply for funding. Eligible applicants must be able to demonstrate tax-exempt status, including federal recognition of tribal designation, or non-profit status.

Eligible Expenses:

Eligible expenses may include, but are not limited to capacity-building, strategic planning, program development, and program implementation/operations to support the cultural wellbeing of indigenous youth and families. Potential expenses include staff training, staff salaries, and administration costs (not to exceed 10% of the total budget).

Eligible activities include:

Strengthening youth identity through Cultural Programming & Language Revitalization

- Cultural revitalization, language revitalization, and culturally grounded programming
- Supporting healthy communities by making traditional programs, ceremonies, and healing spaces welcoming, accessible, and safe for youth
- Hosting cultural gatherings, seasonal events, traditional pathways to healing, and intergenerational cultural experiences
- Traditional harvesting practices, land-based education, environmental stewardship, and activities that reconnect youth with the land and Ojibwe teachings

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- Cultural education, arts, storytelling, photography, videography, digital media, creative expression, and other opportunities that preserve and celebrate Indigenous knowledge and culture
- Supporting local artists, cultural practitioners, knowledge keepers, elders, and cultural heritage initiatives
- Activities that strengthen youth identity, belonging, and connection to culture, language, community, and the natural environment
- Opportunities that foster meaningful intergenerational relationships through the involvement of elders, knowledge keepers, cultural mentors, and land-based learning experiences
- Community-led storytelling and creative projects that elevate youth voices, celebrate community strengths, and preserve cultural traditions for future generations

Cultivating positive lived experiences for youth through Community Wellness Programming, & Tribal Collaboration

- Community education and awareness related to mental health, suicide prevention, grief, healing, behavioral health, and overall wellness
- Increasing awareness of available services, behavioral health resources, and community supports
- Programs that create safe, welcoming, and inclusive spaces where youth feel connected, supported, and valued
- Community wellness events, healing circles, peer support activities, family-centered programming, and culturally grounded healing opportunities
- Collaborative efforts between tribal departments, schools, nonprofits, healthcare providers, youth-serving organizations, and other community partners to improve youth wellness
- Activities that strengthen coordination, reduce duplication of services, and build lasting partnerships
- Increased partnerships with local organizations to address youth mental, physical, cultural, and spiritual wellness through athletics, Tribal Youth Councils, outdoor recreation, and other community wellness initiatives
- Land-based wellness activities, including outdoor education, hunting, fishing, ricing, canoeing, camping, hiking, environmental stewardship, and other traditional learning experiences that promote physical, emotional, cultural, and spiritual well-being

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- Community storytelling, photography, videography, digital media, and other opportunities that elevate youth voices, foster healing, strengthen community connections, and promote shared learning across tribal communities

Building pathways for youth to gain life-skills, gain workforce experience, and cultivate positive experiences within their communities by supporting Positive Youth Development

- Youth leadership development, Tribal Youth Councils, and youth-led planning and decision-making
- Youth internships, apprenticeships, workforce development, career exploration, and professional skill-building
- Independent living skills, financial literacy, and life skills programming
- Leadership conferences, trainings, mentorship opportunities, civic engagement, and regional or intertribal learning exchanges
- Addressing transportation barriers, including driver's education and public transportation access
- Activities that engage youth who may not already be connected to existing programs, services, or safe support networks
- Programming that supports diverse youth interests, including outdoor recreation, arts, technology, robotics, hunting, fishing, athletics, environmental stewardship, and other positive youth development opportunities
- Opportunities for youth to develop storytelling, digital media, photography, videography, podcasting, and other communications skills that amplify youth perspectives and strengthen community engagement
- Youth-led projects that document community experiences, cultural knowledge, and leadership journeys while building workforce, technical, and creative skills

These examples are intended to illustrate eligible activities and are not exhaustive. The Northwest Minnesota Foundation welcomes innovative, community-defined approaches that strengthen youth wellness, cultural identity, resilience, and leadership for Indigenous youth and young adults ages 0–24. Programs should reflect the priorities, strengths, and cultural values of the communities they serve while supporting long-term collaboration, relationship-building, and shared learning. Program should clearly demonstrate a plan to address one of the key outcomes described above:

- Strengthening youth identity through **Cultural Programming & Language Revitalization**

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- o Cultivating positive lived experiences for youth through **Community Wellness Programming, & Tribal Collaboration**
- o Building pathways for youth to gain life-skills, gain workforce experience, and cultivate positive experiences within their communities by supporting **Positive Youth Development**

Ineligible Expenses:

Grants cannot fund direct mental/behavioral health services/programming, one-time/stand-alone events, capital investment projects, political activities, religious activities, discriminatory practices, past operating debts, legal fees, or similar activities. This fund will not consider applications for fundraising planning, feasibility studies, membership or subscription dues, computer license fees, financial audits, building construction, or capital campaigns.

Reporting Requirements:

Reporting requirements will be determined based on the individual project needs to best meet the goals of shared learning for all parties involved in serving children and families. The purpose of reporting is not to create administrative burdens on grantees, but to generate opportunities for shared learning and growth as projects are implemented in real time. All grantees will be required to submit an Initial Progress Report, due in December 2026. Final Grant Reports will be due upon completion of the grants, with specific performance periods based on project needs.

How to Apply:

Step 1: Register to apply through the Northwest Minnesota Foundation's grant portal & select "Native Youth Wellness 2026" <https://nwmf.spectrumportal.net/accounts/signin>

Step 2: Applications must be submitted via the NMF Web Portal no later than **11:59 PM, September 20th, 2026**

Step 3: Full applications will be reviewed and approved or denied based on program fit, available funding, and may require board approval. A final determination should take no longer than 60 days from when the full application was received.

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Contact:

If you have any questions about the applications, or need assistance, please e-mail or call Margret Treuer, Children and Families Senior Program Officer, margret@nwmf.org 218-759-2057 ext. 5310