

Introduction

The Polk County Community Foundation is a public charity founded in 1975 by a group of generous and visionary community leaders who wished to improve the quality of life in our area. It is completely funded by gifts and bequests from donors in our local community.



The Community Foundation is pleased to offer grants for free community events, an initiative of the Foundation's Board of Directors to support face to face social interactions that build community in ways small and large. Gatherings funded by these grants are intended to benefit residents who have chosen to make this community their home, to give people an excuse to strike up a conversation and get to know each other. Free means absolutely, 100% free. The only thing you'll spend or give is time with your neighbors. You can leave your wallets and purses at home.

How to apply?

Use the Short Form Application, available online at www.polkccf.org and at the Foundation office, 255 South Trade Street, in Tryon.

Which organizations may apply?

- The Foundation awards grants to local charitable organizations that have been reviewed and approved by the Foundation's committee and Board prior to consideration of any particular application. Please contact the Foundation with questions about your organization's eligibility to apply for grants.
- Local Polk County, North Carolina 501(c) (3) nonprofits and units of government that primarily serve the citizens of the community centered in Polk County.

Grant Criteria

- Grants of up to \$3,000 shall be awarded for small, single events.
- Grants of up to \$8,000 shall be awarded for a series of events or a large single event likely to attract a hundred or more local people.
- All grants are awarded to local organizations to support opportunities for local residents to gather, socialize, learn, play, exercise, celebrate, and connect with one another.
- Saluda events will automatically be considered for Saluda Community Fund grants.
- We encourage you to consider incorporating one or more of the following into your project (*not required*):
 - Developing or sharing a common interest.
 - Healthy living emphasis, such as local and/or healthy food.
 - Physical activities.
 - The use of public gathering spots, such as parks, libraries, and schools.
 - Events that bring together local people from diverse demographic backgrounds around a common interest or passion.

Grant Conditions

- Events must be free and open to the public.
 - “Free” means that attendees may not be asked for contributions and the events may not include the sale of food or merchandise, or charges for entertainment. When awarding grants, the committee will consider whether people coming with money and people coming without money will have the same experience. For example, one of our donors used the example of a father and his child attending an event to evaluate this criteria. The donor wanted the child to have no idea that there was a difference between his family’s financial circumstances and those of all the other families attending because at no point during the event was there an opportunity to buy anything, donate to any group, or tip anyone.
 - “Open to the public” means that events must appeal and be welcoming to members of the public other than your members/clients.
- So that the Foundation’s support may be acknowledged in publicity before and during the event and to allow adequate planning time, events must be held at least three weeks after grant decisions are available (see our “Dates & Dollars” chart).
- Work with the Foundation to include our “Community Matters” seal in your publicity leading up to the events and on signage at the event. It should be clear to anyone who sees publicity and attends the event that the event is made possible by a Free Community Events grant from the Community Foundation. The grant publicity submitted with your report for this grant will be carefully reviewed for compliance with our brand. Please call the Director of Grants to discuss this condition.
- All publicity for the event shall be in local media outlets and/or local venues. Local means Polk County and Landrum media outlets. Publicity shall not be designed to attract visitors from outside of our community, but to encourage local residents to attend.
- We encourage you to purchase your refreshments and other supplies from locally-owned businesses. The Foundation can provide banners and other signage to make it clear that goods and services provided at your event have been purchased with the Foundation’s grant funds.
- If nonprofits participate in the event, they shall not use the event to encourage donations. Fundraising or solicitations of any type are strictly prohibited.
- The following types of events shall not be funded with grant dollars:
 - Tourism or economic development events designed to attract visitors to the area. Proposed events should encourage neighbors to meet neighbors here in our community.
 - Fundraising events.
 - Information Fair events, where the purpose is more promotional than social.
 - Events that are primarily to promote your organization.
 - Events that are primarily attended by your members or clients, staff, board, volunteers, etc.
 - Events that are “free with suggested donation” or events that have a high barrier to participation.
 - Events targeted to a particularly narrow demographic.
 - Events designed to provide charitable assistance to individuals, social services, support groups, etc.
 - Events that do not fit the guidelines outlined here and/or Foundation policies.
 - *Please note that the Foundation’s Unrestricted grants may fund events that do not meet the Free Community Events criteria. Please contact the Foundation for guidance.*
- The Polk County Community Foundation values your efforts to coordinate a “Free Community Event” for residents. We continue to tweak the grant criteria and conditions to best serve our community. We look forward to working with your organization to promote this brand so that when community members see the “Community Matters” seal, they can expect a 100% free and purely social opportunity to spend time with their neighbors.

Project Examples

Past Free Community Event grants have funded a Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration, the Do-It-Yourself Messiah, a New Year's Eve celebration, free concerts in Columbus, Landrum, Saluda, and Tryon, heart-healthy banquets in Green Creek, programs for children and Shakespeare fans at the Polk County Public Library, and a Play Day for children and families in Saluda. *Additional ideas for free gatherings could include:*

- A yoga series at a library
- Community nights at schools
- Recreational and sporting activities
- Dances
- Gardening classes
- Community grill nights at public parks
- Arts and music workshops and performances
- Extraordinary learning opportunities for community members young and old
- Festivals and celebrations for local residents
- Grant funds may be used to help keep schools open outside normal school hours as gathering places for community building activities.

Application Deadline

- For application deadlines, see the “Dates & Dollars” chart available online and at our office.
- Please note that all applications are due on Tuesdays by 11:59 pm on the date indicated.

Helpful Publications

- The “Directory of Kirby Endowment Funds, Competitive Grant Funds and Donor Information” provides information about the many funds available at the Community Foundation, including examples of past grants.
- The “Dates and Dollars” chart lists application deadlines, notification dates, interview dates and requirements (if any), and available dollars for each grant program.

Timeframe for Using Approved Grants

Grant funds must be spent within 12 months of the time of the award notification. You may request a longer grant period by indicating the need for an extension of time on the cover page.

Additional Application Hints and Requirements

Please refer to the signature page on the application.

Questions?

For additional information concerning this or other grant applications, or help with your unique situation, please contact Noah Wood, our Director of Grants. You may visit us at 255 South Trade Street, Tryon, NC or online at www.polkccf.org; call 828-859-5314; or email: grants@polkccf.org.