



## Heart of Cook Foundation Fund Program Guidelines



### Our Vision

The Heart of Cook will be a leader in furthering education, supporting human services, and protecting the environment through a continued commitment to local communities in the **AEP service area (Southwest Michigan and Northwest Indiana (La Porte, St. Joseph, and Elkhart Counties))**.

### Our Committee

We are an employee-developed and driven advisory committee that provides recommendations for grants from our corporate advised fund (Heart of Cook Foundation Fund) administered by the Berrien Community Foundation. Members represent a cross-section of organizational structure and demographics.

### Applications

You may fill out an online grant application at the Berrien Community Foundation website for either the **Mini Grant (\$100-\$500) OR Long Form Application (over \$500-\$10,000)**

A non-profit organization (501(c)(3), units of government, religious organizations, or schools) **may submit only one application during this cycle** (i.e., one for either the long form or the mini grant form).

*Note: If the organization is not one of these four types, we cannot accept a grant application from that organization due to IRS regulations for corporate advised funds.*

**If an organization has received a grant from Heart of Cook for the last three consecutive years, the organization is not eligible to apply for funding for one year.**

Please direct inquiries to Heart of Cook Grant Program, Berrien Community Foundation, (269) 983-3304 x 2 or [susanmatheny@berriencommunity.org](mailto:susanmatheny@berriencommunity.org).

### Guidelines & Funding Emphasis

Our three primary funding areas are:

- **Furthering Education**
- **Supporting Human Services**
- **Preserving and Protecting the Environment**

We take special pride in supporting organizations and projects in which our employees participate or take a leadership role. The partnership of corporate contributions and employee initiatives typically results in improved outcomes.

### ***Furthering education***

To promote economic development and provide for a well-trained and available work force in the area, we will provide grants to programs that build work skills and to educational organizations and projects that supplement professional development for educators and volunteers. Projects that specifically target science and mathematical disciplines, as well as development in impoverished communities are given priority.

### ***Human services***

Strong families are the building blocks for successful communities and businesses. We will provide grants to programs and organizations that nurture children and youth, help foster independence for those in need, ensure safety and support of older individuals, and teach parenting skills.

### ***Protecting the environment***

As an energy provider located in a particularly beautiful and unique ecosystem, we recognize the importance of protecting, restoring and enhancing our natural surroundings. We provide grants to organizations and projects supporting these types of environmental activities.

## **Additional Criteria**

While there are many worthwhile causes and projects that deserve funding, resources are limited. Given AEP's generous corporate contribution, priority will be given to organizations not already funded by United Way. We are particularly interested in proposals that:

- **Identify specific measurable outcomes with program evaluation methods**
- **Address emerging needs or provide innovative solutions to existing needs**
- **Focus on prevention**

In general, we **do not** provide grants to support salaries and related costs (i.e., fringes, taxes); **nonqualified organizations** (e.g., **for profit businesses, service clubs without nonprofit status (i.e., 501(c)(4)s, 501(c)(19)s, etc.—see four types that do qualify above)**); individuals, tickets for contests, raffles, or other activities with prizes; religious organizations (unless the request is for a non-religious activity that supports the overall community); fraternal organizations; capital campaigns, endowment funds, academic chairs or fellowships; debt-reduction campaigns; political or partisan organizations or events; sports tournaments or teams; trips or tours for individuals or groups; and talent or beauty contests. We are also interested in whether or not you have applied and/or received funding from an AEP and/or I&M affiliate other than the Heart of Cook in the last 14 months.