ToolBox 2026: Advancing Sector-Wide Strategies in Talent, Technology, and Shared Infrastructure

Over the past year, North Texas Community Foundation (NTCF) engaged more than 200 local nonprofit stakeholders through surveys, focus groups, and strategic planning sessions to assess current capacity constraints across the nonprofit community.

In response, NTCF reimagined the ToolBox 2026 grant cycle to support Tarrant County nonprofits providing or piloting capacity-building strategies that strengthen organizations serving vulnerable populations. This year's funding focuses on improving organizational effectiveness and resilience, filling resource gaps, and strengthening the overall nonprofit ecosystem. We define a **nonprofit ecosystem** as the interconnected network of organizations, people, resources, and conditions that shape how nonprofits operate and create impact in the community.

This collaborative process identified three key capacity-building priorities to advance sector-wide progress:

1. **Talent and Leadership Development:** Strengthening nonprofit workforce and leadership pipelines.
2. **Technology and Data Systems:** Modernizing technology infrastructure and improving data management.
3. **Shared Infrastructure and Support Services:** Expanding access to shared resources and operational support for nonprofits.

The data from this input also indicated that organizations serving vulnerable populations have been disproportionately impacted by recent funding changes, reinforcing the need for sector-wide investment.

Purpose of Funding: Strengthening the Nonprofit ecosystem

Grant funds will be awarded to entities working to advance sector-wide strategies that benefit multiple Tarrant County-based nonprofits. Projects must demonstrate sector-wide impact, measurable outcomes, and the potential for broad benefit across the nonprofit sector.

Projects and programs developed should prioritize building capacity for Tarrant County organizations with limited staff capacity, resources, and/or funding that provide critical services to vulnerable populations - such as education, economic mobility, health (physical or mental), and/or housing.

Eligible Funding Requests

Proposals must address one or more of the following:

1. **Talent & Leadership Development:** Build a stronger nonprofit workforce through:
   - Initiatives that cultivate emerging and established leaders
   - Succession planning and professional development
   - Board and staff training, mentorship, and leadership pipelines
   - Sector-wide workshops, bootcamps, or summits for nonprofit leaders

2. **Technology & Data Systems:** Create or expand technology and data systems across multiple nonprofit organizations through:
   - Modernization of technology infrastructure
   - Shared data management and analytics platforms
   - Cybersecurity enhancements and digital equity initiatives
   - Collaborative projects to improve interoperability and innovation

3. **Shared Infrastructure and Support Services:** Improve operational capacities and efficiencies for nonprofit organizations by providing access to resources and services, including:
   - Shared services (e.g., bookkeeping, Human Resources, IT support, Legal, Marketing and Communications, Fundraising, Mental Health and Wellness Support)
   - Collaborative facilities or operational support
   - Back-office functions and administrative systems
   - Other shared resources and services that reduce costs and improve operational efficiency for nonprofits

Nonprofit Eligibility

- 501(c)(3) organizations with a proven track record in providing capacity building for local nonprofits
- Continuous operation for a minimum of three calendar years, headquartered in Tarrant County
- Projects must benefit multiple Tarrant County nonprofits providing services targeted at vulnerable populations (e.g., education, economic mobility, health, housing, etc.)
- Demonstrated ability to execute the project within 12 months

- Minimum annual operating budget of $2.5MM
- Collaborative proposals that meet the following criteria:
  - Up to three 501(c)(3) organizations may apply jointly, designating a lead organization headquartered in Tarrant County with a proven track record of improving nonprofit capacity acting as fiscal agent, responsible for reporting.
  - Collectively, participating organizations must meet the minimum operating budget threshold of $2.5MM.
  - If selected to receive funds, collaborative grants must execute an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) between participating organizations within six (6) weeks of being selected to receive funding. (Note: This is not required for the application.)
- Implementation team must designate one full-time staff member as Project Manager
- Must have a representative attend one of the two virtual nonprofit orientation meetings (January 20th or 21st)
- Application must include a letter of endorsement from a nonprofit that has benefited from your services

Ineligible Requests:
- Religious organizations seeking funds to support evangelism
- Municipal entities
- Political campaigns or lobbying activities

Scoring Rubric

- (25%) Clear benefit to multiple nonprofits (e.g., shared resources, training, systems, etc.)
- (20%) Articulation of how the project will help Tarrant County nonprofit organizations working to alleviate poverty, prioritizing those with limited staff capacity, resources, and/or funding
- (15%) Capacity to execute the proposed project within 12 months
- (15%) Nonprofit capacity building experience in Tarrant County
- (10%) Method for measuring success
- (10%) Strategies to address potential challenges that may arise while implementing grant
- (5%) Project sustainability beyond the grant period

Funding

Proposal funding ranges:

- $20,000 - $30,000
- $30,000 - $40,000

- $40,000 - $50,000

How to apply

- Attend a mandatory virtual orientation (January 20th or 21st)
- Pass the grant eligibility quiz
- Submit a proposal through the Community Foundation's grants portal. Only one application per organization will be accepted. Organizations that are a part of a collaborative grant proposal cannot submit a separate proposal. We will not accept late submissions.
- Submit a letter of endorsement from a nonprofit that has benefited from your services.
- Organizations may submit an optional short video (no more than two minutes in length) with their proposal. Videos recorded via phone camera are acceptable. More details are in the application.

Timeline

January 20	Virtual orientation (6pm-7pm); click here to register.
January 21	Virtual orientation (12pm-1pm); click here to register.
February 26	Proposal deadline (5:00 PM CST)
Mid-April	Award notification
Mid-May	Grants distributed

*Applicants must have a representative from their organization attend **one** of the orientations.

Frequently Asked Questions

- **Can funds be used to support capacity building at my individual organization or to provide direct services to the community?**
  Projects must focus on expanding the capacity of multiple organizations by providing resources and/or services. They may not be directed for the sole benefit of the applicant organization or its clients.

- **For collaborative grant proposals, how will funds be distributed and who will be responsible for reporting?**
  Collaborative grant applicants must identify a lead organization to receive grant funding and submit the final report.

- **For collaborative grant proposals, can the combined annual operating budget of all participating organizations be considered?**

Yes, the annual operating budget for all organizations combined must meet the minimum required budget of $2.5MM.

- **For collaborative grant proposals, do all organizations need to be headquartered in Tarrant County?**
  No, only the lead organization needs to be headquartered in Tarrant County.

- **My organization does charitable work, but we are not a 501(c)(3). Can we still apply?**
  No, applicants must have nonprofit status to be eligible for funding. This includes collaborative grant proposals; all organizations must have nonprofit status.

- **What if our project cost exceeds the maximum grant amount?**
  If your project will not be fully funded through ToolBox, note the source from which you plan to obtain the additional funds in the project budget template.

- **Can ToolBox funds be used to pay for staff time?**
  Grantees may direct the award to support staff time required for project implementation. This amount should be noted in your project budget.

- **How many grants will be awarded?**
  NTCF anticipates awarding 6-8 grants through this cycle.

  ToolBox is made possible through the generous support of our fundholders, endowed funds, and private foundation partners.

NTCF staff will not be available for questions until after the mandatory orientation meeting. If your organization still has questions afterwards, please submit to: grants@northtexascf.org