



2026-2027 Multi-year Community Grant Program Guidelines

Behavioral Health & Health Care | Food | Shelter & Safety

The Santa Barbara Foundation's Community Grant Program offers multi-year grants to support general and programmatic operations (otherwise known as unrestricted funding) in three program areas:

- Behavioral Health & Health Care
- Food
- Shelter & Safety

Organizations are only eligible to be awarded a grant in one program area; therefore, we highly recommend that organizations strategically apply in the program area that most closely aligns with their mission. Please see "Program Area Priorities" below for additional details on each of the three thematic areas.

Background

The Santa Barbara Foundation's Multi-year Community Grant Program is designed to support our nonprofit partners working in the basic needs priority areas of Behavioral Health & Health Care, Food, and Shelter & Safety.

Federal funding cuts and policy changes have impacted access to basic services across these areas, and the need is anticipated to increase over the next decade while nonprofits are asked to do more with less. Health care continues to remain inaccessible to too many, and there has been an unprecedented increase in demand for behavioral health services across demographics. Despite being a food-producing county, research suggests that more than one in four households in Santa Barbara County are food insecure. A confluence of factors - including increases in the cost of living, the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, and a regional housing crisis - has increased the number of unhoused community members, including youth.

While many of the challenges our community members face are intersecting and overlapping, addressing these needs is a precondition for healthy and thriving individuals, families, and communities. Our program areas reflect these foundational needs. Together, Santa Barbara County nonprofits weave the critical safety net that supports our community's most vulnerable populations and therefore our county on the whole. The Santa Barbara Foundation offers our Multi-year Community Grants in recognition of the essential role that our nonprofit partners play and to help further their vital work in these three program areas.

About Multi-year Community Grants

Multi-year general and programmatic operating funding increases nonprofits' ability to build their capacity and respond to community needs. We also recognize the need for longer-term funding in order to reduce the administrative burden on nonprofit organizations and allow for multi-year planning. Therefore, our Multi-year Community Grant Program is a two-year grant cycle that offers unrestricted funding to be used for organizational operations and programs with the intention of increasing the efficacy of your work in the program area for which you are applying.

Multi-year Community Grants are open every other year. This funding cycle is for 2026-2027; the next cycle will be for 2028-2029. Grantees will be required to participate in a mid-cycle check in towards the end of the grant’s first year of implementation, prior to the disbursement of the second year of funding. A final report is required at the close of the grant period, 25 months after the initial award.

Priority Will be Given to Organizations that:

- Implement nondiscriminatory practices and/or policies that foster inclusion internally and seek to dismantle language, cultural, and other barriers that prevent low-income and marginalized populations from accessing services.

Important Note: The Foundation aims to ensure in its grantmaking a balance of geographic spread, population served, organization size, and immediate response programming vs preventative programming. As such, these characteristics will also be considered at the committee level when prioritizing grant awards.

Funding Amounts and Duration

The maximum award for the Multi-year Community Grants is a total of \$60,000 (\$30,000 per year for two years). Please note that based on funding availability, award amounts could be less than requested.

Eligibility Requirements

- Organizations must serve **Santa Barbara County**.
- Organizations must **provide direct services** to address the program area for which they applied (Behavioral Health & Health Care, Food, Shelter & Safety) and/or **servicing as a coordinating body** for other entities within the program area for which they applied.
- Organizations must demonstrate **sound fiscal management** (e.g., financial audits/reviews, board oversight), **financial sustainability** (e.g., diversified funding, reserves), and **primarily serve low-income and underserved communities** in Santa Barbara County.
- Organizations must be **certified as tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3)** of the Internal Revenue Code or **use a fiscal sponsor with 501(c)(3) tax status**. Applications that do not contain a valid EIN (tax ID) number will not be considered. Organizations using a fiscal sponsor must review the [Eligibility Criteria & FAQs](#) for additional information and instructions.

Grant Limitations

Grants are not intended for:

- Services/programs not focused on the program area in which the organization has applied.
- Scholarships or individuals.

Please visit the [Eligibility Criteria & FAQs](#) for a complete list of what the Foundation does not fund.

Important Dates

Behavioral Health & Health Care	Food	Shelter & Safety
Application Launch: January 27, 2026	Application Launch: March 31, 2026	Application Launch: July 14, 2026
Application Deadline: 5:00 p.m. PT, March 3, 2026	Application Deadline: 5:00 p.m. PT, April 28, 2026	Application Deadline: 5:00 p.m. PT, August 11, 2026
Grant Award: Early June 2026	Grant Award: Late July 2026	Grant Award: Mid November 2026

Submittal Procedures

Applications must be submitted through our SmartSimple grant application, which includes the following documents:

- Organizational profile
- Program Budget Form
- Narrative answering eight (8) questions.

Program Area Priorities: Behavioral Health and Health Care Program Area

The Behavioral Health & Health Care grant implementation period is 24 months after the award date in June 2026, with a final report due one month after the implementation period ends.

The purpose of this grant program is to provide multi-year general and programmatic operating funding to organizations that are providing direct health care or mental health care services or support to clients. For the 2026-2027 cycle, applications MUST address at least one of the basic needs specified below:

- Provides behavioral health services based on a demonstrated sustained and/or increase in demand; and/or
- Provides health care services based on a demonstrated sustained and/or increase in demand; and/or
- Addresses youth mental health needs based on a demonstrated sustained and/or increase in demand.

Important Dates

March 3, 2026, 5:00 p.m. PT	Behavioral Health & Health Care Grant Application Deadline
Early June 2026	Behavioral Health & Health Care Grant Awards Announced

Application Questions

1. Please describe your organization's programs and services in this Program Area.
2. Describe the need your organization is addressing and how your services respond to this need.
3. What are your organization's strategic goals for the next 2 years in this Program Area, and what approaches will you use to achieve them? How do these goals position your organization to proactively meet community needs rather than simply react to immediate demands?
4. Describe the scope of your impact in this Program Area, including the number of people served annually, geographic reach in Santa Barbara County, and how your work creates community-level change.
5. If awarded, describe in detail how you plan to use these unrestricted funds to advance your organizational goals and strengthen your response to community needs in this Program Area.
6. Describe your organization's key partnerships and collaborative efforts in this Program Area. How do these collaborations enhance service delivery, expand your impact, or reduce service gaps? Please provide specific examples.
7. SBF evaluates our success using a results-based accountability framework. In order to better understand how our grants impact your organization, we want to better understand your goals for the grant funds. Please pick 1-3 of the areas below that you believe will be most impacted by the funding. Your selection(s) will influence the questions you'll be asked in your final report.
 - Financial stability of your organization
 - Increased or maintained program quality
 - Expanded programs: geographically or population served

- Increased outreach to most vulnerable and hardest to reach populations
 - Improved access for clients
 - Increased capacity to serve diverse groups
 - Expanded language access
 - Increased capacity: leadership, management, operations, and resources
 - Increased organizational ability to self-advocate at the local, state, and/or national level
 - increase participation in collaborative networks
8. How will you measure success in each of the 1-3 areas you've selected? Please explain: How will data be collected and analyzed – this can include specific tools, documents, databases, budgets/financials, etc.? and How will you use these findings to inform decisions or improvements during the grant period?

For questions regarding the Behavioral Health & Health Care program area and funding eligibility, please contact **Jamie Perez, Program Officer** at jperez@sbfoundation.org or (805) 880-9395.

All eligible applications will be reviewed by an external, peer-led committee using the criteria outlined below.

BHHC Scoring Rubric Structure
 Scale: 5 (Highest) to 1 (Lowest) | Maximum Score: 25 Points

Criteria	5	4	3	2	1
Response to Essential Community Need in BHHC	Clearly demonstrates well-documented services with compelling data/evidence that effectively respond to a critical community need in behavioral health or health care. Services strongly align with at least one of the three priority areas (sustained/ increased demand for behavioral health services, sustained/increased demand for health care services, or youth mental health needs). Shows strong organizational capacity to address the need.	Demonstrates solid services with adequate supporting data/evidence responding to a significant community need. Services align well with program priorities and show good organizational capacity.	Describes services responding to a community need with some supporting data/evidence, but documentation is limited or response is less comprehensive. Partial alignment with program priorities or moderate organizational capacity.	Vaguely describes services with minimal evidence of effectiveness in responding to community need. Weak connection to program priorities or limited organizational capacity to address the need.	Does not clearly demonstrate how services respond to a community need or services are not aligned with Behavioral Health & Health Care program area.
Strategic Vision and Goals	Presents a clear, comprehensive strategic vision with specific, measurable goals and actionable strategies to address the identified need over the two-year grant period. Demonstrates proactive, forward-thinking approach rather than reactive response.	Provides a solid strategic vision with defined goals and strategies, though some elements may lack specificity or long-term perspective.	Describes general goals and approaches but lacks strategic depth or appears more reactive than proactive. Limited evidence of multi-year planning.	Goals are vague or lack strategic framework. Organization appears primarily reactive to immediate demands without longer-term vision.	No clear strategic vision or goals provided. Approach is entirely reactive without defined direction.
Scale of Impact in the Community	Demonstrates substantial reach and impact serving a significant number of community members or addressing a critical gap (in service access, population reached, or specialization required). Clear evidence of meaningful outcomes	Shows notable impact serving a considerable population or addressing important needs. Evidence of positive outcomes at individual or group level.	Demonstrates moderate impact with limited reach or depth. Serves a smaller population or addresses needs with less community-wide significance.	Impact is minimal or unclear. Limited reach and/or uncertain outcomes. Services touch few community members or have shallow effect.	Negligible or no demonstrated impact. Unclear how services benefit the community.

	and potential for broader community-level change.				
Collaboration and Community Partnerships	Actively engages in robust, meaningful collaborations with other organizations, agencies, or community groups. Clearly articulates how partnerships enhance service delivery, reduce duplication, and amplify impact. Demonstrates leadership in community-wide collaborative approaches.	Participates in solid collaborative relationships that enhance programming. Shows how partnerships contribute to organizational effectiveness.	Engages in some collaboration but partnerships are limited in scope or impact. Collaboration is mentioned but connection to improved outcomes is unclear.	Minimal collaboration or partnerships appear superficial. Little evidence of how collaboration benefits the work or community.	No evidence of collaboration or operates in isolation. Does not engage with community partners.
Measurement, Evaluation, and Learning	Provides a detailed, feasible plan with specific data collection methods and tools clearly identified (e.g., databases, surveys, tracking systems). Describes clear, realistic processes for analyzing data and demonstrates understanding of how findings will inform decisions and program improvements during the grant period.	Presents a solid plan with defined data collection methods, tools, and analysis approaches. Includes how findings will be used to inform decisions, though some elements may lack specificity.	Provides a basic plan with some identified data collection methods and general analysis approaches. Limited detail on how findings will inform programmatic decisions or improvements.	Plan is vague, lacking specifics on data collection tools, analysis methods, or how findings will be used. Feasibility is questionable or connection between evaluation and learning is unclear.	No plan provided or plan is entirely inadequate with no clear methods, tools, or process for using findings to inform decisions.

Scoring Guide

- **22-25 Points = Priority for Funding:** Exceptional applications that strongly meet all criteria
- **18-21 Points = High Consideration for Funding:** Strong applications meeting most criteria well
- **13-17 Points = Consider for Funding:** Solid applications with some areas for improvement
- **9-12 Points = Low Priority, May Fund if Resources Allow:** May fund if resources allow; significant gaps in one or more areas
- **0-8 Points = Does Not Meet Criteria for Funding:** Insufficient alignment with program goals

Program Area Priorities: Food

The Food grant implementation period is 24 months after the award date in late July 2026, with a final report due one month after the implementation period ends.

The purpose of this grant program is to provide multi-year general and programmatic operating funding to organizations that are directly addressing food insecurity and/or are working on food systems change and resiliency in Santa Barbara County. For the 2026-2027 cycle, applications MUST address at least one of the needs specified below:

- Provides direct food assistance for food insecure clients, especially low-income and underserved communities¹, based on a demonstrated sustained and/or increase in demand; and/or
- Piloting innovative service models that test new approaches to how the food system operates, including models that strengthen integration between food providers and health systems, improve supply chain coordination, expand shared infrastructure, or address upstream drivers of food insecurity. Illustrative examples, amongst others, include:
 - **Integrating Food as Medicine and Clinical Pathways:** e.g. developing contracting and reimbursement frameworks that allow for integrated service delivery; expanding referral and data-sharing pathways between food providers, senior services, and healthcare clinicians.
 - **Strengthening Supply Chain Resilience and Infrastructure:** e.g. formalizing engagement with grocers, bakeries, and agriculture sector, particularly in under-resourced areas such as North County and New Cuyama; securing access to shared commercial kitchen infrastructure, allowing multiple organizations to scale prepared meal production without prohibitive individual overhead.
 - **Empowering Operational Excellence and Upstream Impact:** e.g. diversification of portfolios beyond distribution, incorporating nutrition education and food-as-health prevention models; addressing “upstream” drivers of food insecurity – such as transportation barriers, affordability, and health literacy.

Important Dates

April 28, 2026, 5:00 p.m. PT	Food Grant Application Deadline
Late July 2026	Food Grant Awards Announced

Application Questions

1. **Program Area Need:** Please indicate which Program Area Need your proposal primarily addresses (select one):
 - Direct food assistance responding to sustained or increased demand among food insecure residents in Santa Barbara County
 - Piloting a new or innovative service model that advances food systems change or resilience in Santa Barbara County

¹ **Demographic Gaps:** Seniors, particularly age 80+; people with disabilities and homebound individuals; undocumented residents and those fearing immigration enforcement; and children and families, especially those not consistently reached outside of school-based or afterschool programs. **Geographic Gaps:** New Cuyama, Guadalupe, Santa Maria, Lompoc, Vandenburg, Isla Vista, and Tanglewood.

If your proposal addresses both priorities, please select the **primary focus** of your request.

2. **Organizational Programs and Services:** Please describe your organization's programs and services in this Program Area.

3. **Community Need and Program Approach:**

Describe the need your organization is addressing and how your services respond to this need. Please include recent trends in demand for your services (for example: increases in clients served, meals distributed, waitlists, or geographic expansion) and what data or observations support this change.

3a. [Mandatory only for applications that selected "Piloting a new or innovative service model" in Q1]

If you are proposing to pilot a new or innovative service model, describe the model you plan to implement during the grant period, what makes it innovative, and how it will change or improve how the food system works in Santa Barbara County.

4. **Strategic Goals and Approach:** What are your organization's strategic goals for the next 2 years in this Program Area, and what approaches will you use to achieve them? How do these goals position your organization to proactively meet community needs rather than simply react to immediate demands?
5. **Scope of Impact:** Describe the scope of your impact in this Program Area, including the number of people served annually, geographic reach in Santa Barbara County, and how your work creates community-level change.
6. **Use of Funds:** If awarded, describe in detail how you plan to use these unrestricted funds to advance your organizational goals and strengthen your response to community needs in this Program Area.
7. **Partnerships and Collaboration:** Describe your organization's key partnerships and collaborative efforts in this Program Area. How do these collaborations enhance service delivery, expand your impact, or reduce service gaps? Please provide specific examples.
8. **Anticipated Areas of Impact (Results-Based Accountability):** SBF evaluates our success using a results-based accountability framework. In order to better understand how our grants impact your organization, we want to better understand your goals for the grant funds. Please pick 1-3 of the areas below that you believe will be most impacted by the funding. Your selection(s) will influence the questions you'll be asked in your final report.
 - Financial stability of your organization
 - Increased or maintained program quality
 - Expanded programs: geographically or population served
 - Increased outreach to most vulnerable and hardest to reach populations
 - Improved access for clients
 - Increased capacity to serve diverse groups
 - Expanded language access
 - Increased capacity: leadership, management, operations, and resources
 - Increased organizational ability to self-advocate at the local, state, and/or national level
 - increase participation in collaborative networks

9. **Measuring Success:** How will you measure success in each of the 1-3 areas you've selected? Please explain: How will data be collected and analyzed – this can include specific tools, documents, databases, budgets/financials, etc.? and How will you use these findings to inform decisions or improvements during the grant period?

For questions regarding the Food program area and funding eligibility, please contact **Tatyana Venegas Swanson, Director of Grantmaking** at tswanson@sbfoundation.org or (805) 880-9363 or **Bridgette Bugay, Senior Program Officer** at bbugay@sbfoundation.org or (805) 880-9354.

All eligible applications will be reviewed by an external, peer-led committee using the criteria outlined below.

Food Scoring Rubric Structure

Scale: 5 (Highest) to 1 (Lowest) | Maximum Score: 25 Points

Criteria	5	4	3	2	1
Response to Essential Community Need	Clearly demonstrates well-documented programs responding to a critical food insecurity or food system need in Santa Barbara County. Provides compelling data or evidence of sustained or increasing demand OR presents a strong, well-defined pilot model testing an innovative approach to improving how the food system operates. Demonstrates strong organizational capacity to implement the work.	Demonstrates solid programs responding to an important food insecurity or food system need with adequate supporting data or rationale. Shows clear alignment with Food program priorities and good organizational capacity.	Describes programs responding to a community need with some supporting information, but documentation or clarity is limited. Alignment with Food program priorities or organizational readiness is moderate.	Vague description of programs with minimal evidence of need or unclear connection to Food program priorities. Organizational capacity to address the issue appears limited.	Does not clearly demonstrate how programs respond to food insecurity or food system needs or shows little alignment with the Food program priorities.
Strategic Vision and Goals	Presents a clear and comprehensive strategic vision with specific, measurable goals and actionable strategies to address the identified need over the two-year grant period. Demonstrates a proactive, forward-thinking approach that strengthens long-term impact, organizational sustainability, or broader systems that influence community outcomes.	Provides a solid strategic vision with defined goals and strategies aligned with community needs. Demonstrates thoughtful planning for the grant period, though some elements may lack full specificity or longer-term perspective.	Describes general goals and approaches but lacks strategic depth or appears more reactive than proactive. Limited evidence of forward planning or broader impact beyond immediate program delivery.	Goals are vague or lack a clear strategic framework. Organization appears primarily reactive to immediate demands without a clear plan for longer-term progress.	No clear strategic vision or goals provided. Approach is entirely reactive without defined direction.
Scale of Impact in the Community	Demonstrates substantial reach and impact by serving a significant number of community members and/or addressing a critical gap in services, access, or infrastructure within Santa Barbara County.	Shows notable impact serving a considerable population or addressing important community needs. Evidence of positive	Demonstrates moderate impact with limited reach or depth. Serves a smaller population or addresses needs with	Impact is minimal or unclear. Limited reach and/or uncertain outcomes. Services touch relatively few community members	Negligible or no demonstrated impact. Unclear how services benefit the community or

	Provides clear evidence of meaningful outcomes and potential for broader community-level change.	outcomes for individuals, groups, or service systems.	more localized significance.	or the broader benefit is unclear.	address a meaningful gap.
Collaboration and Community Partnerships	Demonstrates strong and meaningful collaboration with other organizations, agencies, or community groups. Clearly explains how partnerships improve service delivery, expand reach, reduce duplication, or address service gaps. May also contribute to sector coordination, shared learning, or leadership within collaborative efforts, when appropriate.	Participates in solid collaborative relationships that strengthen program implementation or service access. Provides clear examples of how partnerships support or enhance the organization's work.	Engages in some collaboration, such as referrals, shared service sites, or participation in community networks. Partnerships are relevant but their impact on outcomes or coordination is somewhat limited or unclear.	Minimal collaboration described. Partnerships appear informal, transactional, or loosely connected to the program's effectiveness. Limited explanation of how collaboration benefits clients or the broader community.	No meaningful collaboration described. Organization appears to operate largely in isolation from relevant partners or networks.
Measurement, Evaluation, and Learning	Provides a detailed, feasible plan with specific data collection methods and tools clearly identified (e.g., databases, surveys, tracking systems). Describes clear, realistic processes for analyzing data and demonstrates understanding of how findings will inform decisions and program improvements during the grant period.	Presents a solid plan with defined data collection methods, tools, and analysis approaches. Includes how findings will be used to inform decisions, though some elements may lack specificity.	Provides a basic plan with some identified data collection methods and general analysis approaches. Limited detail on how findings will inform programmatic decisions or improvements.	Plan is vague, lacking specifics on data collection tools, analysis methods, or how findings will be used. Feasibility is questionable or connection between evaluation and learning is unclear.	No plan provided or plan is entirely inadequate with no clear methods, tools, or process for using findings to inform decisions.

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Program Area Priorities: Shelter & Safety

The Shelter & Safety grant implementation period is 24 months after the award date in November 2026, with a final report due one month after the implementation period ends.

The purpose of this grant program is to provide multi-year general operating support to organizations that:

(1 - Shelter) are providing access to shelter for unhoused clients and/or preventing homelessness

and/or

(2 - Safety) are providing safe shelter or structural support for survivors of gender-based violence, abuse, or other risks to safety and/or working to prevent exploitation and abuse.*

*please note, for programs that are *primarily* mental health-focused, as opposed to material/structural/systems-building support, please apply under our Behavioral Health & Health Care program.

Priority will be given to organizations that:

- Provide emergency shelter; and/or
- Provide diversion, retention, and/or housing loss prevention services; and/or
- Prioritize one or more of the following vulnerable populations:
 - o minors and transitional age youth
 - o families with children, including pregnant mothers
 - o Older adults (55+)
 - o survivors of domestic violence/sex trafficking

Important Dates

August 11, 2026, 5:00 p.m. PT	Shelter & Safety Grant Application Deadline
November 2026	Shelter & Safety Grant Awards Announced

For questions regarding the Shelter & Safety program areas and funding eligibility please contact Bridgette Bugay, Senior Program Officer at bbugay@sbfoundation.org or (805) 880-9354, or Tatyana Venegas Swanson, Director of Grantmaking at tswanson@sbfoundation.org or (805) 880-9363.

Scoring Rubric Coming Soon!