



The CWRU Community Innovation Grant

Overview

The Community Innovation Grant recognizes faculty at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) who truly embody a passion for community engagement by creatively connecting the classroom, campus, and community. Through a juried process, activity leaders will be selected to receive grants in amounts up to \$5000. The best proposals are interdisciplinary, promote citizen participation and autonomy, and support student research. The Community Innovation Grant affirms and encourages current and future faculty initiatives that embrace the benefits of community engagement for student success, neighborhood enhancement, and ultimately benefiting the entire region.

About the Office of Local Government & Community Relations

The grant administering office, Local Government and Community Relations, serves as a liaison between CWRU and the local governments and communities of Northeast Ohio. We collect and disseminate information about the university's collective value and instrumental role in the local community. Our office identifies, updates, and promotes the university's extensive inventory of community outreach programs and partnerships throughout the Greater Cleveland region. We facilitate all public inquiries seeking university partnerships and services, coordinate the university's response to local government and community issues, as well as assist other campus departments on issues of local concern.

Defining "Community Engagement"

Community engagement--in the context of higher education--describes collaborations with larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually-beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in the spirit of partnership and reciprocity. The purpose of community engagement is to connect college and university resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching, and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good.



**CASE WESTERN RESERVE
UNIVERSITY**
**Office of Government
and Community Relations**

**Application Deadline
Friday, May 29, 2026**

What is the CWRU Innovation Grant?

Open to: CWRU Faculty
Maximum Award: \$5000

Community Innovation Grants are designed to support innovative collaborations between CWRU faculty and community-based organizations, local businesses, other public institutions or governmental agencies. Innovation Grants are intended to encourage careful consideration of a local or regional challenge. The intention is to provide support to faculty as they seek to create innovative and creative ways to explore the identified community challenge in the classroom. The Innovation Grant is an opportunity to have students more deeply consider how what they learn in the classroom can be directly applied to the benefit of Greater Cleveland.

Application Criteria & Requirements

- The proposal must align with the qualifications of the grant description
- Partner with at least one (1) new or existing community organization already engaged on the priority issue(s)
- The community partner organization must provide a letter of support that describes the nature of the existing or proposed partnership
- Outcomes should connect directly to CWRU student success, link to learning outcomes, or encourage student engagement and retention
- Clearly indicate and define faculty/staff and/or student roles
- Must be able to justify a specific need for funding
- Must advance equity, antiracism, and/or social justice in our community and/or on campus

Additional Preferred Considerations:

- Show proposed evidence of the sustainability of the project or partnership
- Help community partners in their research, evaluation, and/or capacity building
- Expand opportunities for scholarly research or creative activities by faculty, staff, or students
- Enhance CWRU students' sense of community by participating in community engagement projects
- Timeliness of the project (why now?)
- Involve a partnership with another department, program, or center within the university

Use of Funding

Permissible	Not Permissible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplies • Materials • Equipment • Mileage reimbursement • Food, drinks, and refreshments • Payment to a non-profit organization or K-12 school • Payment to non-CWRU employed individuals to perform services • Payment to a business to perform services • Payment to a guest speaker • Payment to an individual providing training services • Student employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gift cards • Tuition assistance or scholarships for enrolled students • Paid student internships • Staff stipend or bonus • Faculty assigned time/release time

Application Process & Timeline

- Application period opens **January 16, 2026** and closes at **11:59 PM on May 29, 2026**
- The online application form must be completed and submitted (also, letters of support and an itemized budget may be securely uploaded [here](#)) by **11:59 PM on May 29, 2026**
- The applicant is responsible for meeting the deadline & extensions will not be accepted
- All expenses for the project must meet the criteria in the “Use of Funding” section
- All applications will be reviewed blindly by a jury of five (5) impartial members consisting of: Three (3) CWRU and two (2) non-CWRU representatives. There will be at least one (1) CWRU student member. This jury will be established by the Office of Local Government and Community Relations, and will not be competing for one of the grants
- **Awardees will be announced on or before July 10, 2026**
- The number and amount of the awards will depend upon the availability of funds
- The decisions of the jury will be final and appeals will not be accepted
- **If awarded, the Grant Reporting Form must be returned to the Office of Local Government and Community Relations by May 29, 2027**

Application Evaluation Rubric

	1	2	3	4
Community Relevance	Initiative does not address a need or opportunity that the community has identified.	Initiative somewhat addresses a need or opportunity that the community has identified.	Initiative addresses a need or opportunity that the community has identified.	Initiative addresses a clear need or opportunity that the community has concretely identified.
Community Benefit	Community does not indirectly or directly benefit from the initiative.	Community indirectly benefits from the initiative.	Community and at least half of its members directly benefits from the initiative.	Community and the majority of its members directly benefits from the initiative.
Student & Scholarly Engagement	Program is not tied to any course and/or a research project.	Program is indirectly tied to a course and/or a research project.	Program is specifically tied to a course and/or a research project.	Program is a core component of a course and/or a research project.
Balance of Partnership	The community partner (organization or leader) do not share in the responsibility, accountability and/or authority of the initiative.	The community partner (organization or leader) share in some of the responsibility, accountability and/or authority of the initiative.	The community partner (organization or leader) share in most of the responsibility, accountability and/or authority of the initiative. A partnership of equal value with the representative of the community is present.	The community partner (organization or leader) fully share in the responsibility, accountability and/or authority of the initiative. A real partnership of equal value with the representative of the community is present.
Effective Use of Funds	Ineffective use of funds. No benefit is served to the community.	Effective use of funds has a short term benefit to the community.	Effective use of funds has a long term benefit to the community.	Effective use of funds has a long term clear and defined benefit to the community and most of its members.