

THE WEGE FOUNDATION'S VALUES AND PILLAR PRIORITIES

Amended by Board of Trustees November 6, 2025

INTRODUCTION

The Wege Foundation's Grants Policy established four “pillars”:

1. Arts & Culture
2. Environment
3. Education
4. Community Health and Wellbeing

In addition, The Wege Foundation has long embraced certain cross-cutting values applicable to all four pillars, such as requiring LEED certification for capital grants and a commitment to helping the under-resourced and marginalized. The Foundation has clarified these values and priorities for each of the pillars to focus its grant making, provide better guidance to potential applicants and enhance evaluation.

As with the grantmaking allocations among the pillars, these values and priorities are intended as “targets” to guide the Grants Committee and staff in recruiting and reviewing grant applications. The Foundation will continue to be flexible and strategically opportunistic in funding initiatives that forward Mr. Wege’s goal that Grand Rapids become “the best medium-sized city in the United States” and that export effective programs from Grand Rapids to other communities.

VALUES

(Applicable to all pillars)

VALUE #1 - DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION: Implement the Foundation's "Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Policy" with respect to all pillars and all grantees.

VALUE #2 - CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: Foster civic engagement¹ through grantees that intentionally and systematically develop in the individuals they serve the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make a difference in civic life and policy choices.

¹ A civically engaged individual recognizes himself or herself as a member of a larger social fabric and considers social problems to be at least partly his or her own. Civic engagement can take many forms, from individual voluntarism to organizational involvement to electoral participation. It can include efforts to directly address an issue, work with others in a community to solve a problem or interact with the institutions of representative democracy. Civic engagement encompasses a range of specific activities such as working in a soup kitchen, serving on a neighborhood association board, writing a letter to an elected official or voting. An engaged citizen should have the ability, agency, and opportunity to move comfortably among these various types of civic acts.

VALUE #3 - ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY: Encourage, support, and educate grantees to demonstrate environmental responsibility by rigorously tracking, taking into account and seeking to eliminate or minimize the adverse environmental impacts of grantees' programs, activities, facilities and operations and by inculcating values of and educating about environmental stewardship the people they serve, including their board, staff, volunteers, vendors, collaborators, partners, constituents and beneficiaries of their programs.

VALUE #4 - ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY: Encourage grantees to achieve organizational sustainability through a clear mission; thoughtful long-term planning and near-term implementation; outstanding board and staff leadership; effective use of volunteers; diverse, robust and stable revenue streams; creative fundraising programs, expanding their donor base; rigorous budgeting and financial controls; effective collaboration and partnerships; and satisfied beneficiaries of programs and services.

PRIORITIES

Arts & Culture

ARTS & CULTURE PRIORITY #1: Foster authentic artistic and cultural expression by diverse neighborhoods and communities, especially those that are historically under resourced and marginalized.

Example grants: Support for underrepresented artists through social media features and artist talks focused on racial equity and social justice themes; Music program with academic and arts focus; Equitable access and exposure to the arts for communities of color; Arts working group network support to integrate a collective DEI strategy; Support for a capital campaign to redevelop a multi-purpose, LEED Silver-certified facility in an underserved neighborhood.; Curation of historical narratives in W MI about Mexican-American communities; Arts & tech program for teens to explore different career paths; Incorporation of Native American worldviews & indigenous knowledge in staffing, internships and expanded programming; Free youth music training program & after school music club that teach students how to perform; Traveling Jim Crow Museum of racist imagery exhibit.

ARTS & CULTURE PRIORITY #2: Ensure affordable and welcoming access by lower-income and diverse individuals to a wide variety of artistic and cultural exhibits and performances through relevant programming and aggressive outreach.

Example grants: Program for individuals with neurological and sensory conditions such as autism; Mobile studio that provides access to art, cultural, and educational experiences for individuals with disabilities; Inclusion support that provides culturally relevant programming; Cultural film, music, arts hub, & training center.

Education

EDUCATION PRIORITY #1: Ensure access to extracurricular services and programming (pre-K through post-secondary) that prepare under-resourced students to learn and enhance academic and life skills achievements to promote the next level of development.

Example grants: Promotes culturally responsive financial literacy with an individualized & diverse teaching approach; Tutoring and academic support for underserved youth and under-resourced schools; Interactive after-school autism program to increase social skills; After school program that addresses the lack of diversity in STEM professions; Program focused on STEM and literacy with social and academic support to prepare refugee youth for academic success; Teaches English & basic computer skills to under-resourced community of color; Youth program that focuses on full spectrum of careers in media including technology, broadcasting & production; Arts & sciences program for special needs students & adults.

EDUCATION PRIORITY #2: Support effective strategies for involvement by adult caregivers and mentors in children's education, especially in public schools with diverse student populations.

Example grants: Mentoring for teens to ensure successful life outcomes; Personal and professional mentoring for young women; Mentorship program for marginalized youth adults during difficult life transitions; Youth development through mentoring for underserved students of color; Assists newly immigrated African youth; Developmental screenings, parenting coaches and resources for families and young children with developing social and academic skills; Peer mentoring to increase college graduation rates among youth in foster care; Mentoring for underserved youth to improve literacy and social emotional learning; Technology program that teaches under resourced youth of color digital editing skills; Afterschool programming that includes drivers education program, workforce readiness, leadership & skills development; Mentoring for underrepresented teen girls that combats adverse childhood experiences.

Environment

ENVIRONMENT PRIORITY #1: Ensure access to experiential environmental education for public school students that is regular, systematic, integrated with curricula, and connected with "real world" community initiatives such as Grand River restoration, renewable energy & efficiency, water conservation and protection, addressing climate change, wildlife habitat conservation and sustainable food systems.

Example grants: Hands on STEM learning through food systems education and youth career encouragement in sustainability field; Project that implements educational interpretive signage along the trail of the Grand River in Grand Rapids; "Connecting Children to Nature" partnership at four GRPS sites in under-parked neighborhoods; Engage urban youth in projects reducing urban and agricultural run-off pollution of two Grand River watersheds; Collaboration of nine environmental education organizations to provide experiential environmental education; Engage communities of color in environmental action to focus on increasing access to nature; Summer camp that provides

outdoor education; Environmental education summer camps for youth from underserved communities.

ENVIRONMENT PRIORITY #2: Ensure access to and the protection, restoration, and development of Michigan watersheds and natural environments.

Example grants: Statewide collaboration network to address PFAS contamination in West MI.; – Innovative stormwater credit trading program to reduce water pollution; Mobilizing public support for Grand River restoration project and clean water policies; landscape-scale conservation planning for Grand River mouth and coastal corridor; Support for houses of worship to protect watersheds, create habitat and build diverse, resilient communities.

ENVIRONMENT PRIORITY #3: Ensure Grand Rapids continues to be a state, national, and/or international leader in its commitment to sustainable development, i.e. “Economicology” or circular economy.

Example grants: Green home upgrades for affordable housing; Environmental certification programs for affordable housing projects; Technical, legal, and civic engagement to meet Grand Rapids’ 100% renewable energy; Equitable sustainability program that addresses racial and economic inequities; Neighborhood-based citizen engagement around local parks; Green infrastructure water conservation project in under-resourced neighborhoods with focus on People of Color-owned businesses.

ENVIRONMENTAL PRIORITY #4: Ensure that Michigan is a national and international leader in policies to protect the environment, including the Great Lakes, in ways that recognize the connection between environmental protection, human health, and promoting economic and social justice.

Example grants; Development of equitable policies to reduce carbon emissions from building sector in W MI; Advocacy of closing W MI coal-fired power plants and transforming region into a national clean energy leader; Engagement of people of color to enhance climate justice leadership to increase social connectivity; Removal of barriers to on-site renewable energy generation in Michigan and develop improved programs for purchase of renewable energy; Law & policy center focused on protecting Great Lakes water as a shared public trust resource; Water quality and climate change policy advocacy; Launching a regional Great Lakes PFAS Action Network of at least 25 PFAS-affected communities; Educating businesses on environmental policies & provides opportunities for community members to civically engage.

Community Health & Wellbeing

COMMUNITY HEALTH & WELLBEING PRIORITY #1: Address disproportionate racialized outcomes in health, housing, and economic equity to improve the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age in the greater Grand Rapids metropolitan area. The Wege Foundation encourages community collaborative approaches that foster long-term solutions.

Example grants: Legal services, advocacy, education, and outreach services for refugees; Support for survivors of human trafficking; Preventative health programs that address chronic diseases & food injustice by; Creating a self-sustaining life & fostering a sense of belonging for new Americans by bringing people together to build connections; "Cure Violence" youth support and prevention program that takes a public health approach; Temporary housing and financial literacy for underemployed and individuals experiencing homelessness; Foreclosure intervention services and support for homeowners; Support for affordable rental housing for under resourced senior citizens & expansion of child development center; Free therapeutic services for women, children, immigrants, domestic abuse survivors and LGBTQIA community; Building civic engagement capacity for organizations run by people of color; Advocacy & education work on child care, community safety, mental health, immigrant & refugee wellbeing; Free legal services for various barriers that new Americans encounter; Affordable rental program for women ageing out of foster care.

COMMUNITY HEALTH & WELLBEING PRIORITY #2: Ensure a pipeline of diverse and culturally competent talent to create racial justice and equity within greater Grand Rapids metropolitan area.

Example grants; Scholarships, mentoring, and academic support for Black student nurses; Pilot internship program for African high school seniors & college freshmen; Empowering Latinx businesses through education with a focus on equitable growth and development of Latino talent; Support for education of underrepresented populations on new redistricting process and census; Technical support for historically excluded entrepreneurs; Repurposing and upcycling manufacturing materials to create diverse workforce & equitable circular economy for textiles.

COMMUNITY HEALTH & WELLBEING PRIORITY #3: Strengthen and sustain equitable access to a network of quality healthcare, mental wellbeing, housing stability, and/or food security services that positively impact the greater Grand Rapids area.