

# THE WEGE FOUNDATION CROSS-CUTTING THEMES AND PILLAR GOALS

*Revised – May 18, 2022*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Wege Foundation's Grants Policy, as amended on April 23, 2020, established four “pillars” and established target grantmaking allocations for each of these topics of interest:

1. Arts & Culture (20%)
2. Environment (35%)
3. Education (25%)
4. Community Health and Wellbeing (20%)

In addition, The Wege Foundation has long embraced certain cross-cutting themes 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 cross-cutting themes and developed results-oriented goals 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 themes and goals 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.

## **CROSS-CUTTING THEMES**

**(Applicable to all pillars)**

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

**THEME #2 - CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:** Foster civic engagement<sup>1</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

**THEME #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.

**THEME #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.

## **PILLAR GOALS**

### **Arts & Culture**

**ARTS & CULTURE GOAL #1:** Foster authentic artistic and cultural expression by diverse neighborhoods and communities, especially those that are historically disadvantaged.

*Example grants: **Grand Rapids Community Arts** – Support for underrepresented artists through social media features and artist talks focused on racial equity and social justice themes; **New City Kids** – Music program with academic and arts focus; **NIA Centre** – Equitable access and exposure to the arts for communities of color; **Grandville Avenue Art & Humanities** – Arts working group network support to integrate a collective DEI strategy; **Diatribes Inc.** – Support for a capital campaign to redevelop a multi-purpose, LEED Silver-certified facility in an underserved neighborhood.; **Ecliptic at Rosa Parks Circle Conservancy** – Activated public art space honoring Rosa Parks that serves as a venue for civic engagement activities; **Has Heart** – Veterans partner with graphic designers to share their stories through art ; **Grand Rapids Public Museum Foundation** - Incorporate Native American worldviews & indigenous knowledge in staffing, internships and expanded programming.*

**ARTS & CULTURE GOAL #2:** Assure 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: **Grand Rapids Civic Theatre** – Program for individuals with neurological and sensory conditions such as autism; **Artist Creating Together, Inc.** – Mobile studio that provides access to art, cultural, and educational experiences for individuals with disabilities; **Grand Rapids Public Library Foundation** – Inclusion support that provides culturally relevant programming; **Ebony Road Players** – Theatre training program for diverse local artists in under-resourced communities.*

## Education

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

*Example grants: **MI Women’s Foundation** – Skills development for the next generation of women leaders; **Streams of Hope** – Tutoring and academic support for underserved youth and under-resourced schools; **Compassionate Awareness Autism Center** – Interactive after-school autism program to increase social skills; **Stem Greenhouse Inc.** - After school program that addresses the lack of diversity in STEM professions; **The Refugee Education Center** –Program focused on STEM and literacy with social and academic support to prepare refugee youth for academic success; **Interlochen Center for the Arts** – Youth scholarships for diverse participation at summer arts camp **Hope Link of West Michigan** - Teaches English & basic computer skills to under-resourced community of color.*

**EDUCATION GOAL #2:** Support effective strategies for involvement by adult care-givers and mentors in children’s education, especially in public schools with diverse student populations.

*Example grants: **Better Wiser Stronger** – Mentoring for teens to ensure successful life outcomes; **Girls Growing II Women** – Personal and professional mentoring for young women; **Realism is Loyalty** – Mentorship program for marginalized youth adults during difficult life transitions; **Endless Opportunities** – Youth development through mentoring for underserved students of color; **African American Center of West Michigan** – Assists newly immigrated African youth; **Family Futures** – Developmental screenings, parenting coaches and resources for families and young children with developing social and academic skills; **Educate Tomorrow Corp** - Peer mentoring to increase college graduation rates among youth in foster care; **Affinity Mentoring** – Mentoring for underserved youth to improve literacy and social emotional learning; **Delta Project** - Technology program that teaches under resourced youth of color digital editing skills*

## Environment

**ENVIRONMENT (& EDUCATION) GOAL #1:** Assure 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: **New City Neighbors** – Hands on STEM learning through food systems education and youth career encouragement in sustainability field; **YMCA** – Veterans family camp scholarships to learn basic survival skills, environmental education and outdoor sports; **City of Grand Rapids Parks and Rec & Grand Rapids Public Schools** –*

*“Connecting Children to Nature” partnership at four GRPS sites in under-parked neighborhoods; **Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds** – Engage urban youth in projects reducing urban and agricultural run-off pollution of two Grand River watersheds; **GREEN** – Collaboration of nine environmental education organizations to provide experiential environmental education; **Urban Core Collective** – Engage communities of color in environmental action with focus on increasing access to nature; **Tall Turf Ministries** – Summer Camp that provides outdoor education; **Outdoor Discovery Center Network** - Environmental education summer camps for youth from underserved communities.*

**ENVIRONMENT GOAL #2:** Develop and implement long-term strategy to restore, protect, and make available for appropriate uses by all the lower Grand River watershed, including restoration of the namesake rapids in downtown Grand Rapids.

*Example grants: **Michigan League of Conservation Voters** – Statewide collaboration network to address PFAS contamination in West MI.; **American Rivers Inc.** – Innovative stormwater credit trading program to reduce water pollution; **Clean Water Fund** – Mobilizing public support for Grand River restoration project and clean water policies; **Grand Valley Metro Council** – landscape-scale conservation planning for Grand River mouth and coastal corridor; **National Wildlife Federation** – Support for houses of worship to protect watersheds, create habitat and build diverse, resilient communities.*

**ENVIRONMENT GOAL #3:** Assure Grand Rapids continues to be a national and international leader in its commitment to sustainable development, i.e. “Economicology.”

*Example grants: **Habitat for Humanity** – Green home upgrades for affordable housing; **Green Home Institute** – Environmental certification programs for affordable housing projects; **Inner City Christian Federation** – Upgrade single-family affordable homes to certified green homes; **Environmental Law & Policy Center** – Technical, legal, and civic engagement to meet Grand Rapids’s 100% renewable energy; **West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum** – Equitable sustainability program that addresses racial and economic inequities; **Creston Neighborhood Association** – Creating environmentally friendly neighborhoods through grassroots organizing; **Friends of Grand Rapids Parks** – neighborhood-based citizen engagement around local parks; **West Michigan Environmental Action Council Education Foundation** – Green infrastructure water conservation project in under-resourced neighborhoods with focus on People Of Color-owned businesses.*

**ENVIRONMENTAL GOAL #4:** Assure 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: **Michigan Black Expo Inc.** – Equity focused collaboration of local groups working to address climate change; **GR-HEZero:** Develop equitable policies to reduce carbon emissions from building sector in W MI; **Sierra Club, Michigan Chapter***

– Advocacy of closing W MI coal-fired power plants and transforming region into a national clean energy leader; **Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition** - Engage people of color to enhance climate justice leadership to increase social connectivity; **Environmental Law and Policy Center** - Remove barriers to on-site renewable energy generation in Michigan and develop improved programs for purchase of renewable energy; **For Love of Water** - Law & policy center focused on protecting Great Lakes water as a shared public trust resource; **West Michigan Environmental Action Council Education Foundation** – Water quality and climate change policy advocacy; **Ecology Center, Inc** – Launching a regional Great Lakes PFAS Action Network of at least 25 PFAS-affected communities

### **Community Health & Wellbeing**

**Community Health & Wellbeing GOAL #1:** Assure collaborative and continuing support to focus on the long-term impact of social and community determinants of health, root causes and disproportionate racialized outcomes in housing and economic equity to achieve racial justice.

Example grants: **Justice for Our Neighbors** – Legal services, advocacy, education, and outreach services for refugees; **Sacred Beginnings** – Support for survivors of human trafficking; **Health Net of West Michigan** - Obesity intervention services with hands-on skills building; **South East Market** – Food hub that provides healthy food, environmental & social justice youth programming; **Grand Rapids Urban League** – “Cure Violence” youth support and prevention program that takes a public health approach; **Meaning in Colors** – Temporary housing and financial literacy for underemployed and individuals experiencing homelessness; **Inner City Christian Confederation** – Support services to increase home ownership with in historically excluded population; **Ayni Institute Inc.(Cosecha)** - Organizes and trains community to create systemic change to make Grand Rapids more inclusive to immigrant workers and marginalized individuals; **Puertas Abiertas** - Free therapeutic services for women, children, immigrants, domestic abuse survivors and LGBTQIA community; **Michigan Civic Education Fund** - Build civic engagement capacity for organizations run by people of color.

**Community Health & Wellbeing GOAL #2:** Assure a pipeline of diverse and culturally competent talent to create racial justice and equity that arise from the most disproportionate, racialized social determinants of health in Grand Rapids.

Example grants: **Grand Rapids Chapter National Black Nurses Association Inc** – Scholarships, mentoring, and academic support for Black student nurses; **The Ferris Foundation** - Entrepreneurship training and business coaching for aspiring Latinx entrepreneurs; **West Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce** – Empowering Latinx businesses through education with a focus on equitable growth and development of Latino talent; **Northern Initiative** – Loan program with a focus on People of Color-owned businesses; **Michigan Nonprofit Association** – Support for education of underrepresented populations on new redistricting process and census; **Rende Progress Capital** - Technical support for historically excluded entrepreneurs.