

# Letter of Intent (LOI)/ Grant Guidelines

2026-2027 Grant Cycle: Supporting the Human-Animal Bond

## Mission and Purpose

The mission of Escondido Community Foundation (ECF) is to improve the quality of life in Escondido by meeting emerging needs through:

- Encouraging and increasing responsible and effective philanthropy,
- Building a community endowment,
- Providing funds annually to organizations and causes, and
- Giving the community a vehicle for legacy planning and cash gifts that will benefit the residents of Escondido annually and in perpetuity.

The vision of ECF is to inspire a culture of giving that supports, strengthens and enriches the quality of life in the Escondido community now and for generations to come.

## Introduction

ECF is pleased to announce that our 2026-27 grant cycle is focused on supporting the human-animal bond. We invite qualified nonprofits serving Escondido residents to submit a Letter of Intent for projects that foster meaningful connections between people and animals. Research shows that human-animal bonds provide significant therapeutic, developmental and educational benefits for children and adults. These interactions may involve companion, service or therapy animals as well as wildlife conservation programs that create a lasting positive impact on the community.

## Focus

ECF welcomes applications that support the human-animal bond and may include, but are not limited to, the following examples:

- **Therapeutic and Support Services** - Equine-assisted therapy programs for those with physical, mental or emotional challenge; Animal therapy in healthcare facilities, senior centers and nursing homes; Emotional support programs for veterans and trauma survivors; Service animal programs for specific conditions and disabilities; Pet loss grief counseling and support services for community members.
- **Community Welfare and Education** - Pet adoption programs, animal rescues and wildlife rehabilitation centers; Educational programs, especially for children, about animal care, conservation, and responsible pet ownership; Low-cost veterinary services (routine, emergency, and end-of-life care), Pet food and supplies, basic dog training and behavioral support programs for income qualified pet owners.
- **Infrastructure and Community Resources** - Improvements to existing dog parks; Working dog programs which support local law enforcement and search and rescue.

## Eligibility Criteria

Grants must be administered by a 501(c)3 public charity, or an organization that is fiscally sponsored by a 501(c)3, a school or other government agency. ECF does not make grants to supporting organizations or private, non-operating foundations. If an organization is using a fiscal sponsor, a cooperative relationship between the two must be clearly demonstrated. The project must be achievable within a 12-month time frame.

## Grant Seekers Forum

A voluntary online informational workshop will be held for applicants interested in learning more about the application process.

- **Date:** Wednesday, November 19, 2025
- **Time:** 4:00 p.m.
- **Location:** Zoom
- **RSVP:** [ECF@sdfoundation.org](mailto:ECF@sdfoundation.org) by November 18

## Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Escondido Charitable Foundation Timeline?

- **February 2, 2026:** Letter of Intent (LOI) due by 5:00 p.m.
- **February 20, 2026:** Invitations to submit full applications.
- **March 27, 2026:** Full grant applications by invitation, due by no later than 5:00 p.m.
- **May 2026:** Site visits conducted.
- **August 2026:** Selection of award recipients.
- **September 2026:** Grant Award Celebration.
- **October 1, 2026:** Program funding start date.

How much can we request?

ECF will accept proposals in a range of \$10,000 up to \$35,000.

What is the grant period?

Grants are made for one year. This grant cycle is from October 1, 2026 to September 30, 2027.

What reporting is required?

ECF requires periodic reporting, the details of which will be specified in the grant award letter. Photographs representative of your impact will be requested.

## What will ECF not fund?

Escondido Community Foundation does not fund:

- Scholarships
- Capital or annual campaigns
- Existing obligations/debt
- Projects that promote religious or political doctrine

## Who can I contact if I have any questions?

For program questions or technical questions regarding the online application, please contact Eve Childs at [echilds@sdfoundation.org](mailto:echilds@sdfoundation.org).

## Application Instructions

San Diego Foundation has a [grant application portal](#). All nonprofit applicants are required to create a new user account through the SDF online portal to submit your application for the grant cycle. After creating your account, click the “Apply” button to access the application. For additional guidance regarding creating a new user account, please [see this tutorial](#). [Register/apply today](#).

Note: SDF highly recommends updating all of your organizations contact information in Foundant including address and EIN# as well as fully updating your profile in [Candid](#).

## Organization Information

- **Type of Organization\*:** Which describes your organization?
  - A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization
  - Fiscally sponsored by a 501(c)3 organization
- **DBA:** Please provide if the organization name you use is different from your legal name.
- **Mission Statement\*:** Describe the organization’s mission and goals.
- **Geographic Areas Served (list)\*:** Please provide how your project specifically serves the Oceanside community.

## Fiscal Sponsor Information (if applicable)

- **Fiscal Sponsor Name\*:**
- **Fiscal Sponsor EIN Number\*:** Please be sure to format it correctly (##-#####)
- **Fiscal Sponsor Agreement\*:** Please upload a letter demonstrating the agreement between your organization and your fiscal sponsor. A letter or MOU will suffice.

## LOI Questions

- **Project Name\*:** Name of Project
- **Amount Requested\***
- **How will this project positively impact Escondido? (1000 Characters)**
- **Approximately how many people do you expect to serve with this funding?**
- **Letter of Intent\*:** Provide a compelling description of your project, how it aligns with the focus area and why we should support it. (2000 Characters)

## Full Application Questions (by invitation only)

### Project Information

- **Project Name\*:** Name of Project
- **Amount Requested\***
- **Purpose & Alignment\*:** Describe the purpose of the project and how it aligns with the focus area.
- **Impact and Metrics\*:** Based on goals listed above, please share the measurable outcomes anticipated from the project as well as the evaluation methods to be used. Include who will be involved in the evaluation and how the information will be used.
- **Sustainability\*:** Describe how the project is sustainable, replicable or scalable.
- **Collaboration\*:** Describe how the project fosters collaboration with other successful entities in the community to achieve a common goal or objective.
- **Project Leadership\*:** List key personnel involved with the project.

### Project Budget\*

- **Annual Operating Budget\*:** Please enter your annual operating budget based on your last fiscal year.
- **Project Budget Narrative:** Describe your specific line items.
- **Project Budget:** Please fill in your Project Budget (example below).

Expense Category	Requested Amount	Program Budget
1. Equipment & Project Materials (Example)		
2. Consultants & Contractors (Example)		
3. Curriculum (Example)		
4. Training (Example)		
	<b>Total Requested Amount:</b>	<b>Total Program Budget:</b>

- **Other Sources of Funding:** List other sources of funding secured for this project.

**Applications are due no later than 5:00 p.m., Monday, February 2, 2026.**