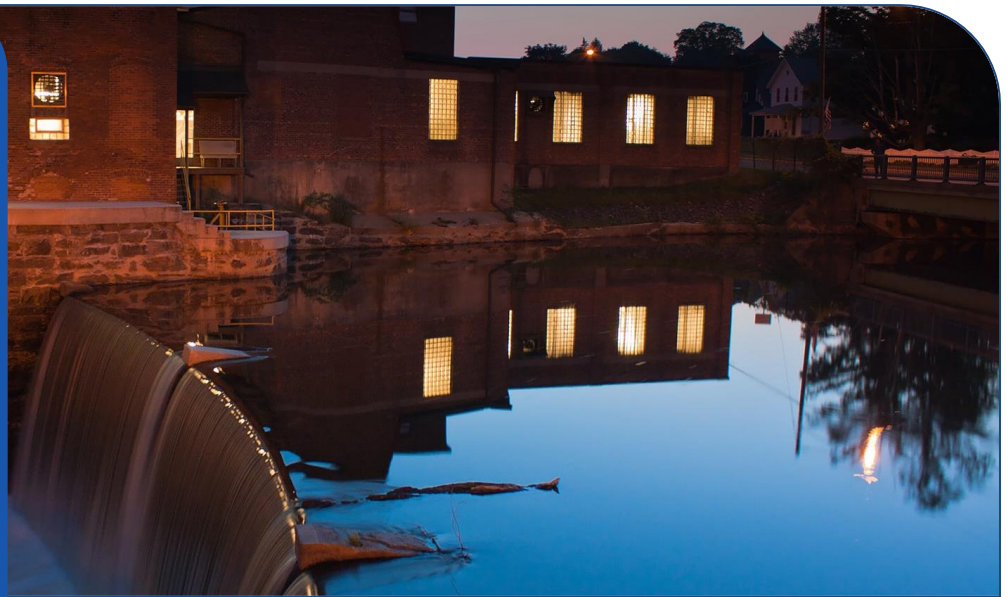


BERKSHIRE Funding Focus

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EQUITABLE RECOVERY FOR A STRONGER COMMUNITY



About BFF

Berkshire Funding Focus (BFF) was established to support Berkshire County entities seeking federal and state funds for pandemic-related recovery and rebuilding, and building organizational and sector capacity for the long term.

Our Services

- **Curate** – we scour state and federal funding announcements, posting high-value opportunities to our website and sending ones of likely interest to your inbox.
- Build **Capacity** – we offer regular training programs to help potential applicants develop grant writing and grant management skills.
- **Convene** – we bring together potential partners to explore collaborative proposals and offer guidance on how to make them more competitive.
- **Consult** – we are here to help answer your questions and help you navigate government grant solicitations, contracts, and compliance and reporting requirements.

Our Audience

BFF serves four key groups – non-profits, municipalities, school districts, and entrepreneurs. Our primary communication tool is a dedicated website: www.berkshirerfundingfocus.org.

Structure and Staffing

Berkshire Funding Focus is housed at Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, with close involvement and support from community partners. This "hub and spoke" model ensures involvement from each of our four core stakeholder audiences, working collaboratively to provide sector-specific coordination and technical assistance to support specific stakeholders with whom they have established relationships.

Berkshire Funding Focus is staffed by a Recovery Grants Specialist and supported by consultant services, to ensure all audiences are connected with technical assistance appropriate to their needs – grant management, partnership building, organizational capacity, and ongoing support to address the needs and challenges specific to their size and scope.

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The Opportunity

Through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) and other COVID-19 relief funding, Berkshire County has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to tap into millions of federal and state COVID-19 recovery dollars.

Berkshire Funding Focus is serving as a leader and clearinghouse for the investment of those dollars in our students and classrooms, workforce and businesses, entrepreneurs and incubators, and neighborhoods and downtowns. Through this concerted effort, we can build resilient, equitable, healthy, and vibrant communities where all are welcome and where people live, learn, work, and play in conditions that improve their well-being.

The Commitment

The Berkshire Funding Focus Advisory Committee has dedicated itself to the Operating Principles shown at right 

To ensure these principles are "lived out" in concrete, practical terms, we have recently undertaken an outreach process to learn directly from members of the Berkshire County BIPOC community what steps would make the most difference in their grant-seeking experiences. Highlights from this process include:

- Using a broader array of communication channels to disseminate information quickly and equitably.
- Partner with community organizations to host drop-in "office hours" with a networking element.
- Seek to secure outreach navigators to develop personal relationships with Black and Latinx members of our business and non-profit communities.
- Invest in translation services for our training materials and workshop/webinar content.
- Establish a "Think Tank" of BIPOC outreach participants to support BFF's equity work in government funding.
- Watch the federal register and Massachusetts' COMMBUYS for opportunities to comment on proposed grant program selection criteria, data collection, and reporting requirements.
- Provide space for authentic conversations about constraints that exist within the current system.
- Advocate with elected officials and agency leadership to incorporate input prior to Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs) and Requests for Proposals (RFPs).

The Potential

By sustaining the Berkshire Funding Focus initiative into the future, we can bring MORE government funding into the Berkshires, helping to build MORE resilient, healthy, and vibrant communities in our region.

Operating Principles

Equity - Ensuring a "level playing field" for all as well as an equitable distribution of resources.

Inclusion - Actively engaging and ensuring access to information and support for all interested parties - especially those representing residents historically marginalized or excluded from funding processes.

Transparency - Explaining and openly sharing processes related to applying, receiving, and reporting on federal stimulus grants.

Neutrality - Being impartial to all stakeholders in brokering access to information and funding sources, fostering collegiality over competitiveness, and protecting against any real or perceived favoritism or conflicts of interest.

Collaboration - Fostering inter-agency partnerships and collaborative proposals/applications and learning together through knowledge-sharing and convening.

Supportive Service - Providing complimentary technical assistance and administrative capacities to agencies around prospecting, grant writing and reporting, etc.

Long-Term Impact - Adding strength and building capacities for organizations and sectors that yield sustainable benefits beyond grantmaking periods.

Future Phases

With continued support and increased staffing, Berkshire Funding Focus has the potential to reach more, diverse members of each of its four core audiences and expand funding opportunity leads to private foundations as well as state and federal sources. We also hope to offer an increased level of capacity-building workshops, coaching, and networking.