



GREAT FISH COMMUNITY CHALLENGE 2026 RULES FOR PARTICIPATION

Contents

About the Great Fish Community Challenge	2
About Whitefish Community Foundation.....	2
Eligibility	2
Application	4
Participation Requirements	4
Challenge Grants Structure.....	4
Rules and Procedures	5
Contributions	6
Eligible Contributions.....	6
Ineligible Contributions.....	6
Contribution Reporting.....	7
Great Fish Launch Party	7
Grant Report	8
Marketing Information	8
Logo usage	8
Whitefish Community Foundation is the Host.....	9
Nonprofit Special Events Marketing the Great Fish Community Challenge	9
Promotion and Marketing Reminders	9
Whitefish Community Foundation Staff & Contact Info.....	10

About the Great Fish Community Challenge

The Great Fish Community Challenge launched in 2015 as a matching grant program organized by Whitefish Community Foundation. It is a collaborative fundraiser, designed to encourage mission awareness while raising millions of dollars to support local nonprofit programs and services. The Great Fish Community Challenge has grown every year since inception, raising over \$43 million for more than 100 local nonprofits since 2015.

With a single gift made to Whitefish Community Foundation between August 11 and September 11, 2026, donors can contribute to any number of local charities participating in the Great Fish Community Challenge. Each participating nonprofit will receive 100% of contributions designated to it, and an additional percentage match from Whitefish Community Foundation.

The Great Fish Match Fund is the backbone of the campaign, and a percentage match will be awarded on the first \$25,000 raised by each nonprofit that raises at least \$10,000 in the campaign. We cannot predict the final amount in the match fund, or what the match percentage will be until the end of the campaign.

To ensure participation is 100% free for nonprofits, Whitefish Community Foundation covers the significant expenses associated with the Great Fish Community Challenge, including staff support, marketing, administration, software, and event management (\$367,839 in 2025). Participating in the campaign together builds camaraderie and mission awareness within our nonprofit community and the community at large.

About Whitefish Community Foundation

Whitefish Community Foundation is dedicated to fostering philanthropy, building endowments, and helping donors and nonprofits benefit the greater Flathead Valley.

As the Flathead Valley's home for charitable giving for over 25 years, Whitefish Community Foundation brings together donors and nonprofits to cultivate a passion for giving and improve the quality of life of everyone in the Flathead Valley. Since 2000, we have granted over \$120 million to nonprofit organizations.

The match for the Great Fish Community Challenge comes from the Circle of Giving – our core group of donors who give \$5,000 or more annually to support the grant programs of Whitefish Community Foundation.

Eligibility

To be eligible to participate in the 2026 Great Fish Community Challenge, organizations must meet the following criteria:

- Applicants must be designated by the IRS as tax exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit public charities.
- Applicants must use funds for projects and programs that are conducted by the applicant.

- In limited circumstances, applicants may use funds for a project or program conducted by a single-member LLC if Whitefish Community Foundation determines the following criteria are met:
- The applicant is the sole member of the single-member LLC classified as a disregarded entity.
- The single-member LLC meets all the requirements for a determination letter under Notice 2021-56, 2021-45, I.R.B. 716, including, but not limited to the organizational test.
- If a single-member LLC meets these criteria, Whitefish Community Foundation may, at its discretion, list the single-member LLC as the recipient of funds in marketing materials.
- Public schools are not eligible to apply.
- Organizations must have updated their Candid Nonprofit Profile to earn a Bronze Seal of Transparency. Update your Candid (previously GuideStar) profile [here](#).
- Applicants must have previously participated in a Whitefish Community Foundation Grant Program.
- Organizations must have submitted all required documentation for previous grant awards by the specified deadline.
- Organizations that did not participate in the 2025 Great Fish Community Challenge must have attended either the January 22, 2026 or January 27, 2026 informational meetings in order to apply to participate in the 2026 Challenge.
- To be eligible to participate in the Great Fish Community Challenge, funding must be allocated to projects and/or programs benefiting residents of the greater Flathead Valley and be associated with one of the following categories: Arts and Culture, Animals, Civic, Conservation/Environment, Education, Health and Human Service, or Recreation.

In addition to meeting the above criteria, participating nonprofits must be at least one of the following:

1. An organization that predominantly works in or serves Flathead County, MT
2. An official Flathead County, MT chapter in good standing of a state/regional/national organization, with a board or local advisory board comprised predominantly of Flathead County, MT residents
3. A state organization with Flathead County, MT representation on the board; at least one paid employee whose responsibilities are predominantly comprised of program work in Flathead County, MT; and dedicated office space in Flathead County, MT
4. A regional/national organization, with a board or local advisory board comprised predominantly of Flathead County, MT residents

Two separate nonprofits cannot apply to fund the same project or program, and Whitefish Community Foundation will not fund projects/programs that duplicate services.

Organizations must confirm that funds raised will not be used for programs promoting a religious doctrine or political agenda.

Organizations must agree to comply with participation requirements, rules, and procedures.

Application

Previous year participation does not guarantee participation in the 2026 campaign. To be considered for participation in the 2026 Great Fish Community Challenge, A COMPLETE APPLICATION MUST BE SUBMITTED TO WHITEFISH COMMUNITY FOUNDATION BY 5:00 P.M. MDT ON May 21, 2026.

Participation Requirements

Organizations accepted to participate in the campaign must meet the following requirements:

- Ensure the individual who submitted the application checks email regularly and reads all Whitefish Community Foundation newsletters between June 1 and October 31, 2026.
- Attend the mandatory kick-off meeting on June 23, 2026 at the O'Shaughnessy Center in Whitefish. It is highly recommended that multiple representatives from each organization attend this meeting, including the individual who is responsible for marketing the organization's participation in the Great Fish Community Challenge.
- Organize board members, employees, and volunteers to fundraise and promote the Great Fish Community Challenge.
- Attend the Great Fish Launch Party on August 11, 2026.
- Host an engaging and interactive booth at the Great Fish Launch Party from 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Booth set-up will take place from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- Attend the Great Fish Awards Ceremony on October 22, 2026 at the Wachholz College Center.

Please note: If an organization fails to attend the mandatory kick-off meeting, host a booth at the Launch Party, or meet any of the participation requirements, the organization may not be eligible to receive Special Awards or Incentive Grants, and may not be eligible to participate in the Great Fish Community Challenge. Whitefish Community Foundation reserves the right to not award the Great Fish Matching Grant for failure to comply with participation requirements.

Challenge Grants Structure

The Great Fish Community Challenge grant allows all organizations to benefit fairly from the match.

The \$10,000 Minimum: Nonprofits must raise at least \$10,000 to qualify for the match.

The \$25,000 Cap: Participating nonprofits receive 100% of contributions designated to the organization. The matching grant will be calculated on \$25,000 of contributions made to the organization during the campaign.

The Match Percentage: The match percentage depends on the ratio of the total amount raised in the Great Fish Challenge Match Fund compared to the amount of eligible designated contributions raised by participating nonprofits during the campaign.

Rules and Procedures

Please read and follow the rules for the benefit of your organization and other participating nonprofits. The rules enable Whitefish Community Foundation to process over 10,000 contributions for multiple organizations during the campaign, while keeping the Great Fish Community Challenge free for participating nonprofits.

Organizations must act ethically and honestly and with mutual respect.

Funds may not be used for religious or political purposes.

Funds raised through the Great Fish Community Challenge may be used only to benefit projects or programs based in Flathead County, MT per the approved Use of Funds statement.

Only official donation forms are allowed. An official electronic version of the donation form may be found on the Whitefish Community Foundation website on August 11, 2026. The official donation form may be copied but cannot be altered or recreated.

Organizations may not send box holder mailings, postal patron mailings, or solicitations through a purchased mailing list. Door-to-door solicitations and cold-calling telephone solicitations are prohibited. Organizations may only conduct targeted solicitations related to the Great Fish Community Challenge through their organization's donor database.

Soliciting multiple donations from a single family is discouraged. Soliciting donations from multiple members of one family to win an incentive grant is prohibited.

All contributions received as part of the Great Fish Community Challenge are subject to Whitefish Community Foundation's variance power. **

Organizations must not provide a tax receipt (gift substantiation) for contributions made through the Great Fish Community Challenge. Because donations are made to Whitefish Community Foundation, it is the Community Foundation's legal responsibility to provide tax receipts to donors.

Organizations are encouraged to acknowledge all contributions with personal thank you notes as appropriate.

In response to donor concerns, organizations are discouraged from mailing Great Fish Community Challenge donation forms to Flathead County addresses. Whitefish Community Foundation will mail a donation form to individuals and businesses that have previously donated.

Organizations must not provide any goods or services in exchange for a donor's contribution through the Great Fish Community Challenge.

Organizations collaborating on projects/programs with other nonprofits will be required to submit proof of collaboration.

To establish a strong partnership, participating nonprofits are encouraged to use the Great Fish Community Challenge logo in their advertising during the giving period (See logo usage on page 7).

****Variance Power. Funds raised through the Great Fish Community Challenge are subject to the variance power described in Treas. Reg. 1.170A-9(f)(11)(v)(B)(1), as amended from time to time.**

Pursuant to the variance power, the Board of the Foundation shall have the power to modify any restriction or condition on the distribution of funds for any specified charitable purpose or to specified organizations, if in their sole judgment (without the approval of any advisor, trustee, custodian, or agent) such restriction or condition becomes, in effect, unnecessary, incapable of fulfillment, or inconsistent with the charitable needs of the community or area served by the Community Foundation.

Contributions

Contributions to the Great Fish Community Challenge will be accepted August 11, 2026 at 8:00 a.m. MDT through September 11, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. MDT.

Organizations are responsible for soliciting contributions on their behalf following the rules of the campaign. A unique aspect of the Great Fish Community Challenge is that donors can make contributions to several organizations with only one check or credit card transaction and receive a single tax receipt.

Credit card processing fees for donations made online may be passed on to participating organizations at the rate charged by credit card processors.

Online donations must be a minimum of \$25 per organization.

Eligible Contributions

- Checks made out to Whitefish Community Foundation accompanied by an official donation form.
- Cash contributions will be accepted if they are given directly to Foundation staff by the donor, and are accompanied by an official donation form completed by the donor. Cash donations collected by organizations and delivered to Whitefish Community Foundation will not be accepted. These donations are the property of the organization and can be accepted by the organization as contributions outside of the Great Fish Community Challenge. Online credit card contributions can be made at www.whitefishcommunityfoundation.org
- Noncash contributions (e.g., contributions of stock or other assets) may be eligible. Contact Whitefish Community Foundation directly.
- Payroll deductions may be eligible, please contact Whitefish Community Foundation directly.
- Corporate matching contributions that are otherwise eligible contributions.
- To qualify for matching funds, Whitefish Community Foundation must receive the donation on or after August 11, 2026 and on or before September 11, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. MDT.

Ineligible Contributions

Contributions in exchange for goods and services, including, but not limited to the following are prohibited:

- Event proceeds, such as funds raised through raffles, collections, drawings, auctions, dinners, or other events; Fees, such as admission, registration, tickets, uniform, or any other type of non-tax-deductible payment;
- Membership dues that provide more than an incidental benefit.
- Sales of goods or services
- Tuition

- Sponsorships providing more than an incidental benefit
- Contributions accepted in exchange for raffle entry. For example, “Donate and you will be entered to win \$100 worth of merchandise.”
- Contributions made to fulfill volunteer service hours required by the organization
- Pledges, including those from walk-a-thons, bike-a-thons, swim-a-thons, etc.
- Contributions to Whitefish Community Foundation to fulfill a pledge agreement with the designated organization

Contribution Reporting

Whitefish Community Foundation will provide contribution information to participating organizations through a web-based portal. Upon acceptance to the Great Fish Community Challenge, two Fund Advisors, appointed by the organization’s board of directors, will be given instructions, a username, and password for the portal. Contribution amounts will be provided through each organization’s unique fund portal. Donor names, addresses, and email addresses will be listed in each organization’s unique fund portal if the donor provides this information.

If a donor requests to remain anonymous, the contribution amount will be made available but contact information including their name will be withheld.

Organizations are given free, unlimited, online access to review contribution activity.

Whitefish Community Foundation will provide password information and assistance to designated Fund Advisors only.

Donations must be received by September 11, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. MDT to be eligible to be matched. Donations received after 5:00 p.m. MDT on September 11, 2026 and before September 30, 2026 at 11:59 p.m. MDT will be included in the final award check but will not qualify for the match.

Entry of contributions, adjustments, and reconciliations may continue through the first week of October 2026.

Contributions received on or after October 1, 2026 will remain in the participating organization’s designated Great Fish Fund until December 2026. In December 2026, these late gifts will be released to the designated organization in one grant.

If contributions originating from the 2026 Great Fish Community Challenge are received after the December 2026 reconciliation is complete, they will remain in the designated organization’s Great Fish Fund until June 2027. In June 2027, these gifts will be released to the designated organization in one grant prior to the start of the 2027 Great Fish Community Challenge.

Administrative fees will not be charged to process the December 2026 or June 2027 grants.

Great Fish Launch Party

Each participating nonprofit must have a 10’ x 10’ booth at the Great Fish Launch Party on August 11, 2026 from 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Whitefish Community Foundation will determine booth location.

Booth set up takes place from 3:00 p.m. until 4:30 p.m. on August 11, 2026.

Nonprofits bring everything needed for display, including tents, tables, chairs, table covers, signs, easels, etc. All displays must remain within the 10' x 10' assigned foot print. Nonprofits can give away food at their booths; however, no heating, cooking, or other food preparation is allowed at booths. Please contact the Flathead County Public Health Department for information on serving food to the public. No power or Wi-Fi is available in the booth area. The booths are intended to be an educational opportunity for the community, however, nonprofits may give away items branded with the logo of their organization. (e.g., hats, t-shirts, reusable cups).

Nonprofits are responsible for unloading and removing everything they bring. Each nonprofit must recruit enough help for set-up and clean-up.

If donors wish to give to an organization at the Launch Party, they must visit the Donations and Information tent. Participating organizations cannot accept donations at their booth.

No dogs or other animals are allowed.

Grant Report

The grant report for the 2026 Great Fish Community Challenge is due October 7, 2027 at 5:00 p.m. MDT, and must be submitted online. Organizations that fail to submit a grant report by the due date may not be eligible to participate in the next Great Fish Community Challenge. Matching funds must be spent within 18 months of issuance or returned to Whitefish Community Foundation, unless the organization has received written approval from Whitefish Community Foundation to hold the funds for a specific project. The grant report is used to ensure organizations spend their grant in accordance with their use of funds statement. The grant report is also used to show the impact of the Great Fish Community Challenge to the public, donors, and the media.

Marketing Information

To encourage consistency in marketing the Great Fish Community Challenge and to help donors connect organizations with the Challenge, Whitefish Community Foundation provides participating organizations with the Great Fish Community Challenge logo.

The Great Fish Community Challenge logo may not be altered or embellished and must always appear upright. Color substitutions are not allowed.

Logo usage

The Great Fish Community Challenge logo can be used in a variety of digital and print applications, including, but not limited to:

- Newspaper, magazine, and television advertisements
- Mass emails, websites, and social media
- Newsletters, postcards, brochures, signs, and solicitation letters
- Great Fish Community Challenge Name Usage

Acceptable references to the Great Fish Community Challenge

- 2026 Great Fish Community Challenge

- Great Fish Community Challenge
- The Challenge or the Challenge (upon second or subsequent reference to the Great Fish Community Challenge)
- Great Fish Match Fund
- Great Fish Launch Party
- Great Fish Awards Ceremony

Unacceptable references to the Great Fish Community Challenge

- Great Fish
- 2026 GFCC
- GFCC

Whitefish Community Foundation is the Host

Whitefish Community Foundation is the host of the Great Fish Community Challenge. The Great Fish Community Challenge is a program of Whitefish Community Foundation. When referring to Whitefish Community Foundation and the Great Fish Community Challenge, participating nonprofits are required to follow these guidelines.

It is permissible to state:

- The Great Fish Community Challenge is brought to you by Whitefish Community Foundation
- The Great Fish Community Challenge is hosted by Whitefish Community Foundation
- The Great Fish Community Challenge is a program of Whitefish Community Foundation
- “Nonprofit” is a participant in the Great Fish Community Challenge

It is not permissible to state:

- The Great Fish Community Challenge is brought to you by “nonprofit”
- The Great Fish Community Challenge is a program of “nonprofit”
- “Nonprofit” is a partner in the Great Fish Community Challenge
- “Nonprofit” is a partner with Whitefish Community Foundation
- Whitefish Community Foundation sponsors/is a sponsor of the Great Fish Community Challenge

Nonprofit Special Events Marketing the Great Fish Community Challenge

Participating nonprofits shall not use the name(s) or the logo in any manner that states or implies that Whitefish Community Foundation created, approved, sponsored, or is in any way responsible for the participating nonprofit’s advertisements, letters, communications, or events. The participating nonprofit is responsible for, and will indemnify and hold Whitefish Community Foundation, its employees, agents, and directors harmless from and against any actions, liabilities, losses, judgments, costs, expenses, suits, or other claims, including reasonable attorneys’ fees and costs arising from or in any way related to, the participating nonprofit’s use of the name(s) or logo.

Promotion and Marketing Reminders

In promotional and solicitation materials, organizations are encouraged to include the following:

- The Great Fish Community Challenge giving period is August 11 through September 11, 2026.

- Organizations receive 100% of contributions designated to them. They also receive a percentage Great Fish Matching Grant, based on \$25,000 of eligible contributions they raise.
- Contributions on behalf of participating nonprofits must be made directly to Whitefish Community Foundation.
- Donors are encouraged to give to more than one organization with a single contribution to Whitefish Community Foundation.

Whitefish Community Foundation Staff & Contact Info

Alan Davis, President/CEO, alan@whitefishcommunityfoundation.org

Daria Perez, Chief Financial Officer, daria@whitefishcommunityfoundation.org

Jill Seigmund, Director of Programs, jill@whitefishcommunityfoundation.org

Laura Abernethy, Administrative Assistant, laura@whitefishcommunityfoundation.org

Liz Keeney Scholten, Director of Finance & Donor Services, liz@whitefishcommunityfoundation.org

Lynnette Donaldson, Chief Development Officer, lynnette@whitefishcommunityfoundation.org

Molly Wright, Marketing & Communications Manager, molly@whitefishcommunityfoundation.org

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