

Fund East African Workforce Development Equity Grants



About the East African grants

Minnesota is home to a large and growing East African population with many concentrated communities spread throughout the state in cities such as Rochester, St. Cloud, Moorhead, Willmar, Minneapolis, and St. Paul. Their communities have greatly contributed to the cultural and economic landscape in Minnesota. However, East African communities in Minnesota face cultural, religious, language, and racial barriers that make it difficult for them to achieve economic self-sufficiency. As part of Youthprise's commitment to invest and build capacity in East African organizations and youth, Youthprise has partnered with the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) to increase equity and address challenges facing East African youth. Youthprise is advocating for continued funding for East African Workforce Development Equity Grants.

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Grant program benefits over 1,000 youth per year

Youthprise has been supporting East African youth and community-focused organizations to provide economic development activities and services designed to develop long-term economic self-sufficiency for about five years now, while also providing culturally-appropriate family and academic support. Through an appropriation from the Legislature, **Youthprise funded 17 organizations across Minnesota in 2019 and 2020. 458 East African youth received work readiness training and 1198 East African youth received career exploration and career planning services** from Quarter 1 to Quarter 3 of the 2020 East African Youth Economic Development grant cycle. Despite the state's challenging budget forecast, it is imperative to maintain the funding for these grants in 2021 and 2022 because the pandemic has created an even greater need for these services.

List of all 2020-2021 grant recipients and their locations

African Community Services, Minneapolis
Afro Economic Development Solutions, Saint Paul
African Immigrants Community Services, Minneapolis
Afro American Development Association, Moorhead
BRAVE Foundation, Saint Paul
Community Integration Center Willmar
Fortune Relief and Youth Empowerment Organization, Minneapolis
Islamic Civic Society of America, Minneapolis

Ka Joog, Minneapolis
New American Development Center, Minneapolis
New Vision Foundation, Minneapolis
Northfield Healthy Community Initiative, Northfield
Somali Community Resettlement Services, Faribault
Somalia American Social Service Association (Somali Rebuild Organization), Rochester
South Sudanese Foundation, Moorhead
Street Soccer Twin Cities, Minneapolis

Examples of organizations that currently receive funding

South Sudanese Foundation, Moorhead, \$30,000

Community members founded the South Sudanese Foundation two years ago as a way to build relationships and share services and resources within the community and other communities in the area. The mission of the South Sudanese Foundation is to be a life-changing, transformative community where everyone can encounter reminders of love for our community and move forward together in their home of Moorhead.

Since the pandemic, South Sudanese Foundation has provided services to 35 East African youth. These **services include mentorship, transportation, job placement, translation/interpretation, education, and health assistance.** South Sudanese Foundation is also helping youth that are laid off work due to COVID-19 with their Unemployment Insurance applications while they **assist the young people in finding new employment opportunities, such as becoming Certified Nursing Assistants or obtaining forklift driving certification to work at a warehouse.**

Northfield Healthy Community Initiative, Northfield \$25,000

HCI's mission is to cultivate a collaborative community that supports, values, and empowers youth. HCI strives to build the capacity of the community to more effectively serve its young people. Formed in 1992, HCI has enjoyed a 27-year history as an intermediary backbone organization, supporting youth development and youth empowerment efforts in Northfield and Rice County, Minnesota. Since its formation, HCI has been committed to addressing issues of equity and to supporting work that builds opportunities for youth of color.

One of HCI's programs, Tackling Obstacles and Raising College Hopes (TORCH), has remained **committed to providing a high level of service and engagement for participating youth and families during COVID-19 through remote meetings, phone calls, email and text conversations with over 100 youth.** This work includes:

- Ensuring **weekly contact with participating students** and follow up as needed for those who are struggling to meet the demands of distance learning.
- **Providing language support for students and families who needed assistance securing a reliable internet connection or a working tablet/Chromebook** when schools shifted to distance learning.
- **Creating a short, Somali-language video that was texted to families with tips for success before the start of distance learning.**
- **Integrating into the student support teams** at Northfield High School and the Area Learning Center, so TORCH can coordinate with teachers and administrators on a daily basis to ensure that Somali students are supported during this pandemic and remain on track to meet their academic and career goals.

Why should East African grant funding be renewed?

These East African grants should be a priority for the state because this funding provides critical workforce development funding to organizations across the state, but especially in Greater Minnesota, where there aren't enough resources for East African youth. The grant appropriation last biennium was able to fund 17 organizations, and cutting funding would jeopardize the jobs of both youth and the workers who provide services to these young people. The Legislature has been allocating equity funds to these East African organizations since 2017, so abruptly losing this funding would leave the communities they serve without critical resources. Families will be out of work and young people will not receive the workforce services they need to succeed in life. Some of these organizations are not only a safe haven for new East African immigrants, but they also create a sense of community for people from all walks of life because they are able to receive culturally-specific support that they are unable to get from elsewhere.

About Youthprise

Youthprise is a statewide intermediary with a mission of increasing equity with and for Minnesota's indigenous, low-income, and racially diverse youth. We envision a Minnesota where outcomes for youth are no longer predictable by race, geography, and socio-economic status.



Youthprise focuses on three impact areas: learning & leadership, economic opportunity, and health & safety. We carry out our work by mobilizing and investing resources, advancing knowledge related to youth engagement, and advocating for change with and for Minnesota youth.