

# Pottstown Community Voices Grant Fund

*By Residents, For Residents*

In 2022, the Pottstown Regional Community Foundation (PRCF) took a bold step to better understand the root causes of health disparities by conducting a community health needs assessment centered on Pottstown neighborhoods that have been most impacted by historic inequities. These neighborhoods continue to encounter systemic barriers—inequities in education, employment, housing, and healthcare—while also facing heightened risks such as violence, environmental hazards, and unsafe living conditions. Too often, efforts to improve community health are designed without the meaningful input of the very people most affected by the outcomes. To change this narrative PRCF launched a participatory grantmaking (PGM) initiative that redefined how resources are distributed—by engaging residents directly at every stage of the process.

## WHAT IS PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING (PGM)?

*“Participatory grantmaking cedes decision-making power about funding—including the strategy and criteria behind those decisions—to the very communities that funders seek to serve” (Gibson, 2004)*

- Benefits of PGM:**
- Increases trust and transparency
  - Promotes civic engagement
  - Builds community capacity
  - Aligns resources with lived-experience insights



## THE PROJECT IN NUMBERS

**41** Residents engaged

**8** Grants awarded

**\$100K** Funding distributed

**4,558** People served

## PROCESS

### Phase 1

#### Community Conversations

In the summer of 2023, two community conversations were held at the Ricketts Center to share findings from the community health assessment and for residents to identify issues of priority. Strategy Arts facilitated the sessions using their expertise in equitable community engagement, including trauma informed practices and asset based framing.

### Phase 2

#### Framework Design

A design team of eight residents met four times to co-create a grantmaking framework including goals, purpose, eligibility criteria, scoring rubric, and reporting requirements. The team participated in a presentation to the nonprofit community that shared details of the participatory grant opportunity that launched in July 2023.

### Phase 3

#### Fund Implementation

Six residents formed the grant advisory council, and led the implementation of the Community Voices Grant Fund. After reviewing 18 applications, the council allocated \$100,000 in funding to eight organizations. To celebrate this milestone, PRCF hosted a Meet & Greet with council members and grantees, celebrating the inaugural CVGF.

## RESULTS

### APPLICANT CHARACTERISTICS

The design team identified the following key attributes of competitive applicants:

- Committed to a thriving, healthy, successful future for Pottstown.
- Committed to collaborations and partnerships within the community.
- Representative of the communities served.
- Informed by the community and invested in community participation.

### GRANTEES AND PROJECTS

- Barth Elementary School - 3rd/4th Grade Playground - \$15,000
- Be ReZilient - REACH Wellness Initiative - \$15,000
- Borough of Pottstown - South Street Park Playground - \$8,000
- Centro Cultural Latinos Unidos - Trash Clean-Up/Educational Program and Bilingual Soccer Program - \$10,000
- Hearts for Humanity - Green Spaces for Gardening - \$7,000
- Making a Difference Economically - MADE for the Trades - \$15,000
- Mission Kids Advocacy Center - Expanding Access and Increasing Engagement to Trauma-Informed Mental Health Services - \$15,000
- Pottstown Red Cloud Kung Fu Club - Program Support - \$15,000

### FOCUS AREAS

Access to Parks  
Mental Health Solutions  
Neighborhood Safety  
Barriers to Employment  
Housing \*



\* No funded projects for housing



Pottstown Regional Community Foundation connects donors, partners, and community leaders with the community's greatest needs, investing in systemic change that improves health outcomes, expands educational access, and builds pathways to economic stability for all residents.

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