



# Information Session

Sharing details about the Ruth Nelson Family Foundation's focus areas, funding priorities, and procedures.

March 2026

Welcome!



“

She lived to  
know and  
repair the  
world.



# Housekeeping



# RNFF Team



**Gina Stilp**  
Executive Director



**Alex Paschal**  
Program Director



**Tori Darker**  
Program Officer



**Nikki Sharp**  
Grants Manager

Board of Directors: Mike Nelson, Pam Nelson, Randy Nelson, Tim Blake Nelson, Tom Murphy



# Our Path to 2026

2000-2024

**\$140M**

Grants Paid

**79%**

In Tulsa Area

**~250**

Nonprofits

2025

**\$10M**

Grants Paid

**97%**

In Tulsa Area

**~100**

Nonprofits

# Mission, Vision, Values



## Mission

The mission of the Ruth Nelson Family Foundation is to support the areas of need that reflect the philanthropic interests of Ruth Nelson by nurturing bold ideas, serving urgent needs, and transforming systems to benefit Tulsa.



## Vision

We envision a society in which no person is denied shelter, food, physical well-being or access to education and culture because of gender, race, disability, or economic constraint.



## Values

Ruth's values continue to guide the Foundation today: humility, wisdom, dignity, education, community, integrity, and opportunity.



## Commitment to Tulsa

Focusing support in Tulsa reflects Ruth's belief that meaningful change begins at home. Tulsa is a vibrant hub for arts, education, business, and community innovation. It is also a place where persistent inequities mean many families struggle to achieve long-term economic stability.



# Focus Areas

In keeping with Ruth Nelson's long legacy of giving to areas that support economic mobility, RNFF will focus giving in three core areas: affordable housing, women's health, and youth development.

We will also continue to support organizations Ruth faithfully gave to that fall outside of our focus areas through the Founder's Initiative which will be by invitation only.



**Affordable Housing**



**Women's Health**



**Youth Development**



**Founder's Initiative**



## Economic Mobility

No person should be denied dignity, opportunity, or care because of their circumstances

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# Approach

## RNFF Strategic Pillars

### Grantmaking



### Empowering



### Capacity Building



### Learning



# Affordable Housing

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## **RNFF prioritizes investments that:**

- ❖ Increase coordination and capacity in the housing sector
- ❖ Grow production and preserve affordable homeownership and rental units
- ❖ Create and improve financial tools and supports available to LMI families
- ❖ Improve policies and systems that make housing more affordable and equitable



## Affordable Housing

RNFF seeks to increase access to affordable rental housing and homeownership to strengthen long-term financial stability for families.

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## Women's Health

RNFF seeks to invest in programs that reduce women's health disparities, improve maternal health outcomes and stabilize family income.

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# Women's Health

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RNFF prioritizes investments that:

### **Improve Primary Healthcare Access**

- ❖ Support the operations of safety net clinics
- ❖ Enhance preventative and reproductive health services
- ❖ Fortify insurance coverage

### **Improve Maternal Health**

- ❖ Expand the maternal healthcare workforce
- ❖ Deliver quality initiatives that improve health outcomes of birthing people
- ❖ Offer direct cash assistance to birthing people

# Youth Development

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RNFF prioritizes investments in expanded learning that:

- ❖ Provide access to quality programming for students in- and out-of-school time
- ❖ Train staff to improve the quality and capacity of expanded learning opportunities
- ❖ Scale systems for recruiting, engaging, and retaining students
- ❖ Create and improve safe, inviting spaces for youth to convene



## Youth Development

RNFF seeks to invest in opportunities for youth that support student academic outcomes and well-being, close opportunity gaps, and increase the quality and capacity of teachers and youth workers.

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## Founder's Initiative

Support for organizations to which Ruth Nelson consistently and generously contributed.

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# Founder's Initiative

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Ruth supported hundreds of organizations during her decades of philanthropy. She was deeply relational in her work, which drove her to support many organizations with recurring annual gifts. A true civil servant, Ruth's engagement kept her well informed about the people and organizations driving change.

We hope to carry on her legacy of giving by continuing to support a cohort of nonprofits that have deep history with the Foundation but do not fit into our new focus areas. **This portfolio is by invitation only.**

# Application Process

1

## Information Session

Learn about RNFF giving priorities and processes.

3

## Site Visits and Discussion

Discussion and possible site visit with RNFF staff to understand potential partnership opportunities.

5

## RNFF Board Meeting

Trustees review and vote on eligible proposals.

2

## LOI

Submit letter of inquiry (available on a rolling basis). LOIs will be reviewed throughout the year and if approved will move on to the application process.

4

## Invited to Apply

Selected organizations will be invited to submit a full application.

Currently, we consider grants four times per year: February, May, August, and October (this schedule is subject to change).





# Minimum LOI Eligibility Requirements

## Eligible organizations must:

- ❖ Serve Tulsa County, with preference for City of Tulsa
- ❖ Work in one of our primary focus areas:
  - Affordable Housing
  - Women's Health
  - Youth Development
- ❖ Seek funding for general operating, program support, capital campaigns, capacity building, program-related investments. *We want to meet the needs of our partners with flexible and responsive funding.*

# What's next?

- ❖ Check out our website at [www.rnfftulsa.org](http://www.rnfftulsa.org)
- ❖ Follow us on social media @rnfftulsa

## Contact Info:

- ❖ Technical questions or support with the LOI process, contact:  
Nikki Sharp, Grants Manager [nikki@ruthnelsonfamilyfoundation.org](mailto:nikki@ruthnelsonfamilyfoundation.org)
- ❖ Programmatic questions, contact:
  - Gina Stilp, Executive Director (Housing)  
[gina@ruthnelsonfamilyfoundation.org](mailto:gina@ruthnelsonfamilyfoundation.org)
  - Tori Darker, Program Officer (Women's Health)  
[tori@ruthnelsonfamilyfoundation.org](mailto:tori@ruthnelsonfamilyfoundation.org)
  - Alex Paschal, Program Director (Youth and Founder's)  
[alex@ruthnelsonfamilyfoundation.org](mailto:alex@ruthnelsonfamilyfoundation.org)

“  
While we can  
still do it,  
and before it  
all changes.”



# Questions?

We'll share these slides and answers to questions following the meeting

**Ruth Nelson Family Foundation  
Info Session Q&A  
March 26, 2026**

**GENERAL**

**How does RNFF define trust-based philanthropy and how will it guide your processes?**

First and foremost, we are driven by listening. We know that the people leading nonprofit organizations are experts in their fields. We then seek to find aligned organizations doing good work, create agreements on how we'll partner to achieve desired results, and provide flexible, multi-year grants where possible.

**ELIGIBILITY**

**Are there geographic restrictions?**

Yes. All funded projects must directly benefit the Tulsa community and align with local needs. An organization may be based outside of Tulsa if the funding requested will be used for programs or services in Tulsa.

**Do you support faith-based organizations?**

The Foundation will consider funding if the faith-based organization does not discriminate service delivery based on personal values, beliefs, identity, and orientation. The Foundation does not support proselytizing or religious instruction.

**Are there activities that RNFF cannot fund?**

Except in rare circumstances, the Foundation does not sponsor special events such as galas, fundraising events, or tournaments. We do not support lobbying, political campaigns, partisan political activities, proselytizing, or religious instruction.

**Does an organization need a minimum annual operating budget?**

No

**MAKING THE ASK**

**What is the typical grant size?**

Grant sizes will vary based on the scope and potential impact of the project. The Foundation is committed to making meaningful investments that support real progress, rather than limiting funding to a predetermined amount.

**How much should an organization ask for?**

We will consider any amount, but we are seeking larger average gift sizes. We encourage organizations to ask for what is needed.

**Can an organization submit more than one LOI?**

Yes. Organizations may submit multiple LOIs, however, our preference would be for organizations to submit a single LOI that explains various funding needs. We seek to be as

low-barrier as possible, so the LOI will capture basic organizational information in just a few questions.

**If we span more than one of the three focus areas, should we focus on one in the LOI, or should we lift up all areas of alignment?**

The LOI form will require you to choose one, but you can explain in the narrative where you overlap in the other areas.

## **LOGISTICS**

**When will the LOI link be available?**

It is available on our website now.

**What is the timeline for funding decisions?**

The review process may include multiple stages and follow-up conversations with applicants. Our goal is to make thoughtful, well-informed decisions, rather than rushing the process. LOIs are accepted at any time, and funding decisions are made on a quarterly basis.

**Will funding be equally split between the three focus areas?**

We do not have specific ranges for the focus areas at this time.

**What will reporting requirements look like after an award is made?**

Grantee partners will be asked to submit an annual narrative and financial report. Reports will track progress towards goals outlined in the application. There will also be informal check-ins during the year.

**Will RNFF commit to multi-year grants this year, or will there be an evaluation period to determine long-term partnerships?**

We may do one-year grants for organizations new to RNFF, but our long-term intention is to award multi-year grants.

## **FUNDING INTERESTS/RESTRICTIONS**

**Is RNFF interested in funding coalitions and collaborations?**

Yes! We strongly encourage collaborative proposals. Partnerships, coalition-building and collective action networks that bring together complementary expertise and address multiple aspects of an issue are viewed as a strength.

**Will capacity building be funded?**

Yes! We encourage organizations to start by determining if an organizational assessment is needed to determine which capacity support would be most beneficial. If you already know, tell us more about what support would help drive organizational effectiveness. Tell us what you need, and we'll see where we best fit.

**Does RNFF anticipate having restrictions on funds being used for advocacy and/or lobbying?**

We are not able to fund efforts to change legislation, support voter registration, or promote individual candidates. However, we can support organizations seeking to expand their advocacy efforts.

**Will you consider endowment gifts?**

We are not currently funding endowments. We will share more if this evolves.

**FOCUS AREAS**

**What types of housing projects will RNFF fund? Will rental assistance and eviction prevention be included?**

RNFF supports housing projects that increase the supply, preservation, or accessibility of affordable housing in Tulsa for low and moderate-income households. We are particularly interested in projects that can create lasting, scalable impact by addressing the systemic challenges in the local housing landscape, but we also seek to support families living at or near the poverty line in their ability to stay housed.

**Under Youth Development and in particular education, is there a priority age group that RNFF seeks to serve?**

We are currently focused on K-12 with a heavy emphasis on K-8.

**If we don't fit in the three focus areas, but are one of the programs that Ruth regularly supported, is there something we should do at this time?**

No, there is nothing to do right now. We are working with our trustees to identify which of these organizations will receive invitations to apply.

**What types of safety-net clinics will you focus on?**

We are first and foremost focused on access. This includes everything from prenatal to postpartum care. In addition to availability, we would like to see culturally competent services and providers.

**Do you support mental health initiatives?**

Mental health touches many areas. RNFF is focused on our three primary issue areas of affordable housing, women's health, and youth development. If your organization sees strategic alignment with these issues and our goals, submit an LOI.