

CSTO Trust Grant Program: Funding Guidelines

As of December 2023

Background of CSTO Trust

The Castle Square Tenants Organization 2020 Charitable Trust (CSTO Trust) began in November 2020 as a supporting organization of the [Castle Square Tenants Organization](#) (CSTO). In that role, the Trustees of the CSTO Trust administer funds to advance CSTO's strategic plan as well as other mission-aligned organizations in CSTO's service area through the CSTO Trust Grant Program.

CSTO is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit tenant organization that began in 1987 when residents of Castle Square Apartments organized as a response to the threat of the property being sold, which could have resulted in the loss of 500 affordable rental units in the South End of Boston. CSTO was successful and is now the majority owner of Castle Square Apartments and runs several programs benefiting the 1,000+ residents in Castle Square Apartments and those in the surrounding South End neighborhood of Boston. Castle Square represents one of the most successful partnerships between a for-profit developer and a tenant organization in the country. A timeline of its history and accomplishments is available [here](#) and a historical narrative [here](#).

Vision/Mission

The CSTO Trust's Grant Program aims to support communities where low- and moderate-income and multi-racial residents have the power, voice, and resources to build a united front, where racial and societal wealth disparities are actively addressed and eliminated, advancing a more just, equitable, and prosperous society.

The Grant Program will support this vision of community change with funding that will enhance the educational and cultural experiences, affordable housing, and economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income residents, initially in Boston's Chinatown, South End, and Lower Roxbury neighborhoods, and hopefully in the future in other Metro Boston communities. These funds will help address service gaps, accessibility, and improvements as well as to create affordable housing, especially resident-controlled housing, that advances racial equity and economic justice. To reach these ambitious goals, the CSTO Trust will partner with CSTO leaders, friends, and residents.

Values

Three values anchor the vision and mission of the CSTO Trust.

Respect

We recognize, celebrate, and support each person's unique talents, experiences, and perspectives, believing that everyone can contribute positively to their communities.

Representative Leadership

CSTO's history and current efforts reflect the ethos "Do nothing about me without me." We believe that change is only sustainable if leaders are inclusive and reflect their communities.

Impact

The CSTO Trust's objective is to make a positive difference in the lives of individuals, families, and entire communities so that all may experience a multifaceted sense of hope, health, and well-being.

Funding Priorities

The CSTO Trust's Grant Program aims to strengthen, deepen, and grow resources and relationships in the neighborhoods described below under "Geography." The CSTO Trust, in aligning with CSTO's strategic plan, will target funding to these two priorities:

- **Youth/Child Development and Education**
 - Organizations and programs that serve school-age children ages 6 to 19 and/or older youth up to age 21 who need support transitioning to adulthood. Programs include but are not limited to:
 - Out-of-School-Time programs;
 - Youth leadership programs;
 - College/career/job exploration and readiness programs;
 - ESOL classes for recent immigrants who are older youth; and
 - Mental and behavioral health programs.

- **Affordable Housing, especially**
 - Creation and preservation;
 - Resident services;
 - Strengthening resident-controlled affordable housing developments, for example, board leadership development and capacity-building; and
 - Tenant organizing.

All requests within and intersecting these two areas will be considered, whether for program, general operating support, capacity-building, and/or capital. Collaborations between partnering organizations are encouraged. The CSTO Trust will not award multi-year grants at this time, but may do so in the future.

Geography

Funding will initially be targeted toward three Boston neighborhoods close to Castle Square Apartments: the South End, Chinatown, and Lower Roxbury. Please note that the South End includes Bay Village; Chinatown includes the Leather District; and Lower Roxbury's southern border is Malcolm X Boulevard/Dudley Street. Any questions about the service area should be addressed to Info.trust@cstoboston.org.

Range of Grant Awards

The CSTO Trust will consider grant requests of up to \$50,000. Requests of up to \$10,000 will be processed on an expedited basis based on the LOI, and will not require the “Full Proposal Review” described below, although supplemental information may be requested. Grant applications from \$10,001-\$50,000 will be subject to the full review process.

Application Process & Grants Calendar

The CSTO Trust awards grants once per year in June through a two-step review process.

Step 1: LOI Review

- Initial announcement grantmaking review process in December
- **Applicants must submit a brief 2-page Letter of Interest (LOI) by January 15 using the online portal (see [instructions here](#) and [online portal here](#))**
- CSTO Trust meets to review LOIs in February.
 - For requests up to \$10,000, an in-person or virtual site visit may be required for a final determination.
 - For requests between \$10,001 and \$50,000, CSTO Trust will invite a limited number to submit a more detailed proposal, as detailed below in the *Step 2: Full Proposal Review* section.

Step 2: Full Proposal Review

- Groups with selected LOIs submit a **full proposal by April 1st**
- Review of proposals and site visits in April/May
- Final review and award of grants by full CSTO Board of Trustees in **June**
- Grant award celebration for grantee partners in July
- Trustees meet in August/September to review the grants review process and implement changes for the next round. Changes are made and announced in October/November.

Reporting Requirements

All grantee partners must submit a final report that describes the use of grant funds, major activities, lessons learned, and the funded project’s impact over the 1-year grant period. A report must be received before a new application is accepted.

Exclusions

At this time, the CSTO Trust will not be considering:

- Programs whose impact is substantially outside the Boston neighborhoods of South End, Chinatown, and Lower Roxbury.
- Proposals with poorly defined budget items, outcomes, or benchmarks for success.
- Requests from individuals.
- Groups without 501(c)(3) designation as a public charity or a 501(c)(3) fiscal agent. However, these groups may contact the grants administrator for a further analysis of eligibility determination.

- Requests to directly support public, private, charter or religious schools. However, schools may be a partner or beneficiary of a nonprofit organization's work.
- Endowments.
- Scholarships (however, scholarships may be a line item of a larger request).

For more information about the CSTO Trust and these Guidelines, contact:

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