

MEDIA CONTACT

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Greater Lowell Nonprofits Report a Funding Landscape Shifting on Every Side

September 2026 survey of 73 local organizations finds one in three has lost federal funding—and nearly all are bracing for the year ahead

LOWELL, MASS. – This September, the Greater Lowell Community Foundation (GLCF) asked its nonprofit partners a straightforward question: how are changes in state, federal, and philanthropic funding affecting your work? Between July 28 and September 1, 2026, 73 organizations responded, ranging from all-volunteer groups with budgets under \$100,000 to institutions with budgets above \$5 million. They serve children and youth, seniors, people with disabilities, and hardworking families across the region, in fields from food security and housing to arts, education, and health. Responses are reported in aggregate, and no organization is identified.

The clearest finding is not one funding source disappearing, but the floor shifting in several places at once. Of the 73 organizations, 24 (33 percent) report direct federal funding cuts in the past year, and for two of them the loss exceeds half of their total budget. Yet 92 percent describe their outlook for the next twelve months as cautious, concerned, or very concerned—including many that have not yet experienced a federal cut.

“These numbers are not abstractions. They are the food pantry that stretches a little further, the volunteer who covers a gap, and the neighbor who still gets a visit. Our nonprofit partners are holding Greater Lowell together, and they are telling us plainly what it takes to keep going.” – Jay Linnehan, President and CEO, Greater Lowell Community Foundation

Key Findings

- **1 in 3 organizations reports federal cuts.** Twenty-four of 73 organizations (33 percent) lost direct federal funding in the past 12 months; two lost more than half of their budget.
- **Nearly all are cautious or worried.** Sixty-seven of 73 organizations (92 percent) rate their outlook as cautious (40), concerned (20), or very concerned (7). Six describe themselves as optimistic.
- **Private grants are harder to win.** Sixty-two of 73 organizations (85 percent) say foundation and private grant funding has become more competitive. Among the 67 organizations that applied for foundation funding in their last cycle, 49 (73 percent) won fewer than half of their applications.

- **Smaller organizations carry the most strain.** One quarter of respondents (18 of 73) operate on budgets under \$100,000, and many are entirely volunteer-run.
- **Cuts are compounding.** Several organizations are absorbing federal and state reductions at the same time, a combined pressure that is harder to manage than either loss on its own.

What This Means for Greater Lowell Families

Behind the numbers are real changes to daily life. Food-assistance providers describe rising demand and rising costs, even where donations have held steady. Others report delayed or scaled-back services, hiring freezes, and staff stretched across more work with the same resources. Seniors, children and youth, low-income families, and people with disabilities were the groups most often named as affected.

Smaller, often all-volunteer organizations—the kind that catch families other systems miss—say they feel effectively locked out of grant cycles designed for larger, more established nonprofits, even as demand grows. Newer organizations describe a similar bind: eager to help neighbors now, but facing a long wait for their first grant.

What Organizations Are Asking For

Across nearly every response, two themes stand out: **unrestricted, flexible operating support** that organizations can direct toward their most urgent need, and **multi-year commitments** that let them plan rather than react.

A smaller but notable group asked for something money alone cannot provide: connection. Organizations requested introductions to other funders, peer networks, and technical and administrative support—a reminder that a community foundation's role as convener and trusted guide matters alongside its role as grantmaker.

About the Survey

GLCF's September 2026 State and Federal Funding Survey was open to nonprofit partners from July 28 to September 1, 2026. It received 75 submissions from 73 unique organizations; two organizations submitted twice and are counted once. Figures are self-reported, reflect respondents who chose to participate, and are not a census of the region's nonprofit sector. Percentages are of 73 organizations unless noted.

GLCF thanks every organization that took the time to share its experience. To learn more about the Greater Lowell Community Foundation, visit glcfoundation.org.

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About Greater Lowell Community Foundation

Established in 1997, the Greater Lowell Community Foundation (GLCF) is a philanthropic organization comprised of more than 500 funds dedicated to improving the quality of life in 21 neighboring cities and towns. With financial assets of over \$75 million, GLCF annually awards grants and scholarships to hundreds of worthy nonprofits and students. The generosity of our donors has enabled the Community Foundation to award more than \$50 million to the Greater Lowell community.