

**WEGE FOUNDATION CROSS-CUTTING THEMES  
AND PILLAR GOALS**  
*Revised – April 30, 2017*

**INTRODUCTION**

The Wege Foundation's Grants Policy affirmed Peter M. Wege's five “pillars” and established target grantmaking allocations for each of these topics of interest:

1. Arts & Culture (25%)
2. Environment (25%)
3. Education (25%)
4. Health Care (15%)
5. Community Service (10%)

In addition, the Wege Foundation has long embraced certain cross-cutting themes applicable to all five pillars, such as requiring LEED certification for capital grants and a commitment to helping the vulnerable and disadvantaged. The Foundation is in the process of clarifying these cross-cutting themes and of developing results-oriented goals for each of the pillars to focus its grant making, provide better guidance to potential applicants and enhance evaluation.

As with the grantmaking allocations among the pillars, these themes and goals are intended as “targets” to guide the Grants Review Committee and staff in recruiting and reviewing grant applications. The Foundation will continue to be flexible and strategically opportunistic in funding initiatives that forward Mr. Wege’s goal that Grand Rapids become “the best medium-sized city in the United States.”

**CROSS-CUTTING THEMES**  
**(Applicable to all pillars)**

**THEME #1 - DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION:** Implement the Foundation's new "[Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Policy](#)" with respect to all pillars and all grantees.

**THEME #2 - CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:** Foster civic engagement\* through grantees that intentionally and systematically develop in the individuals they serve the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make a difference in civic life and policy choices.

**THEME #3 - ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY:** Encourage grantees to demonstrate environmental responsibility by rigorously tracking, taking into account and seeking to eliminate or minimize the adverse environmental impacts of grantees' programs, activities, facilities and operations and by inculcating values of and educating about environmental stewardship the

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\* A civically engaged individual recognizes himself or herself as a member of a larger social fabric and considers social problems to be at least partly his or her own. Civic engagement can take many forms, from individual voluntarism to organizational involvement to electoral participation. It can include efforts to directly address an issue, work with others in a community to solve a problem or interact with the institutions of representative democracy. Civic engagement encompasses a range of specific activities such as working in a soup kitchen, serving on a neighborhood association, writing a letter to an elected official or voting. An engaged citizen should have the ability, agency and opportunity to move comfortably among these various types of civic acts.

people they serve including their board, staff, volunteers, vendors, collaborators, partners, constituents and beneficiaries of their programs.

**THEME #4 - ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY:** Encourage grantees to achieve organizational sustainability through a clear mission; thoughtful long-term planning and near-term implementation; outstanding board and staff leadership; effective use of volunteers; diverse, robust and stable revenue streams; creative fundraising programs expanding their donor base; rigorous budgeting and financial controls; effective collaboration and partnerships; and satisfied beneficiaries of programs and services.

## PILLAR GOALS

### Arts & Culture

**ARTS & CULTURE GOAL #1:** Foster authentic artistic and cultural expression by diverse neighborhoods and communities, especially those that are historically disadvantaged.

*Illustrative grants: **Ebony Road Players** – Theatre arts education focused on children of color and work with local playwrights to create original, community-based work; **DisArt** – Festival of disability art practitioners; **West Michigan Center for Arts & Technology** – Elevate voices of urban teens to affect social change through the visual arts and technology; **Grandville Avenue Art & Humanities** – Provide youth opportunities to explore their creativity, celebrate their culture and the cultures of others and build community; **Mosaic Film Experience** – Work with disadvantaged teens on training, festival and social media platform for videos shot on mobile devices.*

**ARTS & CULTURE GOAL #2:** Assure affordable and welcoming access by lower-income and diverse individuals to a wide variety of artistic and cultural exhibits and performances through relevant programming and aggressive outreach.

*Illustrative grants: **Grand Rapids Children’s Museum** – Reduced admission rates for economically-disadvantaged children and families; **Grand Rapids Symphony** – Network of access points for people of all ages and walks of life to engage with orchestral music; **Opera Grand Rapids** – Collaborate with GR Public Schools to bring opera instruction to middle school students.*

### Education

**EDUCATION GOAL #1:** Assure access to extracurricular services and programming (pre-K through post-secondary) that prepare disadvantaged students to learn and enhance academic achievement.

*Illustrative grants: **Kids Food Basket** – Distribute through schools healthy sack suppers for students; **Close Up Foundation and Ottawa Hills High School** – Tuition assistance for economically-disadvantaged high school students to attend the Washington DC program; **West Michigan Refugee Education & Cultural Center** – Comprehensive*

*educational support and youth development services to refugee children; **Grand Rapids Community College Foundation** – Peer support and mentorship for African-American male students; **Franciscan Life Center** – Music therapy for children with autism.*

**EDUCATION GOAL #2:** Support effective strategies for involvement by adult care-givers and mentors in children’s education, especially in public schools with diverse student populations.

*Illustrative grants: **Literacy Center of West Michigan** – Strengthen reading and language level of parents and increase the number of literacy activities in the home; **Grandville Avenue Arts & Humanities** – Student mentoring collaborative; **Roosevelt Park Ministries** – English language literacy program for adult learners.*

### **Environment**

**ENVIRONMENT (& EDUCATION) GOAL #1:** Assure access to experiential environmental education for public school students that is regular, systematic, integrated with curricula, and connected with “real world” community initiatives such as Grand River restoration, renewable energy & efficiency, water conservation and protection, addressing climate change, wildlife habitat conservation and sustainable food systems.

*Illustrative grants: **Blandford Nature Center** – Use 143 acres of differing ecosystems, a small farm, and a wildlife education center to connect students to nature in meaningful ways; **New City Neighbors** – Employ students in social enterprise involving food systems; **West Michigan Environmental Action Council** – Advocate and collaborate with other local and regional partners for environmental education with a focus on water quality and biodiversity policy; **Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds** – Engage urban youth in projects reducing urban and agricultural run-off pollution of two Grand River watersheds.*

**ENVIRONMENT GOAL #2:** Develop and implement long-term strategy to restore, protect, and make available for appropriate uses by all the lower Grand River watershed, including restoration of the namesake rapids in downtown Grand Rapids.

*Illustrative grants: **Grand Rapids Whitewater** – Restore Grand River and namesake rapids in downtown GR; **City of Grand Rapids** – Public planning process for land use along restored Grand River, especially neighborhoods of color; **Grand Rapids Public Museum** – Experiential Grand River watershed learning lab that will serve thousands of students each year; **Grand Valley Metro Council** – Lower Grand River watershed habitat restoration and farmland conservation.*

**ENVIRONMENT GOAL #3:** Assure Grand Rapids continues to be a national and international leader in its commitment to sustainable development, i.e. "Economicology.”

*Illustrative grants: **West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum** – Incorporate equity into sustainable business strategies; **Local First** – Align local business community with pressing social and environmental challenges; **Green Building Council of West***

*Michigan – Promote LEED certification and launch “2030 District” for sustainable commercial buildings; Kendall College of Art & Design – Wege Prize for sustainable solutions to “wicked” problems; Aquinas College – New science building that will house “Center for Economicology.”*

### Community Service

**COMMUNITY SERVICE GOAL #1:** Assure emergency and continuing compassionate support during disruptive life experiences such as spouse/partner/child abuse, homelessness, joblessness and substance abuse.

*Illustrative grants: CASA of Kent County – Trained volunteers appointed by family court to investigate, facilitate, advocate and monitor services for children living in foster care; Children’s Assessment Center – Streamline less-traumatic, developmentally-appropriate support for sexually-abused children; Well House – Housing and job training for homeless rehabbing old homes to LEED standards; Mel Trotter Ministries – Shelter for homeless young men, including LGBTQ youth.*

**COMMUNITY SERVICE GOAL #2:** Advance equity of economic opportunities for marginalized individuals, including support for entrepreneurship and businesses led by individuals of color.

*Illustrative grants: Michigan Migrant Legal Assistance Project – Legal assistance to migrant workers seeking fair wages and working conditions; Inner City Christian Federation – Financial literacy and home ownership training for low-income home owners; Start Garden – Fostering entrepreneurship in underserved communities; GROW – Training and mentoring to help women start and grow businesses.*

### Health Care

**HEALTH CARE GOAL #1:** Reduce/eliminate racial and class disparities in key health outcomes through prevention and access to care, especially among children and that allows seniors to remain in their homes.

*Illustrative grants: Cherry Health – Access to medical, dental and vision care for low-income populations in partnership with Grand Rapids & Cedar Springs public schools; Senior Neighbors – Connect elderly poor with services for crisis assistance, food assistance, home repair and other services.*

**HEALTH CARE GOAL #2:** Expand universal access to transportation and recreational opportunities for differently-abled individuals.

*Illustrative grants: Alternatives in Motion – Refurbishing and recycling wheel chairs; Disability Advocates – Expand public transportation for people with disabilities; Mary Free Bed YMCA – Universal design facility and grounds.*