

2026 Immigrant-Led Organizations (ILO) Fund Funding Opportunity Announcement

Maine Initiatives is now accepting applications for the 2026 Immigrant- Led Organizations (ILO) Fund.

The ILO Fund supports immigrant-led organizations whose work advances immigrant, refugee, and asylum seeker flourishing in Maine, unceded Wabanaki Territory. All immigrant, refugee, and migrant-led organizations are encouraged to apply.

APPLY HERE

for eligible organizations

Applications due by
Feb 22, 2026
11:59 PM ET

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*All photography courtesy of the 2025 ILO Fund Grantees.



OVERVIEW

The ILO Fund at Maine Initiatives is a participatory grantmaking program that funds, strengthens, and convenes immigrant-led and serving organizations in Maine, unceded Wabanaki Territory.

The Program seeks to organize people and resources in support of efforts across the state that intervene on persistent issues experienced by immigrants of color: xenophobia, racialized discrimination, and insufficient support from municipal and state governments.

For a three-year period, beginning in 2024, the ILO Fund Program has committed to providing \$1.35 million in multi-year, unrestricted, general operating support to immigrant-led and serving organizations that:

- Provide critical direct service support to immigrant communities;
- Advance immigrant flourishing through community building, grassroots organizing and advocacy, and/or policy change;
- Strengthen immigrant communities by embracing and preserving cultural practices;
- Are led by and serve immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in Maine

NOTE: The ILO Fund welcomes applications from groups whose work is advancing immigrant flourishing in other important ways that may not be captured in the list above. If the applicant is unsure if they meet the eligibility requirements, please contact the ILO Fund staff at ilofund@maineinitiatives.org.

GRANT DETAILS

AMOUNT & TERMS

\$45,000

paid annually over 3 years

\$15,000 each year

GRANTS AWARDED

10

selected by the
2025 ILO Fund Grantmaking
Advisory Committee

DEADLINE

FEB 22, 2026

11:59 PM ET

The ten (10) organizations selected for the 2026 ILO Fund cohort will each receive unrestricted, general operating grants of \$45,000 paid out over three (3) years, \$15,000 per year. Grant awards will be announced in July 2026.

In addition, these organizations are invited to participate in a series of peer learning, training, capacity-building, and community outreach activities over the course of their 3-year grant period, from July 2026 through August 2029.

Organizations chosen for the 2026 ILO Fund cohort will be selected by a Grantmaking Advisory Committee, the majority of which will be members of the immigrant community.

The participatory grantmaking process offers the ILO Fund ecosystem (current and past grantees, applicants, donors & peer funders, organizers, and members of the general public with a commitment to immigrant justice) opportunities to participate in the application design, review, and evaluation, and the grantmaking decision process. We view this participatory framework as an opportunity for both individual and collective learning about current work in Maine that advances immigrant flourishing, furthers immigrant movement building, and strengthens immigrant communities.



Intercultural Community Center



VISION

The ILO Fund supports immigrant-led efforts that ensure immigrants of color in Maine not only survive, but flourish. Advancing racial justice requires naming the particular histories and realities of immigrant injustice in the United States and how those legacies and ongoing violence continue to impact immigrant communities of color today.

The ILO Fund seeks to name and respond to:

- the particular effects of xenophobic rhetoric and policies on the opportunities for immigrants of color to seek safety within the United States; and
- the current restrictive systems designed to reduce immigrants, regardless of status, from accessing fundamental necessities such as healthcare, housing, and safe working conditions in Maine.

Since its inception in 2018, the ILO Fund has forged deep relationships with the multifaceted, highly skilled, and robust ecosystem of immigrant-led groups in Maine. In the face of ongoing violence, we have seen this ecosystem continue to mobilize and organize to protect Maine's immigrant communities. Beyond essential protection and direct service efforts, immigrant-led organizations continue to lead the transformative work of creating opportunities for immigrants to foster belonging and community, experience joy, and preserve and celebrate their cultures.

The ILO Fund remains steadfast in its support of the vibrant ecosystem of immigrant-led organizations statewide, grounding in the truth that all immigrants, regardless of legal status, should be fully included, valued, and celebrated in our society. We know and trust that immigrant flourishing is essential to advancing racial justice and equity across Maine.

FUNDING PRIORITIES

The ILO Fund seeks to support work in the state that is:

- **Intersectional:** We seek to support organizations that draw their leadership from and work in solidarity with other historically marginalized groups such as: women, LGBTQ+ and Two-Spirit, disabled, poor and working class, and those impacted by incarceration and the carceral system.
- **Geographically Diverse:** We seek to support organizations from across the state of Maine: not just in more densely populated cities and towns in Southern Maine, but also in rural areas of the state.
- **Programmatic/Thematic Variety:** We seek to support work across a broad diversity of programmatic and thematic areas that are necessary for advancing immigrant flourishing. Some examples include, but are not limited to: advocacy, education, food security, healthcare, housing, workforce development, etc.

The ILO Fund also seeks to fund efforts from both established organizations and new organizations in their first few years of existence. We have designated these as HUB ORGANIZATIONS and EMERGING ORGANIZATIONS, respectively.

- **Hub Organizations:** might be understood as serving various immigrant communities through more than one program across the state of Maine; relatively well-established with higher visibility to the general public; and having developed access to resources or established funding sources and relationships with donors.
- **Emerging Organizations:** are typically providing specific or unique programs/services to one or more immigrant communities; staffed by a few people, many often in volunteer capacity; applying for first few grants and/or seeking fiscal sponsorship; and perhaps less visible to traditional funders and/or the general public.

PARTICIPATE

Maine Initiatives relies on community input for all aspects of this program, including design, implementation, decision-making, and evaluation. This includes our commitment to participatory, community-led grantmaking, through which community members engage in a collective decision-making process for selecting our grant recipients.

This multi-phase process extends from January through May through the following steps:

- **Community-Led Design:** Each year, we invite community input to inform and update the program design, including from a sounding board made up of respected immigrant-identifying community leaders from current ILO Fund cohort members or those with experience participating in the ILO Fund process.
- **Funding Opportunity Announcement:** The grantmaking process begins with an open invitation for applications from immigrant-led and -serving organizations doing work to advance immigrant flourishing in Maine.
- **Volunteer Application Readers:** The process continues with an invitation to community members from around the state to serve as Volunteer Application Readers (“Readers”). Each Reader is provided with an orientation and basic training about this program and the process, and is invited to read, reflect on, and complete a short evaluation of three (3) separate applications.



Anonymized input from the Reader evaluations is compiled and aggregated by Maine Initiatives staff and a summary is shared with the Grantmaking Advisory Committee (see below) to inform their discussions, deliberations, and decision making.

- **Grantmaking Advisory Committee:** The final phase of this community-led process takes place via a multi-day grantmaking retreat of the Grantmaking Advisory Committee. This majority immigrant-identifying Committee brings together a group of community volunteers selected from the pool of Volunteer Application Readers representing the broad diversity of identities and perspectives in our community. These individuals engage in a facilitated process of discussion, deliberation, and decision-making during the retreat with the goal of selecting a cohort of ten (10) grantees from the applicant pool.
- **Grant Selection and Announcement:** Final decisions about the Immigrant-Led Organizations Fund grantee recipients will be made by the Grantmaking Advisory Committee (with approval by the Maine Initiatives Board of Directors) and announced by Maine Initiatives in July of 2026.



ELIGIBILITY: 2026 Requirements

To be eligible for the 2026 Immigrant-Led Organizations Fund, applicant organizations are:

- Working exclusively or primarily in Maine
- Programming primarily serves and supports immigrant communities
- An immigrant-led organization, group, or coalition

NOTE

Organizations that are current grantees of other Maine Initiatives programs (like Grants for Change or the Outdoor Equity Fund) are still eligible to apply to the Immigrant-Led Organizations Fund.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR IMMIGRANT-LED ORGANIZATIONS

Applicants are also required to meet the following:

- Implementing programs that support immigrant communities in local communities or statewide
- A Maine-based organization or group or a coalition/alliance of groups (we do not fund individuals):
 - If your organization is a nonprofit with 501(c)(3) designation from the IRS, you may apply.
 - If your organization is fiscally sponsored by a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, you may apply.
 - If you do not currently have a fiscal sponsor or nonprofit 501(c)(3) status, you are still welcome to apply but will need to obtain a fiscal sponsor **prior to May 1, 2026**.
- Have an organizational operating budget, including administrative and programming budget, of under \$3,000,000.

HOW TO APPLY

Applications are currently being accepted for the 2026 Immigrant-Led Organizations Fund. Please follow the process below:

- 1. Check your eligibility:** Please confirm that your organization meets the eligibility criteria listed above. Contact the ILO Fund staff with any questions at ilofund@maineinitiatives.org.
- 2. Request language accommodations:** If you would like translation or interpretation assistance to complete an application, please make a request by emailing ilofund@maineinitiatives.org by **January 30th, 2026**. Such a request will not negatively impact your chance to receive funding. We will make every effort to accommodate each request, but cannot guarantee requested accommodations.
- 3. Read the Application:** Prior to starting your application, we strongly recommend you read all the application questions and prepare your responses in advance. You can find a **PDF with the full application questions here**.
- 4. Attend the Information Session (optional):** Attend the applicant information session on **Wednesday, February 4th, 2026, 12:00pm - 1:00pm EST**. Please **click here** to register for the Information Session. If you are unable to attend, you can reach out to ilofund@maineinitiatives.org to request a recording.
- 5. Access portal:** Login or create an account on Maine Initiatives' grant management portal at: t.ly/maineinitiativesgrants and submit your application when ready. You can review our **"How-To Apply" guide** if any questions arise.

* We acknowledge that traditional grantmaking application processes often present barriers and/or unfairly represent the work of individuals who do not have English as their first language. The ILO Fund is committed to acknowledging this bias in its review of applications and will make every effort to support the Grantmaking Advisory Committee in conducting a fair, nuanced, and informed evaluation of applications.

Application deadline**
FEB 22, 2026
11:59 PM ET

APPLY HERE
for eligible organizations

**Due to the multi-phase nature of this process, the ILO Fund decisions will be made late May 2026. Groups that receive a grant can anticipate receiving the first installment of grant funds within a month of providing Maine Initiatives with documentation of fiscal sponsorship or 501(c)(3) status.

Evaluation Criteria

For Reference Only

In a commitment to transparency, we are pleased to share with all applicants the evaluation criteria our Application Readers will use to evaluate each application.

As you can see, the following assessment areas are directly related to the application narrative questions; each question will include an opportunity for the Reader to elaborate in a comment section (not included in the reference copy below). All Readers will be expected to review the entire grant application and complete the assessment worksheet based on the materials submitted.

Grant Application Evaluation Form - For reference only (applicants do not need to fill this out.)

ASSESSMENT: ORGANIZATION

- What is your impression of this organization?
- Is its mission clear, important, and timely?

ASSESSMENT: THE WORK

- Does this organization have clear and understandable programs?
- Do you think the organization's programs and activities will bring about the impact they seek?

ASSESSMENT: ADVANCING IMMIGRANT FLOURISHING

- To what extent does this organization advance immigrant flourishing?

ASSESSMENT: SUCCESS

- Is the organization's success story of advancing immigrant flourishing compelling and important?
- Does this organization's success story demonstrate meaningful impact in this area?

APPLICATION DEADLINE: FEB 22, 2026 11:59 PM ET



Early Math & Language Initiative

APPLY HERE
for eligible organizations



Empowered Immigrant Women Unite