



GRUNIN
FOUNDATION

STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2026

Executive Summary



Our Story

For more than 50 years, the Grunin family has proudly called the Central Jersey Shore home. Deep roots have anchored their presence which have fostered an unwavering commitment from the family to partner with the community to cultivate an equitable, just, and vibrant Central Jersey Shore where everyone thrives.

Jay Grunin and the late Linda Grunin, Co-Founders of the Grunin Foundation, met at NYU School of Law in 1967, later married, and settled in Toms River, New Jersey. In the 1970s, they established their own small law firm in Ocean County, one of the fastest-growing counties at the time, where their practice thrived. Over the years, they expanded their business interests to include real estate and other investments. In the 1990s, Jay and Linda dissolved their law practice to concentrate full time on their two greatest passions: business investments and philanthropy. In 2013, Jay and Linda, along with their only child, Jeremy (President of the Grunin Foundation), formalized their charitable pursuits and created the Grunin Foundation.



As a Foundation, we began providing funding to 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations located in Toms River, focusing on the pillars of the arts, education, and healthcare. Since then, we have invested over \$45 million in the Central Jersey Shore, with an additional \$14 million committed through 2037. Over the years, our funding landscape expanded to include all of Ocean County, and then eventually Monmouth County, which we collectively call the Central Jersey Shore. **In 2017**, we introduced Grunin Capacity, aimed at equipping nonprofits and nonprofit leaders with the tools, knowledge, and support to accelerate their impact. Beyond the Foundation's funding support, Grunin Capacity offers an array of resources, events, and opportunities geared to support changemakers, foster collaboration, and amplify diverse leadership for greater impact.

In 2019, our family of organizations, which includes the Grunin Foundation and Grunin Holdings (a partnership specializing in the development and management of commercial real estate, investing in projects that positively impact the economic environment of the Central Jersey Shore), underwent a comprehensive branding overhaul with the support of our partners at **Idea2Form**. This initiative involved revisiting our mission, vision, and values, along with redesigning our logos, colors, and website. We set out to create a new brand that embodied our personality and unique approach to driving change at the Central Jersey Shore. The new logo served as the visual key to our new identity, rooted in our mission, vision, and values. It also united the family's philanthropic and investment efforts with one powerful image. Through this work, we remained focused on our three pillars of work at that time: grantmaking, capacity building, and ecosystem development. The rebrand was unveiled to the community in **January of 2020**.



In mid-2020, the vast existing racial inequities highlighted by the pandemic and the murder of George Floyd prompted many in the philanthropic space to reexamine their practices and commitment to equity, the Grunin Foundation included. Acknowledging this work was long overdue, this pivotal moment spurred us into deep, transformative work, engaging at both the individual and organizational levels. We actively gathered resources, participated in racial equity trainings, deeply investigated our own complicity in the flawed philanthropic system, and joined task forces, marking the beginning of a lifelong journey toward a more equitable future.

Simultaneously, we invested in building out an Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (EDIB) framework, with the support of Idea2Form, meant to serve as a lens for all foundation decisions moving forward. This comprehensive effort involved deep interaction with the community, alongside new funding commitments and initiatives aimed at fostering lasting positive change.

As a part of our commitment to becoming a more equitable funder, we also took several significant steps. **In January of 2022**, we added six board members, each bringing extensive knowledge, experience, and diverse perspectives to guide and provide strategic direction to the organization. Four of these new board members were community members, a shift from the previous all family board.

In November of 2022, we hired our inaugural Director of Thriving Communities, tasked with advancing our EDIB strategic framework and Capacity Building programming. **In early 2023**, we welcomed our seventh board member. To date, we have a total of nine board members (five family and four community members), and we plan to bring on two additional community board members by the end of 2024.

In late 2022, we realized not only that our funding and EDIB strategies were operating separately, but also that we needed to be more connected to community to truly fund equitably. We believe it is essential to our mission to find meaningful ways to integrate Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging in everything we do. We have pledged to co-learn and work with our partners, colleagues, and communities to help break down barriers, uplift marginalized voices, celebrate diversity, and champion a more just and equitable society.

To achieve this, we took a step back and engaged experienced consultants from the **Novalia Collective** to guide us through our strategic planning process. It's important to note that during this pause, the Foundation sustained funding to our existing grantees, grew our capacity-building initiatives, and continued to build relationships in the community. Overall, this journey aims to transform the organization, resulting in a more integrated and comprehensive approach that seamlessly ties all the work together.



Strategic Process

With the Board's approval, we officially began our strategic planning process in early 2023, guided by Odelia Younge and Vina Vo, co-founders of the **Novalia Collective**. To ensure our process was collaborative, we prioritized listening and learning directly from our local community. The Novalia Collective facilitated discussions with a diverse group of nearly 50 community stakeholders who have firsthand knowledge of community needs and assets, including former grantees, current grantees, and organizations with no prior relationship to the Grunin Foundation. From these inclusive discussions, the Novalia Collective generated a findings report that shaped our strategic direction and helped us develop components of our strategic plan. Over nine months, engaging in conversations with the community and undertaking deep internal work, we crafted a strategic plan for the next three years (2024-2026) with the promise of continued listening and learning from community to remain nimble, relevant, and impactful.



Mission, Vision & Values



Grunin Foundation **VISION**

We envision an equitable, just, and vibrant Central Jersey Shore.

Grunin Foundation **MISSION**

The Grunin Foundation provides holistic support through funding, capacity building, and coalition building to organizations who have a shared vision of an equitable, just, and vibrant Central Jersey Shore.

Grunin Foundation **CORE VALUES**

Creativity & Joy

- Staff are aligned, happy, and supported
- Fun and care are intentional and integral components of time together
- Work is inspired by strengths and assets of the community
- Staying open to new ideas and perspectives on how to do the work
- Exposure to new experiences and people
- Sharing of stories, learnings, and accomplishments of people, organizations, and community

Collaboration & Belonging

- Regularly asking community and partners for input, guidance, and feedback
- Listening actively and openly to others, especially those who are most impacted by challenges
- Using input from community to shift and change the work
- Creating shared goals and working collectively to solve problems
- Being inclusive and accessible in working with community and partners
- Communicating expectations for relationships and partnerships
- Eliminating barriers and creating pathways that allow more people the ability to be in community together

Vulnerability & Growth

- Being upfront about challenges and needs
- Leading with curiosity
- Approaching growth as an ongoing process
- Willingness to admit when we do not know something or make mistakes
- Focusing work on human beings and not just outcomes
- Continuing to learn and grow

Authenticity & Transparency

- Showing up to the work as a partner and not as an influencer
- Aligning words with actions
- Leading with humility in how we approach the work and talk about community
- Speaking constructive truth
- Being honest about the work

Justice

- Making advocacy a core part of the work
- Centering equitable outcomes
- Getting to know community and understanding their challenges and joys
- Approaching the work with the belief that our collective liberation is woven together



Strategic Priorities

Over the next three years, the Grunin Foundation will actively work on the following strategic priorities:

1 FUNDING: Fund and support organizations, partnerships, coalitions, and other structures whose work aligns with the Foundation's prioritized outcomes and who have a strong connection to the community.

- 1.1 Identify and build relationships with grassroots/community-centered nonprofit organizations and less traditional structures.
- 1.2 Connect nonprofits with other funders and organizations to foster collaboration and additional funding opportunities.
- 1.3 Mobilize regional and state funding to organizations at the Central Jersey Shore.
- 1.4 Provide clarity and transparency around the Foundation's grantmaking process.

2 CAPACITY BUILDING: Invest in the capacity building of organizations and individuals to enhance their impact, effectiveness, and sustainability.

- 2.1 Provide quality, accessible, and continuous professional development, regardless of title, level, or organization size and budget.
- 2.2 Support leaders holistically.
- 2.3 Reduce barriers for participation in capacity building activities.
- 2.4 Invest in and support strong board leadership for the sector.
- 2.5 Provide thought leadership for trust-based and participatory philanthropy.

3 COALITION BUILDING: Engage in coalition building and advocacy at the regional and state levels to impact systemic issues.

- 3.1 Convene organizations, groups, and community members to drive impact in the Central Jersey Shore ecosystem.
- 3.2 Encourage and support advocacy activities in the sector.
- 3.3 Actively participate in coalitions and/or affinity groups.



Funding Priorities & Processes



Funding Priorities

We recognize that because of historical inequities, marginalized communities, including groups who have been excluded based on race, age, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic or immigration status, face specific challenges in the region and are disproportionately impacted. To support equitable outcomes in Monmouth and Ocean Counties, we value partnerships with organizations whose work positively impacts these communities.

Addressing complex, systemic challenges requires holistic approaches to the work. To that end, we fund and support single organizations, partnerships, coalitions, and other structures whose work aligns with one or more of the following outcomes:

- **Increasing access to holistic wellbeing**
- **Promoting economic opportunities and pathways**
- **Increasing channels to self-determination and agency**
- **Investing in and developing BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) leadership**
- **Igniting youth changemakers**
- **Resourcing communities to center justice and belonging**

We have intentionally transitioned from traditional pillars of funding (e.g., arts, education, healthcare) to a more holistic focus on specific outcomes that collectively strive for an equitable, just, and vibrant Central Jersey Shore. We recognize the intricate interconnections involved in addressing the community's most pervasive issues and needs, prompting a shift in our previous strategy.

The Foundation grants to 501c3 nonprofit organizations or those that are fiscally sponsored by a 501c3. While we understand our funding priority outcome areas are intentionally broad in scope, there are some areas that the Foundation does not fund. These include:

- **Direct donations or grants to individuals**
- **Sponsorships for special events or fundraising events**
- **Political campaigns and partisan activity**
- **Medical or scientific research**
- **Historic preservation projects and monuments**
- **Environmental land preservation**
- **Mutual aid groups without a fiscal sponsor**
- **Projects that exclusively serve religious purposes and mission trips**
- **Fraternal groups, unions, bands, volunteer firefighters, community service clubs, or similar groups**
- **Athletic teams, athletic events, or leagues, i.e., little leagues, school teams**
- **Animal welfare causes**
- **Classroom-specific requests**
- **Interests outside of our geographic focus**

While we don't fund in these areas, we are always willing to have a conversation. Organizations might find value in our capacity or coalition building work, we can offer assistance with connections to other groups or funders, or explore alternative ways to provide support.

Funding Priorities & Processes



Geographic Focus

We continue to be a place-based funder with a direct focus on the Central Jersey Shore – specifically Ocean and Monmouth Counties. As a place-based funder we aim to create meaningful change by investing in the Central Jersey Shore, understanding its unique dynamics, and working collaboratively to address its most pressing challenges. This approach allows us to make deeper impact and emphasizes our sustained commitment for effective philanthropy at the Central Jersey Shore.

While the majority of our funding, capacity building, and coalition building efforts are focused on the Central Jersey Shore, there are some initiatives that we participate in at more regional and state-wide levels that have impact in our geographical focus area.

Flexible Funding

We understand the importance of flexible funding to empower nonprofits to be more adaptable, innovative, and sustainable. Our goal moving forward is to provide more general operating support versus programmatic funding – putting trust in organizations to utilize dollars where they feel it is most needed. This type of funding enables organizations to navigate the complexities of the nonprofit landscape, respond to community needs, and achieve greater impact.

Process

The Grunin Foundation remains a relational funder, providing financial support to grantees while also building and nurturing strong, collaborative relationships. This approach fosters open communication, mutual understanding, and trust between the foundation and its partners. It also means foregoing Letters of Inquiry (LOIs), application cycles, or a predetermined grant process to reduce the burden on nonprofits. Nevertheless, we recognize the importance of clarity in understanding how we arrive at decisions and the process for initiating and sustaining relationships. In an effort to improve how we operate, we aim to document and enhance transparency regarding our entire grantmaking process. This includes clarifying avenues for connection, detailing funding and geographic priorities, outlining areas less likely to receive funding, specifying assessment levels and alignment questions, and delineating the decision-making process.

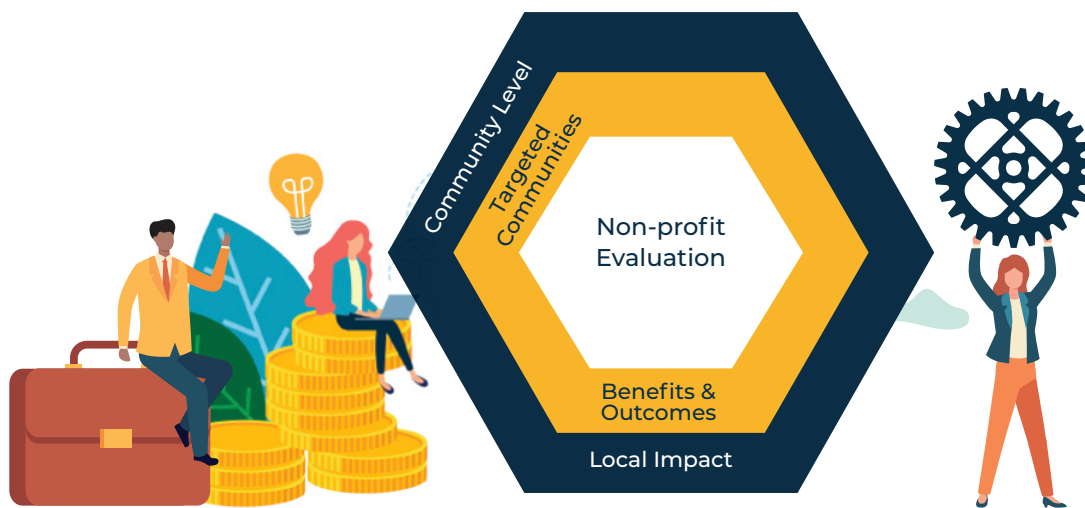


image inspired by the Rockefeller Foundation

Funding Assessment Levels

In our ongoing commitment to fostering deep and meaningful relationships within the community, we recognize the need for strategic allocation of our resources. While acknowledging our resource limitations and the fact that we can't fund everything, we are dedicated to ensuring alignment in our funding decisions. To operationalize this commitment, the Foundation is introducing a set of questions that will guide our funding conversations and considerations. These questions, shared below, will also be on our website and provided to potential partners ahead of meetings. *Questions updated October 2024.*

- 1. What outcome area(s) resonate with your work and mission? (See Outcome Focus Areas)**
- 2. Who does your organization serve and how do you engage with them? Additionally, how are you actively seeking and incorporating feedback to better understand and address needs, identify gaps, and enhance your programming?**
- 3. How have you engaged and/or partnered with others (where appropriate), including intended service recipients, organizations, and community members, to propel your initiatives forward?**
- 4. How does your organization center equity in your work both internally (i.e. governance) and externally? What goals and strategies does your organization have in place to ensure equitable access to resources and benefits?**
- 5. How does your organization define and measure success?**
- 6. Optional: How does the impact of your work extend to the broader community?***

**** Please note: We recognize that, in some cases, the focus of an organization may be specifically tailored to intended service recipients, and evaluating broader impact might not be applicable. This question is optional, and responses can also be qualitative in nature.***

These conversation questions are simply a guide, aiming to provide a better understanding of the nonprofit's mission, approach, and impact. They will support decision making, as well as help us build deeper relationships with organizations.



GRUNIN
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