After gun violence claimed the life of a Cedar Rapids teen in 2015, community members came together to form the Creating Safe, Equitable and Thriving Communities (SET) Task Force. For two years, the task force engaged community partners, including the City of Cedar Rapids, Linn County, Cedar Rapids Community School District, local nonprofit organizations and neighborhood groups. The goal of the task force was to address systemic causes of youth violence in Linn County to move toward safer, more equitable and thriving communities.

In a February 2017 report, the task force made recommendations that target improved economic opportunity, educational success, safe and affordable housing, supportive law enforcement practices and improved access to youth programming and other health and human services. In 2018 the task force asked the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation to help facilitate a competitive grantmaking process focused on working toward those recommendations.

Contributions from the City of Cedar Rapids, Linn County and the Cedar Rapids Community School District were used to establish the Creating Safe, Equitable and Thriving Communities Fund. In 2018, the fund was opened with a $100,000 contribution from the City, $100,000 from the County, and $25,000 from the School District. This fund is open for contributions from the community and hopes to grant at least $160,000 each year, for a minimum of three years, to nonprofits and other eligible applicants who are working to make our community safe, equitable and thriving.

In February 2019, Rachel Rockwell joined the Community Foundation team as the program officer for the fund. In May 2019, the fund awarded the first round of grants. The first grant cycle offered funding for summer programming that engaged with youth and young adults who were disproportionately exposed to violence in their homes, neighborhoods, and schools and who might not otherwise participate in summer programming. Priority was given to applications that involved youth in program design and integrated youth voice and choice throughout program delivery. The fund received 15 applications totaling $125,058, and awarded 8 grants totaling $40,000 for the following projects:

**SUMMER GRANTS, 2019**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANIZATION</th>
<th>PROJECT TITLE</th>
<th>FUNDING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American Heritage Foundation dba African American Museum of Iowa</td>
<td>Humanize My Hoodie</td>
<td>$6,600.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys and Girls Club of Cedar Rapids</td>
<td>Junior Staff Academy</td>
<td>$5,130.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Iowa African Diaspora</td>
<td>Youth Development Program</td>
<td>$4,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Iowa Arts Academy</td>
<td>It Takes a Village Mural Project</td>
<td>$2,643.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Boyd Community House</td>
<td>Challenge Camp</td>
<td>$6,547.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kids First Law Center</td>
<td>Youth Restorative Justice</td>
<td>$4,814.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The fund is currently accepting applications for another round of grant funds. $120,000 is available for 5-10 grants that improve community safety by strengthening economic, social and academic conditions for youth and neighborhoods. The application packet, including grant guidelines, is available [here](#), as well as details about informational/planning sessions. The deadline is October 10, 2019 at 4:30 p.m. Interested applicants may contact Rachel Rockwell to discuss an idea and receive technical assistance with the application process at [Rachel.Rockwell@gcrcf.org](mailto:Rachel.Rockwell@gcrcf.org) or 319.200.4007.

The Creating Safe, Equitable & Thriving Communities Fund is guided by a policy committee that establishes funding priorities and community strategies. Policy Committee membership is listed below. More information on the SET Fund can be found [here](#).

**Policy Committee Membership:**
Ashley Balius  
Noreen Bush  
Anne Carter  
Brad Hart  
Nancy Humbles  
Okpara Rice  
Lemi Tilahun  
Dale Todd  
Stacey Walker  
Mary Wilcynski  
Leslie Wright