



Weaving Social Trust One Community at a Time

Weaver Awards Community Host Application Info Session
July 28, 2026, 12pm ET



Introduce yourself in the Chat.

1. Your name
2. Your location
3. The organization(s) you are representing



Purpose and Agenda

The purpose of today's session is to prepare you for the Weaver Awards Community Host application opening on August 31st.

- 01 Weave: The Social Fabric Project
- 02 The Community Host Role
- 03 The Application Process
- 04 Q&A





Weave: The Social Fabric Project



What is **social trust**?

“Social trust is a belief in the honesty, integrity, and reliability of others - a *faith in people*”

Pew Research Center (2007)

Why does social trust **matter**?

Without trust, we can experience isolation that leads to physical and mental health challenges. Lack of trust also creates barriers to tackling pressing social and economic issues.

Social trust is what binds our social fabric and makes our communities and nation strong.



The *Challenge*

The United States is grappling with a profound erosion of social trust.

Less than half of US adults say they trust most or all their neighbors.

Pew Research Center (2025)

8%
decrease since
2015

US adults are more likely to say their fellow Americans are morally bad than good.

Pew Research Center (2026)

53%
say
morally bad



“The reality is that democracy and the economy rest upon a foundation, which is society. **A society is a system of relationships.** If there is no trust at the foundations of society, if there is no goodness, care, or faithfulness, relationships crumble, and the market and the state crash to pieces.”

David Brooks

The Relationalist Manifesto



The *Solution*

Social trust is grown by cultivating relationships.
Creating deep relationships with others where they live, work or learn builds social trust.

In other words, *the solution is weaving.*



What is *weaving*?

Weaving is the practice of building meaningful relationships that set the conditions for social trust to grow in communities.



Weaving invites people to:

**Discover what they
have in common**

**Learn how their
differences can
make the community
stronger**

**Work side by side
towards the common
good**



Weaving can be formal or informal,
and all weaving shares four qualities:

Welcoming

It invites people to join as they are

Continuous

It builds relationships that deepen over time through ongoing engagement



Local

It brings together people who share the same neighborhood, town, or region

Mutual

Every participant both gives and receives benefits



While many kinds of community building are positive....

Starting a food garden where neighbors plant and harvest their individual plots.

*...Weaving goes deeper by centering **relationships** and building social trust.*

Starting a community garden as a means to strengthen bonds between neighbors. Folks build relationships while farming a shared plot, cooking together, and providing produce to neighbors without access to fresh foods.



Why *weaving*?

What makes us think weaving is the solution?



Relationships establish social capital

Increasing the number and quality of relationships people have within their local communities not only reduces social isolation and improves mental and physical health, but also increases *social capital*: the networks of relationships that people can draw on when they need help, information, or opportunities (Putnam, 1993; Putnam, 2000). These networks not only make it easier for communities to work together to solve shared problems, but also are key to developing trust.

Moreover, the four qualities of weaving are grounded in key insights from social psychology about how meaningful relationships are formed.



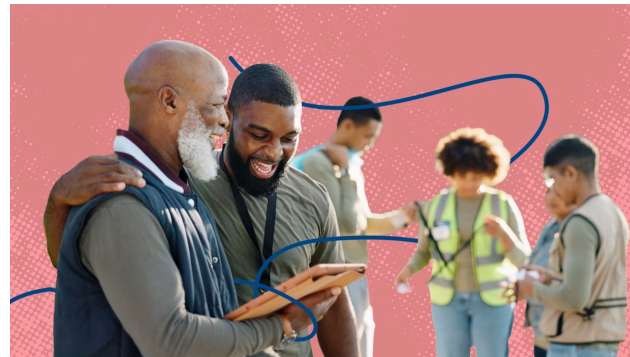
Who are *weavers*?

Weavers spread trust in their communities by showing up for others. Weavers are people who:

- Recognize the dignity in every person
- Strengthen relationships across differences
- Focus on shared needs and local strengths
- Make and keep commitments to others
- Invest time in meaningful connection

Weavers often know their neighborhoods deeply and are known and trusted in return. They reach out to neighbors who may feel isolated or unseen and understand that lasting change often begins close to home.

*weavers show up consistently &
create spaces where others feel they belong*



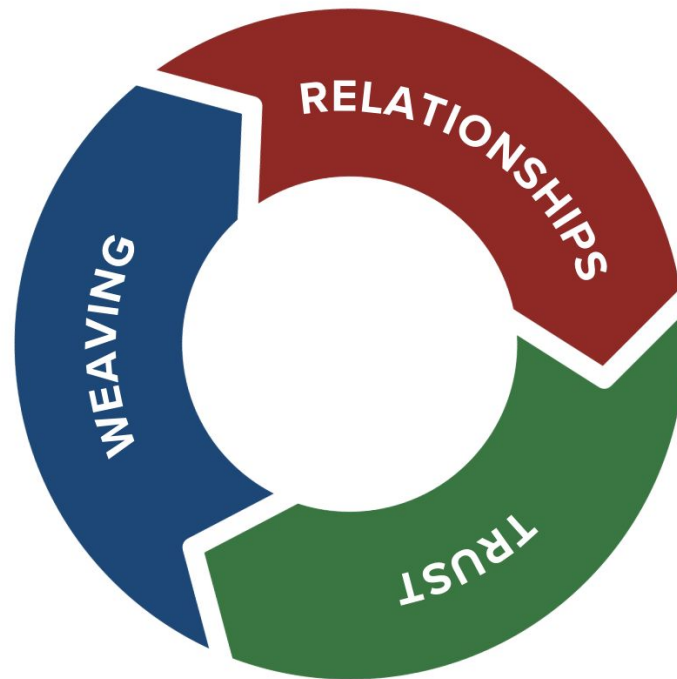


Weavers spark a *virtuous cycle of change*

Weaving - When Weave inspires weavers, they grow their weaving efforts, which in turn foster stronger relationships among community members.

Relationships - As these relationships deepen, people experience a greater sense of belonging in their communities and social trust grows.

Trust - With higher levels of trust and belonging, community members feel more able and willing to connect, leading to more weaving.





Weave's key objective is to grow a people-powered movement that builds social trust nationwide by *inspiring* weavers in local communities.



What are *norms*?

Norms are the unwritten rules that guide how people are expected to behave

How does social trust shift *norms*?

As trust grows within a community, community norms will change. People's sense of what *should* be normal is shaped by what *is* normal.

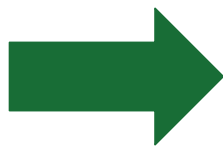
So when most community members trust one another, trust becomes the expectation.



Norm change snowballs and leads to societal *narrative change*

When we inspire more weaving by more weavers in many communities, we will:

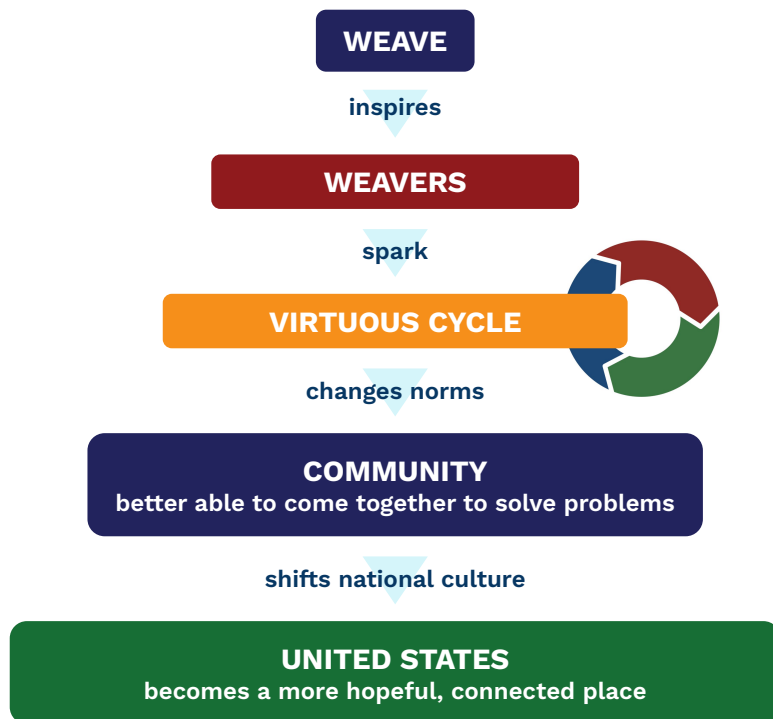
**Spur an American society
where belonging
and trust are the norm**



**Create a new national
narrative that promotes
hope and connection**



Weave's Theory of Change



- #1 If Weave inspires weavers in local communities, then weavers will grow their weaving efforts.
- #2 If weavers grow their weaving efforts, then relationships will strengthen among neighbors.
- #3 If neighborhood relationships strengthen, then social trust will gradually build in weavers' communities.
- #4 If social trust grows in communities, then more community members will feel able to come together through weaving, thus stepping into the role of weaver.
- #5 If this virtuous cycle continues, then community norms will shift so that trust and connection become the expectation.
- #6 If these norms take root in communities nationwide, then U.S. culture will gradually change.



The Weaver Awards Community Host Program



The Weaver Awards

The Weaver Awards inspire weavers by celebrating neighborhood leaders who are strengthening relationships and building connection with \$2,500 - \$5,000 awards.



2024 Baltimore Weaver Awardees



2025 Northwest Arkansas Weaver Awardees



We launched the Weaver Awards Community Host program to invest in local organizations inspiring weaving across the country.

Weaver Awards Expand Nationally Through 25 New Community Host Organizations

Local partners across the U.S. will lead a national effort to strengthen trust, belonging, and community connection.

Washington, DC, January 14, 2026- We are thrilled to introduce the 25 Community Hosts that are partnering with Weave to bring the Weaver Awards to their communities in 2026.

These trusted, local organizations will lead a four-year effort to find, support, and celebrate the everyday neighbors who are building trust, nurturing belonging, and weaving the social fabric in their communities.



Weave's *Theory of Change 2.0*





Community Hosts receive a suite of supports that include:



Proven Tools and
Templates



A National Peer
Network



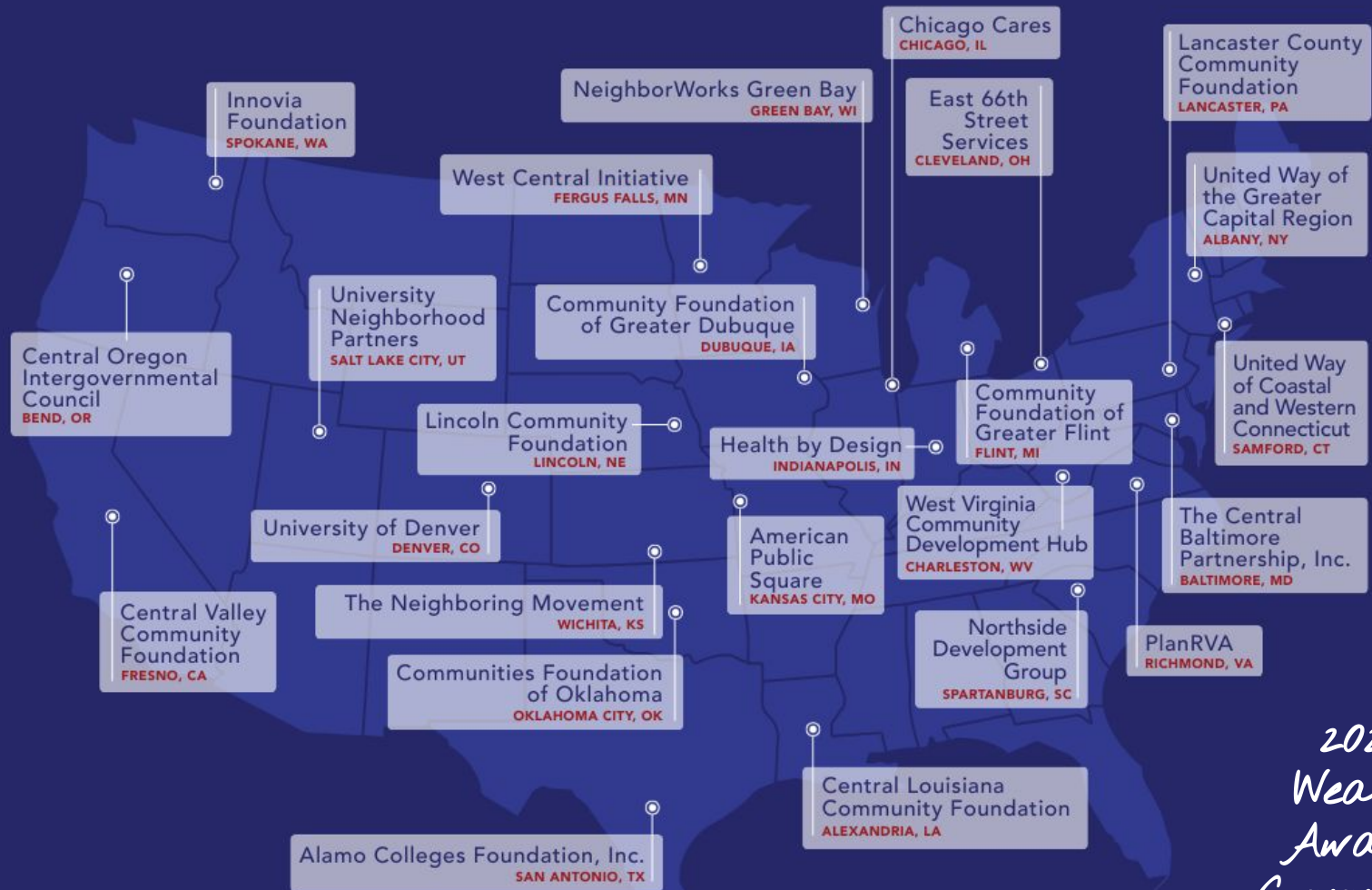
Measurement and
Evaluation Tools



Technical Support
and Learning Opps



Startup Funding
(years 1 and 2)



2025
Weaver
Awards
Community
Hosts



Community Hosts create the conditions for social trust to grow in their communities

They invest in the weavers who foster positive relationships and address immediate community needs, while also leading a shift in norms towards connection and trust that will benefit generations to come.



The Community Host Role



*Community Hosts **decide** how to bring the Weaver Awards to their communities and **inspire** Weavers by:*

Activating **Weavers and Weaving**

Identify weavers, offer weavers funding, & connect weavers to resources so that they can enhance, deepen, & sustain their weaving practices & feel energized to do more.

Showing **the Power and Impact Of Weaving**

Demonstrate the impact of weaving on communities across the country so that more people become aware of weaving as the solution to restoring social fabric.

Amplifying **Stories Of Weavers and Weaving**

Uplift weavers as trusted social leaders by providing them with speaking opportunities and sharing their stories.

Building **the National Movement for Weaving**

Connect weavers to each other to foster progress in local communities towards creating nationwide systemic change.

Inspiring Weavers

<i>What Community Hosts Do</i>	<i>How Community Hosts Do It</i>
Activate weavers and weaving	By leading the local Weaver Awards process to identify, celebrate, resource, and network local weavers
Amplify stories of weaving and weavers	By showcasing strong examples of weaving and its impact
Show the power and impact of weaving	By engaging with Weave's cutting-edge efforts to measure weaving across communities
Build the national movement for weaving	By being an active and engaged part of the national Weave community, especially other Community Hosts



*Community Hosts **benefit** from this role:*

- The opportunity to implement a **ready-to-use, proven model** that bolsters your existing work and organizational goals *and* uplifts your community
- An **enhanced reputation** as a trusted leader and changemaker, bridging social trust and connection in your community
- **Prestige on a national stage**, as a part of a movement that is advancing an innovative approach to philanthropy and community building



The Application Process



Successful Community Hosts:

See full criteria for Community Host selection in the Application Companion

- Are committed to rebuilding social trust and believe that weaving is an essential way of doing so
- Have a strong track record of running successful and stable programs with and in their communities
- Are eager and able to implement the Weaver Awards in their community for four years, in alignment with Weave's expectations and guidance
- Believe that collaboration, knowledge exchange, and coordination are essential to driving systemic change on local and national scales, and recognize the power of participating in a growing movement to rebuild social trust



Applicants should confirm they meet the basic requirements

- Distribute microawards to individuals and small nonprofits for 4 years
- >\$1,000,000 organizational budget
- Compliance with the terms of the sub-grant agreement with Weave:
 - Submit data and financial reports to Weave 2x/year
 - Participate in scheduled bi-annual check-in calls with Weave
 - Participate in an in-person annual Harvesting Session



Steps to apply

- 01 Learn more about the Community Host role and decide if you should apply
- 02 Craft and submit your application
- 03 Respond to follow-up questions
- 04 Look out for a notification message from Weave



Key Dates for the 2026 Community Host Application Round

Application opens	August 31, 2026
Virtual Info Sessions	July 28, 2026, 12-12:30 pm ET September 10, 2026, 12-12:30 pm ET
Virtual Office Hours	September 16, 2026, 12-1pm ET
Application closes	October 4, 2026, 11:59 pm ET
Applicants notified	Early December 2026
Year 1 (2026) grant distributions (\$125,000)	January 2027
Virtual onboarding sessions	January 20, 2027, 1-2pm ET February 3, 2027, 1-2pm ET
In-person onboarding in Washington, D.C.	February 24-25, 2027, with Welcome Reception the evening of February 23
Year 2 (2027) grant distributions (\$100,000)	January 2028



Q&A



Question & Answer

- Is the Pew data presented during the information session stratified by age, race/ethnicity etc.? What does the Pew data say about the structural drivers of the breakdown of social trust?
 - To learn more about the methodology and disaggregation of the Pew Research data referenced during the information session, check out these sources:
 - [How connected do Americans feel to their neighbors?](#)
 - [Americans' Trust in One Another](#)
 - [In 25-Country Survey, Americans Especially Likely To View Fellow Citizens as Morally Bad.](#)



Question & Answer

- Are Weavers always unpaid local leaders and residents? Or is an organization a weaver?
 - Anyone can be a weaver, however those eligible to apply for the Weaver Awards include individuals, small informal groups and collaborations, such as unincorporated associations or nonprofit organizations, and formally incorporated organizations with budgets less than \$250,000. Formal organizations that apply do not have to be a 501(c)3, but must verify that their budget is below \$250,000 but submitting their most recent 990 or financial statements (audited or unaudited) alongside their application.



Question & Answer

- For prospective Community Hosts that have a broad or national geographic reach (for example, an organization that supports projects in different states), could they submit multiple applications for different project locations, or choose one to focus on?
 - Prospective Community Hosts should submit one application for one geographic area.



Question & Answer

- Is there a preference for Community Hosts to provide awards to a diversity of weavers working in different project categories?
 - Yes, our recommendation is to provide awards to a diversity of weavers working in different project categories (e.g., education, health, arts and culture, senior services). Based on our experience implementing the Weaver Awards, it is ideal for the awardee cohort to be representative of the broader community. It is also important for community members to know (especially in the first year of implementation) that the Weaver Awards are not designed for one type of weaver or project category but for people of all backgrounds and disciplines.



Question & Answer

- For the 20 Weaver Awards a year that Community Host organizations must give out, does the money come out of the two year start up funding or is the start up funding a general operating grant?
 - Weave awards \$225,000 as startup funds to each Community Host over the first two years of the program (\$125,000 in Year 1 and \$100,000 in Year 2).
 - Using these start-up funds, Community Hosts must distribute between \$50,000 - \$100,000 in the form of at least 20 Weaver Awards each year during the first two years of the program. These awards must be valued at \$2,500 - \$5,000 each.



Question & Answer

- Continued
 - Any remaining funds not distributed as Weaver Awards (between \$25,000 and \$75,000 in Year 1 and a maximum of \$25,000 in Year 2) may be used towards other costs associated with implementing the Weaver Awards. This includes, but is not limited to, communications and marketing, events and community outreach, staff time, and stipends/honoraria.
 - All \$225,000 in start-up funding must be spent down by the end of Year 2. No grant funds can carry over to Years 3 or 4. This does not apply to any interest accrued on grant funds if Community Hosts elect to hold their funds in an interest-bearing account.
 - Weave's expectation is that by the end of Year 2, Community Hosts will have the experience, data, and visibility needed to sustain the program in Years 3 and 4 either through their own funds or through external funding support.



Question & Answer

- Should the Weaver Awards go to implement a Weaving project? And is the Community Host organization responsible for overseeing that project in the community?
 - Yes, Weaver Awards are intended to support the implementation of a weaving project or set of activities. Awardees cannot, for example, donate their award to another local organization.
 - Community Hosts are not responsible for direct oversight of Awardees' activities, but are expected to maintain a connection with the Awardee to provide guidance, engage them in cohort activities where possible, collect high-level data on their activities, and provide capacity building support as possible and needed.



Question & Answer

- How many Community Hosts do you anticipate selecting in the second cohort?
 - Weave will select 25 Community Hosts for this cohort.
- Weave has a national reach. Are there any priority geographic areas?
 - Weave is not targeting any specific geographic areas. However, we are seeking geographic diversity amongst current and future Community Hosts to ensure the Weave model is implemented across different contexts, which will generate rich learnings and insights to further strengthen this approach.



Question & Answer

- If a Community Host already exists in our city or area, will Weave consider an application from a different entity serving a different community in the same city or area? Is there room for multiple Community Hosts in the same city or area?
 - Prospective Community Hosts in the same city or area as a current Community Hosts are still eligible to apply as long as they do not cover the same geographic area as the current Community Host (e.g., covering different quadrants of the city or different regions in a state). Organizations working in a city or state where a current Community Host is located should clearly explain how the geographic area they are targeting differs from the current Host. We encourage applicants to highlight what makes their organization stand out, whether that be your geography, organizational type, or strategic focus.



Question & Answer

- Is there an age requirement to receive a Weaver Award?
 - Yes, Weaver Awards can only be distributed to community members who are 18 years or older.



Your Action Items

- Sign up for the [Weave newsletter](#) for updates on the application process (if you haven't already) and join [Weaving Us](#)
- Follow Weave: Instagram: [@weavesocialfabric](#); LinkedIn: [Weave: The Social Fabric Project at the Aspen Institute](#); and Facebook: [Weave: The Social Fabric Project](#)
- Stay tuned for messages from Weave announcing the application is open (late August)
- Share these materials with others at your org so that you're ready to apply when the application opens



Thank You!

Questions?

Contact us at:
weaverawards@aspeninstitute.org