

Lark Awards Nonprofit Well-being Toolkit

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The Durfee Foundation

Mission: The Durfee Foundation invests in people and possibilities in Los Angeles County, where the foundation's history lies and where funding needs are great.

We build trust-based relationships with individuals and organizations that share our ideals of creativity, risk-taking, equity, integrity, fiscal care, and continuous learning.

To learn more, please visit our website: <https://durfee.org/who-we-are/our-mission/>

Introduction

Nonprofit employees are the heart and soul of the missions they serve. They dedicate themselves to creating positive change, but the passion, dedication, and long hours required can sometimes lead to burnout. By investing in staff, we believe organizations will be better equipped to make a lasting impact on the causes they care about and their organization's mission.

This toolkit provides guidance for small, community-centered nonprofits to improve staff well-being, both for organizations eligible for the Lark Awards and those that may not be eligible.

The Lark Awards

The Durfee Foundation's Lark Awards provide community-centered organizations with \$30,000 for the collective care of their staff. There isn't a prescription for how the funds should be spent. Individual organizations know best what their teams need. They can use their discretion to allocate the funds for individual or staff-wide activities that will promote joy and balance. A portion of the funds might be spent on a collective activity like a staff retreat or camping expedition. The foundation also encourages the use of the funds for individual renewal activities such as joining a gym, hiring a trainer or a nutritionist, yoga, dance classes, purchasing art supplies, culinary gear, books, concert tickets, staycation, gardening supplies, etc.

The program also offers access to a well-being coach for guidance and facilitation, and convenings for wellbeing check-ins.

What is Well-being?

The Durfee Foundation cannot define what constitutes well-being because we believe it is contextual, but we hope that this initial introduction can be helpful as you begin to define what well-being means for you. One framework can be breaking up well-being into the following categories:

- **Physical Well-being** (e.g., Gym memberships, yoga classes, well-being workshops)
- **Emotional Well-being** (e.g., Partner with mental health professionals or provide access to therapy)
- **Social Well-being** (e.g., Team retreats, social outings, or volunteer opportunities)
- **Intellectual Well-being** (e.g., Professional development, in-person/online courses)
- **Spiritual Well-being** (e.g., Offer mindfulness sessions, meditation spaces, or spiritual retreats)
- **Environmental Well-being** (e.g., Improve your home/workspace, green your space)

Each of these areas of well-being can be a different-sized piece that creates a composes your whole well-being approach. And within these areas, the practices you collectively decide on also require different amounts of effort.

Why Prioritize Well-being

- **Reduced Stress and Burnout:** Feeling overwhelmed can lead to decreased productivity and higher staff turnover. Prioritizing well-being combats stress and fosters a more resilient workforce.
- **Improved Work-Life Balance:** Healthy boundaries between work and personal life create a more fulfilling experience in both.
- **Enhanced Creativity and Problem-Solving:** A well-rested and balanced mind is better equipped to tackle challenges and innovate.
- **Stronger Team Dynamics:** When employees feel supported and valued, it fosters a more positive and collaborative work environment.

Preparing Your Organization

We recommend beginning this journey with an initial assessment of the areas of staff well-being that the team might want to explore or address. The information can be collected through surveys or meetings to gather input on well-being priorities. We have included a sample survey in the Appendix.

From there, you can begin planning by defining clear goals for how the grant might be used to address staff needs. This preparation could help you complete your Lark Awards application (if you haven't already done so), and serve as reflections that you can come back to measure your progress periodically.

Deciding How to Use the Funds

We understand that there are many factors that you will consider when deciding how to allocate funds towards well-being, including staff size, tenure, or type of work. The Lark funds are intended to bring balance and joy to the organization as a team as well as individual respite. We discourage considering these funds only for professional development opportunities, as many organizations already have a professional development line item in their budget. Instead, this is a rare opportunity for you to do what you normally would not do for yourself, so we encourage you to think outside the box and ask yourself and your team what are all the possible activities that could bring you joy.

Examples of Well-being Practices

Lower-effort



Examples of practices that require less time and expense, or are one-time

- Collective
 - Having snacks in the office
 - Having lunch together as a staff
 - Having off-site meals
 - Having half-days on Fridays in the summer/slower periods
 - Access to meditation applications
- Individual (via stipends)
 - Purchasing technology, art supplies, books, gardening supplies, etc.
 - Booking exercise/dance classes
 - Visiting out-of-state family members

Higher-effort



Thai Community Development Center staff in Hawaii.

Examples of practices that require more time, longer-term commitment

- Collective
 - Weekly team activities during the summer
 - Creating “wellness” areas/corners in the office
 - Planning a well-being retreat
- Individual (via stipends)
 - Hiring a trainer or a nutritionist
 - Hiring a therapist
 - Disney trip with family
 - Booking a staycation or travel

For more ideas on well-being practices, you can visit the following site:

<https://www.recipesforwellbeing.org/recipes/>

Implementing the Well-being Plan & Building a Sustainable Well-being Culture

Implementing a well-being plan and building out well-being habits takes time, and you can develop both short and long-term goals as you do so. Short-term goals are quick wins that can be achieved within the first 3 months. Long-term goals are sustainable practices and programs to be implemented over 1-2 years.

To monitor the progress of your plan we encourage having regular check-ins with staff to gauge staff satisfaction and well-being progress. It is also important to be flexible and willing to adapt the plan based on staff feedback and changing needs.

By leveraging the Lark Awards and implementing a well-structured well-being plan, your nonprofit can create a resilient, supportive, and sustainable work environment that empowers your staff and enhances your organization's impact.

Appendix

A. Sample Organizational Culture and Needs Assessment

This assessment helps organizations evaluate their current culture and identify areas for enhancing collective care and staff well-being.

Organizational Culture

Team Cohesion: How would you describe the current level of teamwork and collaboration within our organization?

- a) Highly collaborative
- b) Somewhat collaborative
- c) Limited collaboration
- d) Rarely collaborative

Communication: How effective is communication among staff and leadership?

- a) Very effective
- b) Effective
- c) Somewhat effective
- d) Ineffective

Work-Life Balance: How well does our organization support work-life balance?

- a) Strongly supports
- b) Somewhat supports
- c) Needs improvement
- d) Does not support

**Well-being
Needs**

Emotional and Mental Health: Are there adequate resources for staff mental health and stress management?

- a) Yes, fully adequate
- b) Somewhat adequate
- c) Limited resources
- d) No resources available

Physical Health: How often do staff participate in activities that promote physical health (e.g., exercise, healthy eating)?

- a) Regularly
- b) Occasionally
- c) Rarely
- d) Never

Social Connections: How often do staff have opportunities to build social connections within the organization?

- a) Regularly
- b) Occasionally
- c) Rarely
- d) Never

**Desired
Outcomes**

Key Areas for Improvement: Which areas would you like to prioritize with Lark Award funds? (check all that apply)

- ☐ Mental and emotional health resources
- ☐ Physical health activities
- ☐ Social and team-building opportunities
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Scoring and Interpretation:

- **Mostly a's and b's:** Your organization has a strong culture and well-being framework, but there may be specific areas where collective care/Lark funds could enhance your initiatives.
- **Mostly c's and d's:** There are significant opportunities for improvement in your organizational culture and staff well-being, which could be well-supported by Lark Award funds/embarking on a collective care journey.

Next Steps: Use the insights from this assessment to develop a tailored collective care plan that addresses your organization's unique needs and fosters a supportive, sustainable work environment. If applicable, also use the insights to guide your application for the Lark Awards, ensuring that you target the most impactful areas for your organization's growth and well-being.

B. Additional Resources & Tips for Each Area of Well-being

- **Physical Well-being:**

- **Resources:**

- YMCA 360 Health Resources: <https://ymca360.org/>
 - The National Institute on Aging: <https://www.nia.nih.gov/>
 - The National Black Farmers Association: <https://www.blackfarmers.org/> (focuses on health and well-being initiatives in Black communities)
 - The National Council on Indian Health: <https://ncuih.org/> (healthcare resources for Indigenous communities)

- **Tips:** Eat nutritious meals, get regular exercise, prioritize quality sleep.

- **Emotional Well-being:**

- **Resources:**

- The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): <https://www.samhsa.gov/resource/dbhis/nami-national-alliance-mental-illness>
 - Headspace: <https://www.headspace.com/> (meditation app)
 - The BEAM: Black Emotional and Mental Well-being Collective: <https://beam.community/>
 - The National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association (NAAPIMHA): <https://www.naapimha.org/>

- **Tips:** Practice mindfulness techniques, connect with loved ones, engage in activities you enjoy.

- **Social Well-being:**

- **Resources:**

- Meetup: <https://www.meetup.com/> (find social groups)
 - The Gottman Institute: <https://www.gottman.com/> (healthy relationship resources)
 - The National Urban League: <https://nul.org/> (social justice organization with a focus on empowering Black communities)
 - Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAJC): <https://www.advancingjustice-aaajc.org/> (advocacy group for Asian American communities)

- **Tips:** Develop strong relationships, volunteer in your community, participate in social activities.

- **Intellectual Well-being:**

- **Resources:**

- Khan Academy: <https://www.khanacademy.org/> (free online courses)
 - TED Talks: <https://www.ted.com/talks>
 - The National Museum of African American History and Culture: <https://nmaahc.si.edu/>
 - The Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center: <https://apa.si.edu/about/>

- **Tips:** Continuously learn and challenge yourself, engage in activities that stimulate your mind.
- **Spiritual Well-being:**
 - **Resources:**
 - Yoga Journal: <https://www.yogajournal.com/>
 - The National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health: <https://www.nccih.nih.gov/>
 - The National Black Theology Student Union: <https://nbsu.org/>
 - The National Asian American Religious Coalition (NAARC): <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/331095784>
 - **Tips:** Explore your values and purpose, develop a sense of peace and connection to something larger than yourself.
- **Environmental Well-being:**
 - **Resources:**
 - The Sierra Club: <https://www.sierraclub.org/>
 - The Environmental Protection Agency: <https://www.epa.gov/>
 - The National Black Environmental Justice Network: <https://www.nbejn.com/>
 - The Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN): <https://apen4ej.org/> (advocacy groups for environmental justice in BIPOC communities)
 - **Tips:** Spend time in nature, reduce your carbon footprint, create a healthy and organized

Building a Supportive Workplace Culture

- **Open Communication:** Talk to your supervisor about your well-being needs.
- **Flexible Work Arrangements:** Explore options like remote work or compressed workweeks to create better balance.
- **Paid Time Off:** Don't be afraid to take vacations and sick leave to recharge.
- **Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs):** Many nonprofits offer confidential counseling and support services.

Remember: You are not alone. Prioritizing your well-being is not a sign of weakness; it's a crucial step to becoming the best version of yourself and maximizing your impact on the world.

Additional Resources:

- Nonprofit Quarterly: <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/>
- The Chronicle of Philanthropy: <https://www.philanthropy.com/>
- Guidestar: <https://guidestar.org/default.htm>
- The Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP): <https://afpglobal.org/> (resources for diversity, equity, and inclusion in fundraising)