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Cleveland Foundation awards \$12.9 million in grants Friday, part of about \$80 million it awarded this year

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By **Amanda Garrett, The Plain Dealer**

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CLEVELAND, Ohio -- The **Cleveland Foundation** on Friday awarded \$12.9 million in grants to nonprofit groups, including \$150,000 to support the transition of Cuyahoga County's government.

The year-end awards show the foundation's annual giving -- about \$80 million in 2010 -- is back in line with what it was before the economic downturn, said Robert Eckardt, the foundation's senior vice president for programs and evaluation.

Last year, as the foundation's holdings dipped, it provided about \$2 million less in grants than it had the year before.

At their peak, the Cleveland Foundation's assets totaled about \$2 billion. That fell to about \$1.6 billion at the depth of the recent financial crisis, Eckardt said, but had rebounded to about \$1.7 billion by Sept. 30.

The Cleveland Foundation, like many college endowments and other substantial grant-making organizations, considers its finances over several years rather than snapshots in time. That prevents sudden drop-offs and sudden rises in grant making, Eckardt said.

Much of the grant money awarded Friday funds economic transformation, public-education reform and neighborhood redevelopment.

Yet \$150,000 was set aside as a special grant to help the county.

"The change to a new form of county government is dramatic," Eckardt said in a prepared statement. "We believe that getting the right people into the right positions is critical for the success of this structure."

Matt Carroll, who is directing the transition, said the grant was awarded to the Economic Growth Foundation -- part of the Greater Cleveland Partnership -- and will be spent in three ways:

- About \$110,000 will pay for a national search to fill three jobs -- fiscal officer, chief information officer and director of development.



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The Cleveland Foundation is awarding a \$250,000 grant to the Gordon Square Arts District to begin the second phase of renovations to Cleveland Public Theatre.

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- About \$20,000 will pay for the ongoing integrity audit that incoming County Executive Ed FitzGerald launched shortly after his election. FitzGerald hired a former FBI agent who is also a certified public accountant for the job. He will submit his report examining possible misconduct and waste by year's end.

- About \$20,000 will pay transition staffing costs.

Carroll said he has had informal talks with other grant-making bodies about funding that would pay for headhunters to help fill other key positions in the new government.

"We are wide open for the best possible people to come in," Carroll said, adding that interim staff members will fill key positions until permanent workers are hired.

Some of the other grants awarded by the Cleveland Foundation included:

- Three grants worth \$970,000 to the lead partners of MyCom, a countywide youth development program. More than half the money -- \$550,000 -- will be spent on activities for children when school is not in session.

- A \$400,000 grant to Shorebank Enterprise Group to support Green City Growers, a sprawling greenhouse at East 55th Street and Kinsman Road that will grow lettuce and herbs without using soil. The greens will be sold to local hospitals and food distributors.

- A \$250,000 grant to the Gordon Square Arts District to begin the second phase of renovations to Cleveland Public Theatre.

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