THE OREGON COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Community Grant Guidelines

Updated November 2017

Program Goals

The Community Grants Program is a broadly accessible, responsive statewide grants program. Its long-term goals are to strengthen the social fabric of our communities and improve the lives of all Oregonians. This program responds to evolving, community-identified needs and builds civic leadership and engagement.

Guiding Principles

- We believe that creative and sustainable solutions come from people who work in partnership to address common needs and aspirations.
- We give high priority to investments that create positive, substantive change and attempt to resolve problems at their source.
- We recognize and respect Oregon's diverse regions and populations, and we seek to advance equity, diversity and inclusion through our programs.

Program Details

The Community Grants Program awards about 350 grants annually, with the average award $20,000 and the award range usually $5,000 to $50,000. Total awards through this program are about $6.5 million per year, with 15-20 percent of the resources coming from donor advised funds[1] and the balance from OCF's discretionary funds.

Two Community Grant cycles occur annually, with an application deadline of January 15 for a Board decision in early May, and an application deadline of July 15 for a Board decision in early November. About 400-500+ requests are submitted each cycle.

Please visit OCF's website at oregoncf.org/community-grants for application log-in directions and additional guidance.

Early Bird Incentive! Organizations who submit their application by midnight on **January 1, 2018** will be entered automatically into a drawing to receive a $2,500 grant for general operating support.

Nondiscrimination Policy

OCF does not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, religion, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, disabilities, age, status as a veteran, national origin or any other protected class. Applicants for Community Grants must hold similar standards in the provision of services.

[1] Donor advised funds are created by donors who advise OCF's board on how to use the funds' income. Nonprofits cannot apply directly to advised funds; however, OCF shares Community Grant proposals with advised fund donors. Discretionary funds are created by donors who leave allocation at the board's discretion.

Four Funding Priorities & Objectives for Each

Health & Wellbeing of Vulnerable Populations **(30%-40% of grants)**	1. Improve community-based health and wellness, including oral and mental/behavioral health 2. Address basic human needs, such as food, housing and related services 3. Improve the quality of life, safety and self-sufficiency of at-risk populations
Educational Opportunities & Achievement **(30%-40%)**	4. Promote social, emotional and cognitive development of young children, including programs that support and educate parents and efforts that engage volunteers 5. Expand academic support, mentoring and recreational programs for children and youth, particularly to close the achievement gap 6. Broaden workplace, career and postsecondary experiences and opportunities for youth 7. Improve adult literacy, skill development, education and workforce training
Arts & Cultural Organizations **(15%-25%)**	8. Strengthen and stabilize arts and cultural nonprofits, and support collaborative efforts 9. Cultivate and support appreciation of diverse cultures and art forms 10. Deepen community-based arts education for children and adults 11. Encourage audience engagement, particularly to reach underserved populations
Community Livability, Environment & Citizen Engagement **(10%-20%)**	12. Promote leadership development, volunteerism, immigrant integration, and civic participation 13. Support stewardship and appreciation of Oregon's outdoor spaces and scenic beauty 14. Address social, economic and environmental challenges or opportunities by bringing together disparate stakeholders 15. Preserve places essential to communities' civic and historic identities

Project Types

Community Grants help nonprofits better serve their local communities, with awards generally for:

- Program development or expansion
- Modest capital projects
- Building the capacity of a nonprofit to strengthen or stabilize its operations

In addition, OCF occasionally awards one-year-only "bridge" support for core operations. These are rare and it is important that: (1) applicant's mission is a close fit with OCF funding priorities, (2) the need is temporary, and (3) applicant has a clear, viable plan for replacing OCF support with more sustainable funding after the grant year.

Restrictions & Application Frequency

The Community Grants Program is not a source of ongoing annual funding for an organization. Also, OCF does not support the same project twice. If a project is funded, the grantee may not submit the same project again (unless the project was offered a multi-year opportunity).

Large awards and multi-year awards are offered, but not frequently. And preference is given to nonprofit applicants who have NOT received multiple Community Grants in recent years.

If you apply and DO NOT receive a grant, you may not apply for another grant until 12 months after your previous application was submitted. Essentially this means one application per 12-month period if you were unsuccessful in seeking a grant.

If you apply and DO receive a grant, you may not apply for another grant until 18 months after your previous application was submitted. This means you must finish your 12-month grant period and present your post-grant evaluation before you may submit a new application – the equivalent of an 18-month period. (The only exception is a multi-year award, which requires a renewal application each year.)

Activities Typically Not Eligible for Community Grant Funding

- Events or performances (either one-time or annual) unless they will result in significant growth in ongoing organizational capacity, financial stability or audience diversity
- Annual fund appeals and contributions to endowments
- Projects in individual schools
- Grants to subsidize participation (scholarships) or re-granting programs
- Purchases or activities that occur prior to grant decisions
- Deficit funding
- Replacement of government funding
- Lobbying to influence legislation
- Scientific research
- Religious activities

Developing a Strong Community Grant Proposal

Competitiveness

Regardless of whether grant requests are for programs, capacity building, capital projects or bridge funding, they should be clearly written and present a strong case for support. Below are the elements that make grant requests competitive.

Organizational Qualities

1. Mission is a close fit with OCF funding objectives
2. Programs address an important community need
3. Community support is evident both through local contributions and volunteer engagement
4. Organization has a track record of effective work

Project Qualities

5. Addresses gaps in opportunities related to education, health, income or other important areas – due to geography, income, race/ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, etc.
6. Staffing and leadership reflect the population to be served – and/or the population to be served was involved in development of services to address their needs
7. Project aligns with organization's overarching mission, expertise and long-term goals
8. Good planning is evident in the project timetable, goals, staffing and sustainability
9. A Community Grant award (average of $20,000) has the potential for impact
10. Significant funding is already in hand
11. Plans for evaluating impact are clear, appropriate and achievable
12. Any proposed collaboration with other organizations has been formalized

Large or Multi-Year Requests

In the case of larger requests or multi-year requests (maximum of three years), close attention is paid to the nonprofit's history, including:

- Stability in staff and board
- Uniqueness of programs and leadership in its field
- Excellence in financial management, and breadth and stability of funding

Project Budgets

If no funding has been secured or no local support is evident, it is almost impossible to be competitive. Project revenues should show broad-based support, including funds from the local community. Applicants may include the value of in-kind support (donated goods or services) in their project budgets. Project expenditures should correlate clearly to project activities. Alignment of the two suggests clear, consistent goals and solid planning.

Guidance for Capacity-Building Projects

Capacity-building proposals are requests for resources to help a nonprofit better fulfill its mission. Goals often are to adjust the organization's efficiency, size or effectiveness. Methods vary but a good nonprofit seeks to develop and sustain a quality workforce, stable finances and effective oversight. Some experts describe the equation as this:

Leadership + Adaptability + Program Capacity = Sustainability

OCF recognizes that program expansion is not always appropriate. A nonprofit may be the right size already or it may have an eye toward growth but must prepare for that future. In either case, the nonprofit's greatest need may be to strengthen or stabilize its existing operations.

Examples of Eligible Activities

- Collaborating with other organizations to improve services or eliminate duplication
- Strengthening governance, leadership or staff expertise
- Restructuring business models[2] and accounting practices to improve financial stability
- Building and diversifying revenue streams[3]
- Developing and implementing long-term strategic plans
- Refining communications, marketing and outreach
- Improving volunteer recruitment, training and engagement
- Acquiring or improving impact measurement tools and program evaluation capacity
- Pursuing opportunities to share space, equipment or other administrative costs
- Enhancing technology (excluding routine upgrades)

Specifics Related to Capacity-Building Projects

Capacity-building grant proposals should reflect board-level commitment to the proposed activities. OCF recognizes that a nonprofit's needs are impacted by many factors – the population being served, the programs offered, and the nonprofit's location, age and sophistication. Projects may encompass a variety of activities but applicants should be clear about the expected outcome of each.

Our capacity-building support is not meant to simply sustain day-to-day activity – it is meant to help an organization reach a new level of operating effectiveness. The anticipated outcome is greater nonprofit adaptability and durability.

Lower priority is given to:

- nonprofits with no track record of community impact
- nonprofits with multi-million-dollar annual operating budgets

[2] By business model, we mean how a nonprofit delivers services and supports its activities through a cost structure and a revenue strategy that combine earned and contributed income.

[3] Requests to build earned income streams or contributions from individuals and businesses are more competitive than requests to build grant writing capacity.

Questions OCF Asks During Proposal Review

1. How is strengthening your organization's capacity important to the community you serve? What is the context for this effort?
2. What specific capacity-building steps will you take?
3. How will your organization be different as a result of this effort?
4. Do you have a long-range plan adopted by the board?
5. Has the board identified the proposed activities as a major priority? How much time will board members devote to it?
6. What sort of staff time will be devoted to project activities?
7. If additional staffing is part of your capacity-building request, how have you determined the appropriate skills, salary and recruitment strategy? And how will you sustain the position after the grant period?
8. If your project involves collaboration with other organizations, have the proposed partners agreed to participate?
9. Are your goals for improved capacity clearly defined? How will you know if you have achieved your goals?

Guidance for Capital Projects

Capital projects seek to improve the physical assets of an organization. Typical projects include:

- building construction or renovation
- technology
- furnishings
- equipment
- vehicles

Specifics Related to Capital Projects

Requests for capital projects should clearly detail two things:

A. How the quality of life in the community will be improved as a result – or how the nonprofit will achieve significant new efficiencies

B. How the nonprofit will maintain the new asset

Lower priority is given to large capital campaigns for which an average Community Grant will have less impact. And capital campaigns for college campuses or medical centers are a lower priority unless the project will have a direct impact on the neighboring community by housing community-based programs or providing significant public access to meeting spaces and community services.

Questions OCF Asks During Proposal Review

Property acquisition, construction and renovation

1. Do you own the property? If not, please describe how an OCF investment in improvements would support the long-term goals of your organization?
2. Is ownership of property or facilities critical to your mission?
3. Could new facilities be leased rather than built? What are the comparative advantages of owning and leasing?
4. Has your organization considered a loan as a feasible alternative to a capital fundraising campaign?
5. Could some of the costs be covered through in-kind donations? Is there an opportunity for greater community involvement through in-kind contributions?
6. What are the plan and timetable for developing the property?
7. What are the restrictions on the use of the property?
8. What is the status of any permits or licenses needed for this project?

Technology

1. What advantages will technology investments provide?
2. How will you measure the impact of new technology?
3. Have you sought technology donations or reduced prices?
4. What kind of technical support is available to ensure the technology has the greatest impact? And have you factored in the cost of training for staff?

Furnishings and Equipment

1. How will new furnishings or equipment change or enhance existing programs?
2. Will the changes be substantive?
3. Have suitable in-kind donations been solicited?

Vehicles

1. What sort of vehicle are you requesting and why? How will this vehicle impact the persons served by your organization?
2. Have local car dealerships or other businesses or individuals been contacted for in-kind donations?
3. Will staff need special training or licenses to drive the vehicle?

General

1. What are the costs of maintaining and potentially insuring the new capital assets?
2. Does the project increase or reduce your annual expenses? If it increases annual expenses, do you have the ongoing capacity to raise additional funds?
3. Is the project actually a maintenance effort (e.g., roof repair, plumbing upgrades, or replacement of furniture) that could be considered the cost of doing business?
4. Do your proposed changes reflect mandates by the Americans with Disabilities Act or other legislation?