



# Approach to Community Impact Grant Guidelines **2016**



MINNEAPOLIS  
FOUNDATION

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# ABOUT THE MINNEAPOLIS FOUNDATION

## OVERVIEW

For more than 100 years, the Minneapolis Foundation has connected people, charitable resources, and ideas - to unite behind common goals and spark positive change in our community and beyond. The Foundation provides rewarding ways for generous Minnesotans to fund their charitable passions. And through partnerships, we create opportunities, tackle problems and build a better future for our community.

## MISSION

We believe that the well-being of each citizen is connected to that of every other and that the vitality of any community is determined by the quality of those relationships.

Our purpose is to join with others to strengthen our community, in measurable and sustainable ways, for the benefit of all citizens, especially those who are disadvantaged.

We are committed to be an effective resource developer and a responsible steward of those resources, an active grantmaker and convener addressing crucial community needs, and an advocate and constructive catalyst for changing systems to better serve people.

## OUR PURPOSE

The Minneapolis Foundation brings people together to expand the culture of generosity to improve the quality of life for all.

## OUR VISION

Our vision is a Greater Minneapolis that is vibrant, inclusive, and positioned to thrive locally and compete globally.

## GRANTS TO NONPROFITS

As a community foundation, the Minneapolis Foundation makes grants each year in accordance with our donors' wishes and to benefit the local community.

Individuals and families who have established Donor Advised Funds at the Minneapolis Foundation support a wide variety of charitable interests. Together, our donors support more than 1,000 different nonprofits each year – in Minnesota and beyond. Of the approximately \$45 million in grants the Foundation distributes each year, the vast majority are directed by our donors.

Over time, generous donors have also left gifts directly to the Minneapolis Foundation to use in addressing community needs. These gifts have created an endowment that provides resources annually to help improve the quality of life for everyone in our community, in accordance with priorities established by the Foundation's Board of Trustees.

The resources are invested in a variety of strategies including advocacy, public awareness, convening, and other means to achieve a specific set of community outcomes. Grantmaking is one of those strategies. Through our Community Grantmaking program, nonprofits can apply through a competitive process for funding to help achieve specific community outcomes. In addition, more time-specific grantmaking opportunities are offered throughout the year through a Request for Proposal process.

## IMPACT PRIORITIES FOR GRANTMAKING

The Minneapolis Foundation seeks to support organizations capable of achieving significant impact in our community, as measured by the OneMinneapolis indicators outlined in our Strategic Framework. Accordingly, the Foundation invests the majority of its Community Grant resources in proven or promising organizations and initiatives that seek to deepen their impact or bring their work to scale and are significantly aligned with the Key Drivers and Key Results in the three focus areas listed below.

While the Foundation focuses most of its competitive grants on organizations that are highly aligned with these Key Drivers and Key Results, the Foundation is also interested in innovative approaches to emerging community issues and makes targeted and more modest investments in such efforts.

## FOCUS AREA: EDUCATION

**GOAL:** All students on track for college and career

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**Key Driver:**

Increase access to high-quality early childhood education.

**Fundable Activities:**

- Promoting access to high-quality early childhood education and the use of meaningful quality rating systems that enable parents to select quality early learning programs.
- Implementing research-based strategies proven to dramatically improve kindergarten readiness for low-income and underserved children.

**Key Results:**

- Low-income students in Minneapolis have access to quality early childhood education.
  - Low-income students in Minneapolis enter kindergarten ready to learn.
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**Key Driver:**

Increase the number of great schools\* serving low-income students of color.

**Fundable Activities:**

- Implementing evidence-based practices and innovative approaches that are showing effectiveness in reducing educational disparities and increasing student achievement for students of color in P-12.
- Implementing K-12 education delivery that ensures high-quality academic outcomes for every student and builds asset-based, social-emotional resilience.

**Key Results:**

- Students of color and students from low-income homes are enrolled at high-quality schools.

## FOCUS AREA: EDUCATION

**GOAL:** All students on track for college and career

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**Key Driver:**

Strengthen the school talent and leadership pipeline.

**Fundable Activities:**

- Building the pipeline and capacity of talented, diverse educators and education leaders who have the mindset and skills to lead all students to academic and professional success.

**Key Results:**

- Teachers and school leaders serving Minneapolis students are highly-effective.\*\*
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**Key Driver:**

Empower parents, communities, and organizations to advocate for educational equity and excellence.

**Fundable Activities:**

- Empowering parents to advocate on behalf of their children and students to advocate for themselves in order to advance educational equity and excellence.
- Researching and advocating in order to influence policy and systemic improvements in P-12, especially with respect to the other Key Drivers, and holding leaders accountable for the effective implementation and enforcement of existing policies.

**Key Results:**

- Highly-effective ecosystem advancing educational equity and excellence, driven by organizations of students, parents, teachers, school leaders, business, and other stakeholders.

*\*defined as schools serving >50% students eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch (the standard definition of students living in poverty) and >50% students of color, with students achieving more than one year of academic growth each year*

*\*\* defined as teachers and leaders who lead students of color and low-income students to at least one year of academic growth each year.*

## FOCUS AREA: ECONOMIC VITALITY

**GOAL:** A competitive and inclusive workforce

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### Key Driver:

Increase workforce preparedness

### Fundable Activities:

- Implementation of new career pathways and innovative living wage job programs designed to meet future workforce needs for the chronically unemployed and underemployed (e.g. communities of color, immigrants and ex-offenders).
- Participation of the chronically un and under-employed (e.g. communities of color, immigrants and ex-offenders) in current and next-generation jobs.
- Initiatives to increase the success in post-secondary training and career laddering opportunities in underrepresented communities of color (e.g. community colleges, professional certification programs).

### Key Results:

- Individuals recruited and trained from communities currently underrepresented in the workforce will earn a living wage with benefits.
  - Individuals recruited and trained from communities currently underrepresented in the workforce will secure full-time positions and maintain job retention beyond 12 months.
  - Workforce training programs provide ladders to careers beyond entry-level jobs.
  - Businesses will have a skilled and diversified workforce from underrepresented communities.
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### Key Driver:

Build community wealth

### Fundable Activities:

- Comprehensive community projects linking job creation, new business development, minority entrepreneurship, and wealth creation.

### Key Results:

- Low-income families are using bank accounts, establishing credit, and financial services.
- Individuals and families have stable housing and are accessing workforce training, development and employment opportunities to help stabilize their families.

## FOCUS AREA: ECONOMIC VITALITY

**GOAL:** A competitive and inclusive workforce

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**Key Driver:**

Strengthen delivery of financial and technical assistance to minority-owned businesses.

**Fundable Activities:**

- Existing community-based networks providing technical assistance, establishing business incubators, and expanding alternative financing options.

**Key Results:**

- New minority-owned businesses are created and developed.
  - Minority-owned businesses sustain and create new jobs paying a living wage with benefits.
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**Key Driver:**

Advocate for improved policies and public sector programs that impact wealth creation.

**Fundable Activities:**

- Research and advocacy to encourage policy and systemic improvements in workforce development, minority entrepreneurship, and wealth creation.

**Key Results:**

- Workforce investments are measured for impact and performance.
- Investments are equitably deployed to address racial disparities in the workforce and minority-owned business development.
- Alternatives to prevent discriminatory and predatory financial practices are implemented.
- Integrated approaches to decrease barriers to accessing workforce training and employment for underrepresented communities (e.g. communities of color, immigrants, ex-offenders, homeless, etc.)



## FOCUS AREA: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

**GOAL:** All communities participate in our democracy & in public decision making.

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**Key Driver:**

Increase the number of people of color who vote

**Fundable Activities:**

- Community organizing that adds more people of color to the voter base and increases voter turnout.
- Initiatives to educate disenfranchised individuals about voter eligibility and elections.
- Community based initiatives educate individuals about equity issues pertinent to upcoming elections.

**Key Results:**

- An increased percentage of people of color vote in federal, state, and local elections.
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**Key Driver:**

Remove systemic barriers to voting.

**Fundable Activities:**

- Research and advocacy to reduce systemic barriers to voting.
- Community organizing and advocacy to expand voting rights.

**Key Results:**

- Public policies protect and expand voting rights.
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## FOCUS AREA: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

**GOAL:** All communities participate in our democracy & in public decision making.

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### Key Driver:

Strengthen leadership, advocacy and organizing capacity in diverse communities.

### Fundable Activities:

- Technical assistance, training or capacity building.
- Community based initiatives for advocacy, organizing or leadership development to advance equitable public policies.

### Key Results:

- The number of elected and appointed leaders matches the proportionate demographics of Minneapolis at every level of public decision making.
- Public policies are shaped and informed by communities impacted by them.
- Advocacy that mitigates the negative impacts on marginalized populations resulting from inequitable public policies.

# COMMUNITY GRANTS

Two types of support are considered through the Foundation's Community Grant process:

**General Operating Support:** The Minneapolis Foundation makes competitive grants to support the core operations of organizations with missions and activities that are highly aligned with the Foundation's Key Drivers and Key Results. The Foundation works and learns with nonprofit recipients of General Operating Support Grants as strategic partners to achieve better, measurable outcomes.

**Project Support:** The Minneapolis Foundation also makes grants to support specific projects or programs that are highly aligned with the Foundation's Key Drivers and Key Results. This includes programs that meet community needs, as well as capacity building activities that will enhance the nonprofit's ability to achieve its mission, increase the scale of its operations, and deliver services more effectively.

## COMMUNITY GRANTS - COMPETITIVE APPLICATION PROCESS

All Community Grants, whether for general operating support or project support, follow the same application process.

### 1. Letter of Inquiry

The application process for Community Grants begins with the submission of an online Letter of Inquiry (LOI), which is accepted at the beginning of a grant round. As part of the LOI review process, Foundation staff may request additional information to determine whether or not a full application will be requested.

### 2. Full Grant Application

Full applications are accepted only from organizations that are invited to apply after review of their LOI. Organizations that are invited to submit a full proposal will be connected with the appropriate Director of Impact Strategy and the Foundation's Grants Administrator to complete the grant application and all other requested materials.

### 3. Review and Evaluation

As part of a comprehensive due diligence process, the assigned Director of Impact Strategy will conduct a site visit to become better acquainted with the organization.

### 4. Grant Decisions

The Community Impact Committee of the Foundation's Board of Directors makes grant decisions based on staff review and recommendations concerning the proposal's alignment with the Foundation's impact priorities and Key Results in the three focus areas. The grant process will take approximately 12 weeks from submission of an LOI to notification of the Community Impact Committee's decision. The assigned Director of Impact Strategy will notify the applicant of the committee's decision. A formal notification will be sent to the grantee outlining the Terms of Grants with a requested signature from the chief executive officer of the organization.

### 5. Annual Review

Funded organizations report annually on progress toward their goals and outcomes before the organization is eligible for subsequent funding opportunities.

## KEY CRITERIA

The Minneapolis Foundation invests substantial resources to support proven or promising nonprofits that share its core values and use our Key Drivers to deepen their impact or bring their work to scale. To maximize the impact and effectiveness of its investments, the Foundation puts significant weight on the following criteria:

**Equity Framework:** The Foundation engages in policy, research, grantmaking, and other efforts to positively affect the city of Minneapolis and all of its residents. However, with its limited competitive grantmaking resources, the Foundation has a particular focus on efforts that unlock economic and educational opportunities for underserved residents and neighborhoods.

**Collaboration:** Complex, long-standing problems require creative, multi-disciplinary approaches that are often beyond the capacity of a single organization. The Foundation is most interested in supporting organizations with a track record of collaboration and collaborative groups of agencies working together to address significant community needs.

**Financial and Programmatic Capacity:** Successful applicants will show evidence that they are stable, have a solid financial and program management team, a strong balance sheet and program plans that give the Foundation confidence that their work will be sustained beyond the Foundation's investment.

**Leadership:** Successful applicants will have strong board and executive leadership that is representative of our community, collaborative, and knowledgeable about the community and the field in which they operate.

**Measurable Results:** The Foundation places a high priority on organizations that are able to clearly articulate organizational goals, present a clear plan for achieving results, and track outcomes and impact on the people and communities served.

## TIPS FOR DRAFTING YOUR LETTER OF INQUIRY

Provide details. Numbers are more informative than adjectives. How many people are currently being served and how many more people will be served with grant funding? What other funders support this work? How many individual donors do you have?

Be clear and concise. 200 words is about ½ a single-spaced page, which should be long enough to make your case, but not so long as to burden the applicant or the reviewer.

Create a compelling narrative. Begin with a brief introduction, elaborate on key points, and conclude by connecting each point to a statement of impact.

Demonstrate a connection. Your LOI should demonstrate that your nonprofit's goals and objectives closely match those of the Foundation.

## EXCLUSIONS

The Minneapolis Foundation does not fund:

- Individuals
- Conference registration fees
- Endowments
- Memberships
- Direct religious activities
- Political organizations or candidates' fundraising efforts
- Conferences, events, or sponsorships
- Financial deficits
- Replacement of public sector funds
- Emergency/safety net services
- Re-granting/loans
- Production of housing units
- Purchase or repair of vehicles
- Capital construction costs
- Organizations/activities outside of Minnesota

## ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for support, an organization must be tax-exempt or operate under the fiscal sponsorship of a tax-exempt nonprofit. In addition, the nonprofit must be primarily serving the people of Minneapolis, with the exception of regional, statewide or national public policy efforts that may benefit a substantial portion of the Minneapolis community. Finally, an eligible organization must be operated and organized so that it does not discriminate in the hiring of staff or provision of services on the basis of race, religion, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, age, nation of origin, or disability.

In general, organizations are not eligible to receive more than one type of funding from the Foundation concurrently. Nonprofits that are part of a collaborative effort funded by the Foundation may also seek funding for their individual operations or projects.

An organization that has been denied funding within the last year should contact a Director of Impact Strategy to confirm eligibility. Organizations that have previously received funding from the Minneapolis Foundation will not be eligible to apply again until all reporting requirements have been met.

Please note that because of the high volume of applications and the Minneapolis Foundation's accountability for achieving a specific set of Key Results, we are unable to fund all of the high-quality requests submitted for consideration.

The Foundation anticipates approving 50-70 grants in this next open application process. The average size grant in 2013 was \$50,000.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

We endeavor to make our community grantmaking processes as understandable as possible. If you have any remaining questions after reading the Strategic Framework, Grant Guidelines, and these Frequently Asked Questions, please contact the appropriate Director of Impact Strategy listed in our online staff directory.

## *How will I know when a grant round has opened or an RFP has been issued?*

Visit the Foundation's website and sign up for electronic notifications regarding grant rounds and RFPs in the upper right hand corner of the "How to Apply" section of the Community Grants page. The Community Grants page is also updated regularly regarding upcoming grant rounds, open grant rounds, and RFPs.

## *Who is eligible for a Community Grant from the Minneapolis Foundation?*

To be eligible for support, an organization must be tax-exempt or operate under the fiscal sponsorship of a tax-exempt nonprofit. In addition, the nonprofit must be primarily serving the people of Minneapolis, with the exception of regional, statewide or national public policy efforts that may benefit a substantial portion of the Minneapolis community. Finally, an eligible organization must be operated and organized so that it does not discriminate in the hiring of staff or provision of services on the basis of race, religion, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, age, national origin or disability.

## *How do I know if my organization will be competitive in the LOI or application process?*

The Minneapolis Foundation invests in nonprofits that share its core values and whose programs or activities are highly aligned with the Key Drivers identified in each of the Foundation's Focus Areas. While reviewing LOIs and grant applications, Foundation staff focuses upon the following criteria: alignment with our Equity Framework, willingness to collaborate with other organizations, financial stability and programmatic capacity, strength of the organization's leadership, and the ability to demonstrate a measurable impact in the community.

## *How soon after I submit the LOI and/or full grant application will my organization receive notification from the Foundation?*

Organizations will be notified whether or not they are invited to submit a full grant application within 3 weeks of submitting the LOI. Organizations invited to submit a full grant application will find out whether or not they will receive funding approximately 12 weeks after submitting the LOI.

## *Does my organization have to submit an LOI or can I just submit a full application?*

Every organization must submit an LOI to be considered for funding. Full applications will only be considered upon invitation.

## *Is there a way for my organization to seek funding from a Donor Advised Fund at the Minneapolis Foundation?*

No. The Foundation works directly with individuals and families who have established Donor Advised Funds to help them make charitable gifts to organizations of their choosing. The Foundation does not accept requests for support from these funds.

*Can I submit additional materials electronically or through postal mail to supplement my organization's LOI or grant application?*

No. The Foundation does not accept any supplementary materials. Thoroughly completing every section of the LOI and full application will give Foundation staff sufficient information to evaluate your request with respect to our grantmaking priorities. Foundation staff will contact your organization if we wish to review additional information.

*My organization's mission and activities align with more than one of the Focus Areas or Key Drivers identified by the Minneapolis Foundation. What should I do?*

Select the Focus Area and Key Driver that you feel most closely aligns with the work of your organization when completing the LOI. Foundation staff is aware that equity issues are complex and many organizations will have programs or activities that can be classified under multiple Focus Areas or Key Drivers. If Foundation staff feels your organization's work should be identified under a different Focus Area or Key Driver than what you selected in the LOI process, we will reassign it accordingly and notify you.

*Can my organization submit an LOI or grant application through email or postal mail?*

No. Only LOIs and applications that are submitted using the Foundation's online system will be accepted. If you are having trouble using the Foundation's online system, contact the appropriate Director of Impact Strategy listed in our online staff directory.

*Does the application process for an RFP differ from the application process for a Community Grant?*

Yes. Because RFPs are issued in response to time-sensitive community needs, they will include a specific set of instructions for how to apply and may not follow the same steps as the application process for Community Grants.

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**OneMinneapolis:** a compilation of community indicators the Foundation uses to gauge Minneapolis' ability to thrive locally and compete globally.

**Focus Areas:** Three areas that the Foundation identifies as having the most significant impact on the OneMinneapolis community indicators: Transforming Education, Economic Vitality, and Civic Engagement.

**Key Drivers:** high-level strategies to affect change in the Foundation's Focus Areas.

**Fundable Activities:** specific actions that are highly aligned with the Foundation's Key Drivers and are likely to create significant gains toward our Key Results.

**Specific Activities:** measurable actions an organization will take during a funding cycle that are aligned with the Foundation's Fundable Activities.

**Measurable Outcomes:** quantifiable results of an organization's Specific Activities.

**Key Results:** desired end states that the Foundation seeks through its strategic investments.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Minneapolis Foundation holds regular informational sessions about its priorities and guidelines. The schedule can be found on our website. If you have any questions after reading these guidelines, please contact the Foundation for additional information and advice. Contact your Director of Impact Strategy or email us at [aporter@mplsfoundation.org](mailto:aporter@mplsfoundation.org) with a brief summary of your question. A member of the foundation staff will respond to your inquiry on a timely basis.

For more information, please visit: [www.MinneapolisFoundation.org](http://www.MinneapolisFoundation.org) and choose "Community Grants." There you will find detailed information about the specific strategies the Foundation uses to achieve our goals, as well as more information about how to apply for a grant.

Be sure to also like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter for the latest Foundation news.