



NEW HAMPSHIRE  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

## Community Grants Program Frequently asked questions

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### **GENERAL ELIGIBILITY QUESTIONS**

#### ***Who is eligible to apply for grants?***

Applicants must be recognized as tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Organizations that received an Unrestricted multiyear grant through this program in 2018 or 2019 are not eligible to apply for a new Community Grant this year.

Organizations that received an Express Grant or any other type of grant from NHCF for COVID-19 pandemic response in 2020 are eligible to apply for an Unrestricted Grant. An interim or final report is not required prior to submitting for an unrestricted grant, but Foundation staff may reach out to you for an update on that work.

Through the Community Grants program, we do not make unrestricted grants to:

- Municipal, County or State Government
- Public and Private schools
- Religious organizations, unless all services being funded are non-discriminatory, non-sectarian and benefit the larger community
- Hospitals
- Colleges and Universities

The Foundation does not accept proposals through our community grants program that are focused on substance use disorders prevention, treatment and/or recovery services.

Such proposals are by invitation-only, and administered outside of the Community Grants program. For information on our Substance Use Disorders Portfolio and to discuss grant opportunities with appropriate staff, please visit our [Substance Use Disorders Portfolio](#).

***What if my organization is headquartered outside NH, or we are headquartered inside NH but also work in other states?***

Organizations that are either headquartered outside NH and doing work in NHCF's service area, or headquartered inside NH but also working outside NHCF's service area (NH and portions of east-central Vermont and southern Maine. See the Foundation's service-area map under "Geographic Focus") may be eligible for Unrestricted support and Express grants. If awarded, funding will be restricted to work being implemented in NHCF's service area. Organizations will be required to submit both an overall organization budget and a budget specific to the NH portion of their work, and will be expected to report on that portion of their work. It is important that reviewers are able to get a sense of your NH-specific work, so your application narrative should focus on the NH portion of your work. You can also use the final, open question on the application to further elevate your NH work. We welcome multistate organizations to contact staff to discuss your specific circumstance before applying.

***My organization is not a 501(c)(3). Can I still apply to the Foundation for funding?***

Non tax-exempt organizations can only apply through a fiscal agent which is a 501(c)(3) and which signs a fiscal sponsorship agreement as part of the application process. When using a fiscal agent, your organization must still meet other qualification guidelines. If your organization does not hold a 501(c)(3) charitable tax status, please call us prior to submitting an application to discuss your options with staff. See below for further examples of non-(c)(3) entities.

***What if my organization is a non-charity, such as a 501(c)(4) or 501(c)(6)?***

We may only make grants to support charitable work, and thus cannot make Unrestricted Grants to (c)(4) or (c)(6) organizations. We can, under limited circumstances, consider project support for a chamber of commerce, trade group or other group that falls under another provision of the tax code, but only for charitable activities, and then, preferably through a fiscal agent that holds 501 (c)(3) charitable tax status. Under no circumstances can we support activities such as membership services not available to the general public, electoral work, or other activities that are not considered charitable in nature.

***Can you tell me more about the Eligibility Checklist we are asked to submit when completing our profile?***

The Eligibility Checklist is a tool used to ensure that nonprofits applying for grants from the NH Charitable Foundation are in compliance with all legal requirements for NH nonprofit organizations and have implemented very basic financial controls and oversight of operations. We require that all organizations complete the Eligibility Checklist, and if the answer to any question on the checklist is “no” we provide a space to provide an explanation. Answering “no” to any of the questions on the Eligibility Checklist may disqualify an organization from receiving a grant. If you answer “no” to any of the questions on the checklist we suggest you contact staff to discuss those instances prior to beginning an grant application— we want to prevent you from taking the time to prepare and submit an application if it will be declined on these grounds. You can find more information about the legal requirements for NH nonprofits at the NH Department of Justice Charitable Trusts Unit website [HERE](#). If you are not a New Hampshire 501(c)3, you are not required to complete the checklist.

***If my organization or its fiscal sponsor is a religious organization that does non-sectarian or secular work, are we eligible to apply?***

We do not fund religious activities of any kind through the Community Grants program. Religious organizations are only eligible to receive funding through this program to provide services that are non-discriminatory, non-sectarian and that benefit the larger community. Unrestricted Grants in this category would be rare, but we encourage application to our Express Grants program to fund specific projects.

***If my organization serves as a fiscal sponsor for an applicant, are we eligible to submit an application for our own efforts separately?***

Yes.

***Do you fund start-up organizations?***

In order to apply for an Unrestricted Grant, an organization must be able to submit three years of operating budgets with their application. Therefore, a new organization would not be eligible to apply. However, a new program or start-up may submit a proposal to the Express Grant program.

***We have a grant from the Foundation from another program (donor-advised fund award, other grant program, special Foundation initiative etc.). Does that affect our eligibility to apply for a Community Grant (Express or Unrestricted)?***

Generally no. Applications for Community Grants are typically open to organizations that have received funding from the Foundation through donor-advised funds, agency/designated funds or through other grant programs, even if they have an active grant from one of these other programs.

***If we apply for an Unrestricted Grant and are declined, are we eligible to then apply for an Express Grant (or vice-versa)?***

Applicants whose proposals are declined are welcome to submit another proposal at the next open call for proposals. Please note, however, that the Foundation will not entertain a proposal for the same project, activity or scope of work if it has already been declined twice.

***Can an organization receive both an Express Grant and an Unrestricted Grant in the same year?***

In 2020, organizations that received an Express grant MAY apply for and receive an Unrestricted Grant.

***Can an organization that is in the midst of a multiyear Unrestricted Grant apply for an Express Grant?***

Typically, no. An organization can only be the recipient of one Community Grant, either Express or Unrestricted, at a time. The exception in 2020 is that organizations that received an Express Grant in early 2020 may apply for an Unrestricted Grant.

***My organization has lost significant public funding. Can we apply for a Community Grant to fill that loss?***

The Foundation does not make grants to fill in gaps left by the elimination of public funding. However, from time to time the Foundation will provide bridge support for an organization transitioning away from public funding towards a new financing model. In this instance an organization must clearly demonstrate a plan for the transition.

***If we receive a grant, can we apply for another immediately when that grant is concluded?***

Yes, for example an organization that received a three year grant in 2018 may apply for another Unrestricted Grant in 2021. An organization that is awarded an Express Grant or a one-year Unrestricted Grant may apply again the following year.

***Does the Foundation fund advocacy? What about lobbying?***

Yes! We recognize that systems-change work and policy advocacy activities, including lobbying, are often an important tool for seeking to make positive community impact. Advocacy includes a wide range of activities from public education to messaging/communications, grassroots organizing, policy analysis, litigation, and legislative lobbying. The Foundation, like all nonprofits, is permitted in appropriate circumstances and within relevant limits to support any or all of these activities, and we do so through our Community Grants program.

## **UNRESTRICTED COMMUNITY GRANTS**

### ***What is meant by “Unrestricted Grant”? Are there limits on how my organization can use such a grant, if received?***

Unrestricted Grants (sometimes called “operating grants”) are not attached to any particular project, activity or line item in an organization’s budget. An organization receiving an Unrestricted Grant is free to use those funds as needed to further the overall work of the organization. This may include salary, overhead expenses, program costs, equipment purchases or any other aspect of the organization’s annual budget.

### ***What do you look for in an application for an Unrestricted Grant?***

The concept paper and application together are designed to help us understand the following:

**Programs:** Does the organization operate quality programs that improve the community?

**Strategies:** Has the organization developed specific and realistic short- and long-term strategies for addressing identified organizational needs?

**Impact:** Did the organization demonstrate how an Unrestricted Grant could have a measurable impact on organizational and programmatic capacity and effectiveness?

**Capacity:** Does the organization have the capacity to manage this grant?

We recognize that the environment you are now operating in has shifted dramatically. We know that you are adapting to the realities and consequences of advancing your mission within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to these four areas we are trying to highlight and learn about through the questions in the concept paper and application this year we will also ask you to describe how the pandemic is affecting your programs and services and your internal operations.

### ***How much can we request when applying for and Unrestricted Grant?***

How much an organization can apply for depends on the types of documentation related to governance and financial management that can be submitted with the application. If an organization does not have an audit or financial review, they may apply for up to \$30,000 over three years (\$10,000/yr). Organizations that do a completed audit or financial review are eligible to apply for up to \$60,000 over three years (\$20,000/yr).

See the chart below:



## IF YOU APPLY FOR...

\$30,000  
(\$10,000/yr  
for 3 years)

\$60,000  
(\$20,000/yr  
for 3 years)

	\$30,000 (\$10,000/yr for 3 years)	\$60,000 (\$20,000/yr for 3 years)
<b>Board approved strategic plan</b>	NOT REQUIRED	NOT REQUIRED
<b>Audit/Financial Review</b>	NOT REQUIRED Must submit their 990 or NHCT-2A (as submitted to Charitable Trusts)	REQUIRED
<b>100% board giving</b>	REQUIRED	REQUIRED

### ***Are financial audits or reviewed financial statements required for Unrestricted Grants?***

An organization that has an independently completed audit or financial review (prepared in accordance with GAAP) can request up to a total of \$60,000/year (up to \$20,000/year for three years). An organization that does not have an independently completed audit or financial review may submit their 990/990EZ or NHCT-2A (as submitted to the New Hampshire Department of Charitable Trusts) and may request up to a total of \$30,000 (up to \$10,000/year for three years). The 990N will not be accepted. An organization that submits the 990N must submit their NHCT-2A.

### ***What is the difference between an audit, a review and a compilation?***

A nonprofit organization can engage an independent, Certified Public Accountant (CPA) to prepare its financial statements. There are three levels of financial statement services. *A nonprofit organization should consult with their financial advisors as to which level of review is appropriate for their organization:*

- 1) Audit: provides the highest level of assurance on an organization's financial statements and that an organization's financial statements are free of material misstatement and are fairly presented based upon the application of generally accepted accounting principles.
- 2) Review: provides limited assurance on an organization's financial statements and that there is a reasonable basis that there is no material modifications to the financial statements necessary based on generally accepted accounting principles.

- 3) Compilation: provides no assurance on an organization's financial statements. The CPA (who may not be independent) prepares the financial data provided by the organization in a financial statement format that complies with generally accepted accounting principles.

A reference document to help explain the difference can be found on the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) website: [American Institute of CPAs- Comparative Overview Brochure](#). You can also find more information about nonprofit finances on the NH Center for Nonprofit's NonprofitNext.

An audit or review of financial statements are acceptable to meet the financial statement requirement for the unrestricted grants application process; a compilation is not acceptable. Financial statements prepared by staff, board members or consultants paid to keep the nonprofit's books are also not acceptable.

***How up-to-date do the audited financial statements need to be?***

You must submit the most recent audited financial statement for your organization. We understand that audits can take several months to complete following the end of an organization's fiscal year, and that the most recent completed audit may be more than a year old. If, at some point during the application process you receive a draft or a completed audit for a more recent fiscal year, please submit that more recent audit by email to Wendy Cahill at [wendy.cahill@nhcf.org](mailto:wendy.cahill@nhcf.org).

***How will organizations be required to document 100 percent board giving?***

During the concept paper process applicants are required to certify that they have received financial support from all board members. We do not ask you to report the amount that each member gives.

***How do organizations with a fiscal sponsor - and, therefore, no governing board - demonstrate board financial support for Unrestricted Grants?***

We do not make that a requirement in this case. On the application there will be a check box indicating your organization is under fiscal sponsorship and therefore this requirement does not apply.

***If an applicant is applying under a fiscal sponsorship, do we use the fiscal agent's audit or financial review and board of directors' information?***

An organization applying through a fiscal agent is only eligible to apply for up to \$30,000 (up to \$10,000/year for three years). Therefore, no submission of an audit or financial review is required. These organizations may submit the fiscal sponsor's audit or financial review, but are not required to do so. The application will require submission of the fiscal sponsor's board list and organization budget. You will also be asked to

submit the applicant organization's operating budget and list of its advisory board members, (if it has such a board).

***Do we need a strategic plan in place to apply for an Unrestricted Grant?***

Typically we require organizations to have a board approved strategic plan in order to apply for the \$60,000 grant. In recognition that the COVID-19 pandemic has likely rendered most strategic plans obsolete we have waived that requirement this year. Organizations that have a strategic plan are welcome to upload it as part of the application, and the concept paper and application will allow you to describe how the pandemic may have shifted your programmatic and organizational goals and strategies and your current approach to planning.

***Is there a limit on the amount we can apply for in Unrestricted support in relation to our organization's size?***

While there is no specific limit, organizations requesting a large percentage of their overall annual budget as an Unrestricted grant from the Foundation should address in the narrative why a large percentage is needed and how the organization plans to increase funding from diverse sources.

## **EXPRESS GRANTS**

***What specifically can Express Grants support?***

Express Grants are project grants, so they are designed to support a particular project your organization would like to undertake.

***How much can we apply for when submitting an Express grant application?***

Up to \$5,000.

***Can we submit an Express Grant application for Unrestricted support?***

No. An Express Grant can only be used for a defined project. Express Grant budget items may, in appropriate cases, include staff or other overhead expenses, but Express Grant funds will be tied to the particular project and its activities as described in the application narrative and budget.

## **EVALUATION AND REPORTS**

***What does the Foundation look for in terms of measuring impact and evaluation?***

Applicants should clearly articulate the outcomes they hope to achieve, and how they are going to measure those outcomes. We appreciate that measurement should be right-sized to the work. An organization applying for an Unrestricted Grant should identify core organizational outcomes from its strategic plan and describe how you will



evaluate ways in which the grant will help to achieve those outcomes. An organization applying for an Express Grant will be asked to describe what success will look like, or what will be different as a result of the work.

***What are the expectations about grant reports?***

All grants require a final report at the end of the designated grant period. Grants that are awarded over two or three years will typically require an interim report at the conclusion of each year in order for the Foundation to release the next year’s funding—that requirement may be waived in certain situations, for example as it is this year during the COVID-19 pandemic.

***Is there a deadline for the grant funds to be used?***

The grant award letter will state whether the award is a one-, two- or three-year grant, and these are the deadlines for funds to be expended.

***What if I need more time than originally planned to expend my grant award?***

If you know you will need more time to complete the work and expend the grant funds awarded, you may submit a [Grant Change Request](#). It is not unusual to approve an extension of up to six months. Any requests for substantially longer extensions should start with a conversation with Foundation staff.

***How should grant reports be submitted?***

[Log in to GrantSource](#) and submit your progress or final report via the online portal.

***How do I know if I have an outstanding final grant report?***

When you log in to GrantSource you will see reports due on your dashboard. If you have any questions, contact Wendy Cahill at [Wendy.Cahill@nhcf.org](mailto:Wendy.Cahill@nhcf.org) or 800-464-6641 ext. 21249.

**GENERAL QUESTIONS**

***Can we include volunteer time as in-kind contribution on our organization budget?***

Yes. The Foundation encourages organizations to include any in-kind or financial support from other sources on both project budgets and organization budgets as appropriate. For currently acceptable rates for volunteer time and information about including volunteer time on organization budgets, visit the [Independent Sector web site](#).

***Do you ever provide partial funding?***

Whenever possible, the Foundation aims to fully fund a request that has been selected for an award, and we encourage applicants to ask for the precise amount of grant funding that they hope to receive. However, there are circumstances where partial funding may be awarded due to limits on funding availability or other reasons.

***How do I know to which region of the Foundation I should apply?***

We are a statewide foundation, but operate with a regional structure that allows regional staff and advisory boards to guide our grantmaking. The region you select when you fill out your organization's profile and concept paper or application on GrantSource will direct your request to the appropriate region. You should select the region that describes where your organization does most of its work. If you feel that you work equally in two or three regions, please select only the primary one. If you choose "statewide" you must be able to clearly demonstrate that your work truly has statewide impact. We recognize that for some applicants selecting a region or statewide designation can be confusing. Don't worry about "getting it right" — if we need to reassign your region we can do that internally and it will not have a negative impact on your application.

***What role do donors play in funding Community Grants? How can I get my work in front of the Foundation's donors?***

The Foundation uses a mix of its discretionary and donor-advised funds in the Community Grants program. Strong proposals that align with donor interest are shared with donors. Along with this sharing of your applications with donors, the best way for you to get your work in front of the Foundation's donors is to keep your organization's profile in GrantSource up to date. We highly encourage all nonprofits, whether you plan to apply for a grant or not, to establish a profile on GrantSource as a means to help us locate information about your work should there be a possibility of aligned Foundation donor interest.

***What if I have a question that is not answered here or on the website?***

Please feel free at any time after reviewing our online materials to direct additional questions to Wendy Cahill at [wendy.cahill@nhcf.org](mailto:wendy.cahill@nhcf.org) or 800-464-6641 ext 21249.