



## Community Funds Accelerator Grant Guidelines

Toledo Community Foundation, Inc. is a public charitable organization created by citizens of our community to enrich the quality of life for individuals and families in our service area. The Foundation serves Northwest Ohio and Southeast Michigan with a particular emphasis on the greater Toledo area. Grants from Community Funds support a variety of programs in the fields of education, social services, physical and mental health, neighborhood and urban affairs, natural resources, and the arts.

As a companion to the Community Funds grant program, the Community Funds Accelerator provides resources for independent, third-party assessments to improve existing programs or prove the impact of new pilot programs. The purpose of the Community Funds Accelerator is to encourage agencies to use data to drive continuous improvement of service delivery to achieve greater impact. Robust assessments may result in enhanced sustainability by strengthening future fundraising and grant-seeking efforts. Grant funds should only be requested to support costs associated with a high-quality, third party assessment designed to ascertain a program's impact or increase the effectiveness of an organization's internal process.

Grants are awarded only to nonprofit, charitable organizations which have been designated as having tax-exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service code. Multi-year requests may be considered if a longer timeline is integral to the quality of the evaluation. Organizations needing assistance in sourcing an appropriate consultant may contact The Center for Nonprofit Resources. Community Funds Accelerator funding is not a pre-requisite to future Community Funds awards. At the conclusion of the grant period, organizations will be required to submit final analysis, interpretation of results and plan for improvement.

### Grant Application Process

The Foundation considers grant requests two times annually. The deadline dates for proposals are: **January 15 and August 15**. Proposals must be submitted through the Foundation's online application process. The online application can be accessed via the Foundation's website at [www.toledocf.org](http://www.toledocf.org). Proposals must be received by midnight of the application deadline in order to be considered for funding.

All grant applications are carefully reviewed by the Foundation's professional staff and Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees meets approximately three to four months subsequent to each deadline date to make funding decisions. Applicant organizations are notified, in writing, of the approval or denial of funding requests within one week after the Board of Trustees takes action. Project expenses incurred by an applicant organization prior to notification cannot be paid by the Foundation.

### Contents of a Proposal

The following information must be included in all proposals:

- **Evaluation** – State the goals and objectives of the project. Provide a description of the program or process to be studied. Identify the target population. Describe outcomes to be measured. Provide detailed information on research methods to be employed and data source(s), such as surveys, questionnaires, focus groups, participant interviews, etc. Explain the organization's long-term commitment to evaluation and

continuous improvement. Describe how the project will inform the organization's work after the conclusion of the grant period. (600 word limit)

- *For applicants proposing to evaluate existing programs*: There are two categories of assessment available to these applicants – (1) evaluation of a specific program or (2) evaluation of an internal process. Program evaluations focus on the results associated with a specific program. Internal process evaluations seek to answer questions about organizational efficiencies and/or how the organization's own processes can be improved in order to yield better outcomes. Grantees will receive priority consideration for a subsequent year's grant request to Community Funds for projects designed to improve the program or process that has been studied. This may result in multiple years of funding.
- *For applicants proposing to evaluate new programs*: Organizations may apply for funds to evaluate a new program. These applicants may also request funds from the Community Funds grant program to support direct programmatic expenses. Those pursuing this option must complete a separate application to the Community Funds program. This may result in two grants funded over the same period.
- **Implementation** – Summarize the scope and timeframe for implementation of this project and the role of internal staff. Explain the process by which your organization selected its evaluator or continuous improvement specialist. (250 word limit)
- **Program Support** – Identify funding sources that support the program or process under evaluation and describe whether these funding sources are expected to change or remain consistent over time. If any gaps in funding are expected, describe any plans to secure alternative sources of support. (250 word limit).
- **Evaluation Project Budget Attachment** – Attach a one-page project budget, which:
  - (1) Specifies the requested grant period;
  - (2) Delineates line-item expenses that clearly detail the proposed use of grant funds, which may include consultant fees, data collection expenses, staff time, staff/consultant travel, participant incentives, etc.; and
  - (3) Lists projected income (both solicited and received) and expenses for the proposed project.
- **Independent Consultant Attachment** – Attach the following:
  - (1) Professional qualifications or biography of the organization's selected independent, third-party evaluator or continuous improvement specialist; and
  - (2) Proposal/quotation from selected independent, third party evaluator or continuous improvement specialist.

**Attachments** – According to a new procedure instituted in 2017, the following attachments must be submitted with every grant application made to Toledo Community Foundation. Please pay close attention to the details or your application may be considered incomplete. Acceptable file types include Word, Excel and PDF only.

Required attachments include:

- **Board List** - The names and affiliations of the organization's Board of Trustees.
- **IRS Letter** - A copy of the organization's tax exemption letter from the Internal Revenue Service.
- **Background** - Brief background and history of the organization, including when and how the organization was established, its mission or purpose, accomplishments to date and a listing of all current programs and services.
- **Financial Statements** - There are two options for submission of financial statements, which include:
  - (1) Option 1 - If the organization has had an audit prepared within 12 months of the date of application, please provide the full audit; or
  - (2) Option 2 - If audited financial statements for this time frame are not available, provide the unaudited income & expense statement (P&L) and balance sheet for the organization's most recent fiscal year-end. Note that both statements must be submitted if this option is selected.
- **Operating Budget** - A board-approved operating budget for the current fiscal year of the organization.
- **Evaluation Project Budget** (as referenced in the previous section).
- **Independent Consultant Attachment** (as referenced in the previous section).

**Additional Information:**

- The Community Funds Accelerator is inspired by the field of continuous quality improvement and aims to support organizations in developing the data and frameworks necessary for ongoing benchmarking and/or change management. Applicants seeking to transform their work will receive priority consideration.
- The Community Funds Accelerator program provides support for several types of assessments:
  - To evaluate internal processes, applicants are encouraged to apply appropriate continuous improvement tools under the guidance of a qualified external expert.
  - The grant program can provide support for an outcomes-based evaluation, which tracks participants through a program and measures outcomes from beginning to end. An outcomes-based evaluation identifies indicators that can credibly demonstrate change (i.e. “increased reading level”).
  - The grant program will also consider more rigorous evaluations, such as experimental studies involving control groups.
- The guidance on assessments or evaluations offered in these Guidelines is not intended to be limiting or exclusive. Applicants are encouraged to consult myriad available resources, such as trainings and publications available through The Center for Nonprofit Resources, local and national professionals, universities, libraries and internet resources for additional information.

**For additional information, please contact:**

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