COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF MIDDLESEX COUNTY

Grant Tips for the

2017-2018 Competitive Grant Cycle

Grant funding requests must be for calendar year 2018. Grant awards <u>cannot</u> be used to fund a program which occurred prior to 2018.

Grant Funding Timeline:

- Applications are submitted by September 14, 2017
- Applications are reviewed during October and November
- Grant Recommendations are made to the Board of Directors in December
- Applicants are notified of decisions by December 28, 2017

Review the Grants Information and Instructions document before completing the application. This document provides information of the focus areas, the Community Foundation's funding priorities, and the application process.

Read all the directions before beginning application.

Be concise – respond to the questions as asked and stay on point to the program/project

Be straightforward – limit the use of technical or industry specific language; provide definitions when referring to industry/technical words or phrases

Write to a broad audience – Grants Committee volunteers come from all walks of life and may not be familiar with a specific industry or issue; write for "everyday" conversations rather than industry-specific discourse.

Include all information requested – <u>do not include</u> information not necessary and not requested (such as brochures, annual reports, articles, and other collateral material).

Include one copy of 501(c)(3) tax exempt status letter or other not-for-profit documentation, even if you have applied before.

Review Focus Area descriptions and select the one most appropriate. Choose a secondary Focus Area only when appropriate to the application being submitted – a secondary Focus Area is not required of an organization, and should only be selected when the application actually incorporates aspects of both. Ensure application narratives specifically relate to the focus area(s) selected.

Review previous grant award amounts. The smallest grant awarded is $500. The average grant amount is approximately $1,500 to $3,000. Though larger grant awards are made, they are not the standard. Consider funding sources, program/project need, and support the amount requested through strong narratives. Do not ask for funding above $5,000.

One program per application – One application per Organization. Determine what program/project is most important for the application, and focus narratives on describing the needs and goals associated.

Narrative sections contain "character limits." Use Microsoft Word or other word processing software to write, spell check, and character count your responses. Character limits <u>include</u> spaces.

Consider the "who, what, where, why" as well as the how. Who will this program serve? What is important about this program/project? What are the outcomes/goals/objectives the program is attempting to accomplish? Where is it affecting? Most importantly, <u>why</u> – why is it important? Why is it necessary? Why does it deserve a grant award? Asking these questions will help develop your responses, especially when writing to an audience who may not be familiar with what you do and who you serve.

If this is an ongoing program/project, **include past facts, successes, and quantifiable statistics** when appropriate and available to explain how this serves Middlesex County. If the program is ongoing, how long has the program existed? What are the outcomes/accomplishments to date? If a new program, is this a one-time program with specific outcomes or is it the beginning of a long-term program, and if so, what are both the short term and long term objectives of implementing it? If the program is not funded by CFMC, will it still go forward?

Collaborations are Important – but not all programs are collaborative or necessary. If this is a collaboration with another organization, explain how this collaboration impacts the community, serves both organizations' missions, and provides stronger/better/broader services to the community.

- If this is a collaboration with a school, include how this program/project fits within the overall curriculum, what this offers above the standard curriculum, how it will be incorporated into the overall academic plan, and the long-term educational needs of the students affected.
- Collaborations require letters of support from the organization(s) not completing the application as the fiduciary organization. Letters should include an explanation of how the collaboration furthers that organization's mission and objectives, why the collaboration is important to program outcomes, and an understanding of CFMC's grant making, evaluation, and marketing expectations.

Peer review and independent proofreading – ask someone to read your responses to be sure they are on point and written to the narrative questions.

Collate and staple – double check all copies to be sure they contain their required pieces. The Grants Information and Instruction sheet has a check list for both the original application and the required copies. Certain items need only be submitted with the original application. Do not include any materials not requested.

Geographic and Population questions refer specifically to Middlesex County, and Geographic Areas refer to the "footprint" specifically addressed by the program/project.

How to focus your request: Pretend you someone new who says "I have $2,000 and I am looking for something wonderful to support …" Craft your answer to as if you had just 3 minutes to get that funding.

How would you describe your program/project? What would you say about it to grab that person's interest and attention? What is the most important aspect?

Use bullet points <u>where appropriate</u>. Do not craft your complete narrative in bullet points; nor, for that matter, craft a solid, long paragraph that is hard to follow.

Board Information – include a list of your Board/Trustees and their <u>professional</u> affiliations (position, profession). If a member has not had an office career, a designation of community volunteer, community activist, or similar designation can be used.

Provide an **itemized budget with revenue and expenses for the program on the required program/project budget form provided with the application materials**. Include other potential funding sources (including your organization when applicable). If this program/project is multi-year, provide information in the explanation section as to how that will be funded in subsequent years. If your budget includes salary and other operations expenses, explain if these are part of the organization's overall operating budget or over and above the approved budget.

The **organization's operating budget** should be itemized for the major areas and should be one page. If the applicant is a division or department of a very large organization with many divisions/departments (like a university or hospital), include the operating budget for the division/department. The Committees wish to understand what the operational costs are associated with the specific division/department in which the program occurs. Include information about funding revenues <u>specific</u> to the division/department, such as the percentage of the parent organization's budget allocated to the division/department, if fundraising is allocated through the parent organization or if the division/department is responsible for fundraising, especially for special programs, and other revenue/expenditure considerations.

Marketing/Communications Plan: The Community Foundation requires organizations to develop a strategic plan to publicize and communicate the grant award. This includes scheduling a site visit for the Foundation's Grants Committees. (It's a way of saying THANK YOU to your funder and their donors.)

Evaluations/Stories/Photos: Evaluations are required when a grant award is expended. Organizations with a current award and submitting an application in the current cycle must submit at least an interim evaluation, including expected completion date of the current grant award. Stories and photos are strongly encouraged and gladly received for use in the Community Foundation's newsletter, e-news, website, and annual report. If you post grant acknowledgments, stories and photos to your Facebook page, twitter feed, and other social media, send an e-mail to CFMC so that we can push the announcement out to our audience.

Like the Community Foundation's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/CommunityFoundationMC.

Further Questions? Difficulties with the Application Form?

Visit the Community Foundation's web site: www.MiddlesexCountyCF.org

Contact Thayer Talbott, Vice President, Programs & Operations, at Thayer@MiddlesexCountyCF.org or 860.347.0025