

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF MIDDLESEX COUNTY  
Grants Committees  
Application Reviewer's Guide

*Questions/comments for staff and follow up with nonprofits are [due by April 24](#)*

Questions / comments may be submitted via email to Thayer's attention using ONE of the following methods:

- The fillable PDF form sent by email and available on the Committee Application page on the website - **SAVE the form** to your tablet or computer **before** completing. Click in the Comment box at the organization's row and type in your responses. The box will "scroll" for multiple lines of text;   **OR**
- A word document with the list of organizations will be sent by email - **SAVE the document** to your tablet or computer **before** completing;   **OR**
- By replying to Thayer's email and typing in your questions/comments - please include the name of the applicant for each group of questions.

**Reviewing Applications:**

The Community Foundation is particularly looking for grants that add value to, and have a positive impact on, the health and vitality of the Middlesex County community. Grant applications should address a need within the focus area and demonstrate impact on the organization, project, community or persons served.

The Foundation seeks applications that possess some of the following elements:

- build infrastructure within the organization in order to meet its mission (operations support);
- build the capacity of community organizations and/or individuals to help themselves (training and professional development, technology infrastructure, technical assistance);
- recognize and build on a community's or organization's strengths and assets;
- address a documented need or concern of the focus area;
- foster cooperative approaches to community issues through collaborations based on shared visions and mutual responsibility; and
- serve as a catalyst for attracting other resources, such as matching gifts.

CFMC staff often use a "yes/no" or "true/false" series of questions to aid in reviewing application narratives, organization missions and objectives. In reviewing applications, we ask ourselves these questions:

This application

- helps further an organization's work / helps address a community issue or need (or not)
- (if yes) this nonprofit appears to know what it is doing (or not)
- (if yes) this application may/can move the nonprofit forward (or not)
- How can we help the nonprofit improve/move forward?

During the information sessions, we provide the following guidance to the nonprofit organizations:

- CFMC takes a "business model" approach to nonprofit organizations, considering both operations support that aids in a nonprofit's overall work, as well as a "program/project" approach for a specific purpose.
- The business model approach recommends an "operations" narrative to inform CFMC about the work of and impact of the organization or a pivot in adapting to a "new" normal.

- Focus on understanding how nonprofits work to stay in business, stay impactful, and adjust to a new and/or changing environment (both internally and externally).
- Broaden the lens:
  - Continue supporting a wide array of focus areas, programs/projects, and nonprofits serving our community.
  - Current critical needs – education, transportation for seniors/medical needs, mental health, veterans, digital divide, adaptation of arts & culture & heritage, employment, utilities/rent, childcare, and other needs that arise.
  - Basic Needs broadened to include the digital divide, the ability to offer and access alternative programming models.

The ARPA question is for information purposes only and does not impact the considerations given to the organization's application.

Normally, the Foundation will not award grants to

- endowments and building “reserve funds,”
- capital campaigns,
- sponsorships, and
- building programs,
- nor to fund debt reduction or lobbying.

Grants will not be made to individuals, political organizations and campaigns.

**NOTE: The 3/1 Grant Policy has been suspended and all nonprofits, regardless of previous grant status have been invited to apply.**

**Application section II. Grant Program / Project Information** *(Narrative section)*

The following is the description provided to applicants to guide the information requested at each of the narrative questions.

1. **Proposal / Purpose** (7,500 characters with spaces) *State the needs or issues to be addressed with funding, including goals and objectives, and any identified challenges and how you propose to meet them.*
2. **Sustainability** (5,000 characters with spaces) *What are your strategies moving forward?*

**Please do not rank/score for the April 24 questions/comments deadline.**

Follow up reports will be distributed to all committees. Materials will include a revised ranking matrix and the ranking forms.