

GRANTMAKING WITH PURPOSE

SAMPLE DOCUMENTS FOR GRANTMAKERS

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This information is provided by Ask CMF, a technical assistance service of the Council of Michigan Foundations, for educational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice.

Grantmakers regularly reach out to CMF for a variety of sample documents related to the grantmaking process, ranging from grant applications and reports to internal process documents. All such documents are components of the overall grantmaking and due diligence processes inherent to grantmaking organizations.

This resource – “Grantmaking with Purpose” – is intended to provide sample documents for the initial stages of the grantmaking process. Grantmakers looking to better understand the grantmaking process and their accompanying due diligence responsibilities should reference CMF’s [“The Basics of the Grantmaking Process and Due Diligence.”](#)

In order to illustrate the impact of an organization’s strategy, structure and mission on the final grantmaking process and related documents, this set of sample documents is based on a hypothetical grantmaking foundation. These resources combine a number of established, effective practices from across the field to illustrate methods for creating appropriate process documents for other grantmakers in the field to then develop their own materials. Users of these materials should not directly copy these forms for their internal use, but should consider how to customize these strategies to best fit the unique needs of their organization (see [“Using Sample Documents”](#) on Page 3).

The appendices of this resource include a number of sample documents relevant to the grantmaking process undertaken by both private foundations and public charities. These samples are designed to primarily address the needs of small to mid-sized grantmakers, including those with few to no staff members.

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USING SAMPLE DOCUMENTS

In using these sample documents generally, it is important to keep in mind a few key tips to ensure that you choose the most useful templates that apply best to your organization.

- **Find sample documents that fit your organization's size and structure:** Sample documents vary widely, depending on the organization that developed them. Try to find examples that originate from foundations that share at least some of the traits of your organization. For example, a small foundation may find using a template created for a foundation with 100+ employees may be overwhelming for use by a lean team, and a large organization may not be as agile as a small foundation and so their outlined processes may not serve as an effective template.
- **Look for multiple samples:** Organization should review multiple examples of the sample document that they need, whether that is a grant application, internal process document or grant report. In looking across several organizations' versions, it becomes increasingly apparent how the writers customize the general concept to their particular needs. These variations may take the shape of different formats or language that reflect the organization's internal structures, capacity or purpose.
- **Expect to make changes:** A sample document is not a one-size-fits-all template and will need to be adapted to your organization's particular needs. Plan to draft a version (or several) with the help of staff or board members, using the samples for suggestions of the language, format and structure. Also, consider having several people review the draft before finalizing it. In some cases, the final document may also need to be approved by foundation leadership or the board, so plan for additional changes that may come along during those review periods.

CMF members looking to develop or update policies and practices are encouraged to explore the CMF Sample Documents Hub for resources, available at www.michiganfoundations.org/sampledocs.

GRANTMAKING PROGRAM TYPES

This resource focuses on three specific types of grantmaking programs common to foundations nationally. Each of these program types are included within the attached samples, illustrating the specific characteristics inherent to these grants and related processes. These include:

- **Capital Projects:** This grants program supports capital projects undertaken by potential grantees. Oftentimes, these involve construction projects designed to make improvements (expansion or maintenance) to the organization's facilities. Examples may include funding the addition of a new wing on a nonprofit's primary facility, the installation of a ramp at the facility's entrances to ensure accessibility for all visitors or the replacement of its HVAC system. These grants are typically limited to a specific timeframe and budget, in keeping with relevant costs associated with completing the capital project.
- **Programmatic or Project-Based Support:** This grants program supports specific projects or programs carried out by potential grantees. These may include funding specific activities intended to serve a nonprofit's primary service group, ranging from a diabetes prevention program at a local hospital to a museum's educational programming designed for local school

children. These grants are oftentimes limited to a specific timeframe and budget, in keeping with relevant costs and timelines associated with carrying out the project.

- **General Operations/Unrestricted:** This grants program supports the general operations and activities of potential grantees. This funding is considered to be “unrestricted” and can be used to support essential administrative tasks, utilities, memberships, staffing and other functions that may not necessarily be covered by other forms of funding. These grants may or may not be limited to a specific timeframe, as they can take the form of multi-year operating support grants. Likewise, the grantee may not necessarily need to provide a specific budget for the grant, although other financial documents may be required as part of the application and reporting process.

CREATING A GRANTMAKING PROCESS AND DOCUMENTS

The appendices of this resource include a number of sample documents relevant to the grantmaking process undertaken by both private foundations and public charities. These samples are designed to primarily address the needs of small to mid-sized grantmakers, including those with few to no staff members.

To initiate this process, the grantmaking team (staff, board members and/or volunteers) should consider the following questions to guide the design of grantmaking documents that best fit their needs:

- How does the organization’s mission, vision, values and grantmaking philosophy impact its grantmaking activities and processes?
- What types of projects and organizations do we hope to fund?
- What information do we need to make informed grantmaking decisions?
- Do we have a system to retain information about grantees from one year to the next? If so, can we adapt grantmaking documents to take advantage of this known information?
- Do we want to integrate any conversations or site visits into the grantmaking process, or use only written documentation and correspondence with the applicants/grantees?
- How often do we want the board and/or grantmaking team to meet to make decisions about grant applications under consideration?
- What do we plan to do with information generated from grantee reports?

While many professionals and volunteers immediately jump to the grant application as the first document required in the grantmaking process, the creation of this sample resource depended on a different order of operations to develop these documents.

1. **Grantmaking Purposes:** As a first step in the process of considering what types of organizations to support, one must first understand and define the foundation’s underlying purposes and intent for its grantmaking program. In the case of this hypothetical foundation, the founders and board members intended to support Michigan-based arts and cultural organizations, primarily museums and music-oriented organizations. Some of this information may eventually appear within the **grant guidelines** document. Developing this language may require multiple

rounds of edits, particularly as the grantmaking team advances through other stages of the grantmaking process and related documentation.

2. **Establishing Priorities:** With an understanding of the underlying purposes of the organization's grantmaking, the next step is to create a means to establish priorities. In other words, the grantmaking team needs a way to ensure that the types of organizations and projects the foundation wants to support will be eligible grant recipients (included in the applicant pool). This goal is achieved in part by creating the **grant rubric**. In the case of the hypothetical foundation, the following categories were used as the basis for the grant rubric:
 - a. **Feasibility:** The foundation grant team wants to ensure the viability of the project and/or organization.
 - b. **Fulfills Purpose and Established Need:** The foundation grant team wants to see evidence that this project or mission is a priority of the organization, specifically that it meets an established need.
 - c. **Serves Community:** The foundation grant team wants to see that this program or organization serves a need in the community or a pre-defined set of participants/stakeholders involved in the initiative.

In addition, this hypothetical foundation chose to focus on three types of grant programs: capital, project and operations. Grantmakers can choose to support only one or two grantmaking program types, depending on their overall strategy and priorities. The variety of funding programs should be an intentional decision and can serve to illustrate the diverse resource supports available to eligible nonprofit partners.

3. **Developing the Grant Application:** Even before writing or formatting a grant application form, consider what questions and information are most relevant to the decision-making process of the grantmaking team. It is vital to ensure that the grant application seeks only the essential information needed by the organization. A clear, streamlined application form and process is more considerate of the time spent by nonprofit staff or volunteers completing the application, and the foundation's volunteers (board members or community members) and staff who will be reviewing the application.

The chart on Page 7 illustrates how application questions and required documentation should match with the primary requirements of the grant rubric.

Considering a Letter of Intent Component

One consideration in developing the grant application and related process is to decide if the foundation should utilize a Letter of Intent (LOI) component as an initial screening step. If the foundation has a relatively broad and open application process, then an LOI is fairly typical. Essentially, an LOI allows the foundation to consider a shortened version of the grant application before inviting the applicant to move forward with completing a full grant application for submission. This option has several advantages in that it saves the applicant and

the review team valuable time, especially if the request is not well aligned with the basic requirements of the grant program, per the grant guidelines.

The alternative to incorporating an LOI component into the grantmaking process is to require that all applicants complete the entire grant application. This approach is more typical if a program officer or another foundation representative (i.e., staff or board member) meets with the potential grantee and invites them to submit an application.

While the exact grant application requirements may vary between the grant program types, the foundation's grantmaking team should consider the time and effort involved in this process, to ensure that it seems reasonable, considering, too, the level of funding achieved by successful applicants. For example, a multi-million dollar grant request involving a major healthcare initiative may reasonably require much more documentation within the application process than a request for several thousand dollars to support a small nonprofit managed by volunteers.

For further information regarding the grantmaking process and required due diligence components, see "[The Basics of the Grantmaking Process and Due Diligence.](#)"

Table 1: Fitting Grant Rubric Criteria with Grant Application Requirements/Questions

The following table outlines general topics addressed in greater detail within the sample materials included in the Appendices. Please note that some elements of the grant application are submitted as attachments, while others are addressed by answering narrative-based questions.

	Capital	Operations	Project
General Requirements (LOI or Preliminary Review)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IRS Letter/ Organizational Check • Service Area • Organization Type • Basic Contact Information • Overall Project Description 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IRS Letter/ Organizational Check • Service Area • Organization Type • Basic Contact Information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IRS Letter/ Organizational Check • Service Area • Organization Type • Basic Contact Information • Overall Project Description
Feasibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of Directors List • Principal Staff and Qualifications • Project Budget • Project Concept/ Concept Documents • Project Timeline • Proof of Cost • Management/ Oversight of Project • Other Funding Sources • Proof of Ownership of Facility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of Directors List • Principal Staff and Qualifications • Audit • Annual Report (or Other Evidence of Regular Activities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of Directors List • Principal Staff and Qualifications • Project Budget • Project Concept/ Concept Documents • Project Timeline • Innovation vs. Continuation • Other Funding Sources • People and Resources
Fulfills Purpose and Established Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection to Long-term Facility Strategy • Establishes Need for Project • Best Solution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission/Purpose of Organization • Preferred Use of Funds • Primary Activities of Organization • Meeting Needs • Evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes Need for Project • Mission Connection • Strategy Connection • Evaluation
Serves Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audience • Impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audience • Impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audience • Impact

4. **Finalizing the Grant Rubric:** With a full version of the grant application form developed, the grant rubric can then be completed to evaluate grants that are submitted. Ideally, the rubric should provide a structure for a grants committee to evaluate the grants, oftentimes by directly scoring the specific aspects of the applications against specific criteria. The foundation can choose to create an additional document to total the scores per grant, and to compile the results of all applications considered within a single grant round.

5. **Developing the Grant Report:** The grant report form should also utilize the same priorities that were established early on and incorporated into the grant rubric. For example, if the foundation is prioritizing feasibility as one of its key indicators of a successful grant application, then the

grant report should evaluate the final product against key indicators that fit with that priority.

The foundation may consider using intermediate reports to identify areas where grantees require additional assistance from the grantmaker. In these instances, questions may be included in the report that ask for information on challenges encountered by the program or an open question asking about the need for specific assistances. This type of feedback allows the foundation to modify implementation timelines, provide changes to the grant agreements or make other adjustments or recommendations that allows the grant initiative to succeed.

Table 2: Fitting Grant Rubric Criteria with Grant Reporting Requirements/Questions

The following table outlines general topics addressed in greater detail within the sample materials included in the Appendices. Please note that some elements of the grant report are submitted as attachments, while others are addressed by answering narrative-based questions.

	Capital	Operations	Project
Feasibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated Project Budget • Proof of Cost • Proof of Project Completion • Final Project Timeline • People and Resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit • Annual Report (or Other Evidence of Regular Activities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Project Budget • Proof of Project Completion • Final Project Timeline • People and Resources
Fulfills Purpose and Established Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Use of Funds • Meeting Needs • Evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Use of Funds • Meeting Needs • Evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Use of Funds • Meeting Needs • Evaluation
Serves Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact

- 6. Developing the Final Grant Guidelines:** With a full set of documents for the grantmaking process, the **grant guidelines** can then be completed. The guidelines document should include a clear description of the foundation’s purpose, grantmaking program, grantmaking cycles, criteria for potential applicants and recommended contact information or grant submission system. It should also outline the types of programs and organizations that do not fit with the foundation’s grantmaking requirements, in keeping with the foundation’s internal process and applicable legal requirements.

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR CREATING GRANTMAKING DOCUMENTS

The appendices of this resource include a number of sample documents relevant to the grantmaking process undertaken by both private foundations and public charities. The following section includes additional notes related to the creation of these sample documents and additional options for foundations using these documents to generate customized materials for their own use.

For organizations that are new to grantmaking, it may be useful to observe which organizations fit with the criteria set forth in the grant guidelines and which do not in the first few grant cycles of any given

grant program (capital, operations, programmatic, etc.). Over time, the foundation may need to evaluate whether the criteria should be broadened or narrowed in future grant cycles in order to best achieve the goals of the organization's grantmaking program. Likewise, these early stages may also result in further adjustments to rubric criteria, annual grant budget amounts and other areas.

Grant Guidelines

- **Open or Invitation-Only Grant Cycles:** Within the grant guidelines document, the foundation should clearly articulate whether the foundation has an open application process or an invitation-only process. An open application process means that all potential applicants can complete the application form, whether using a Letter of Intent (LOI) step or by completing the full application. An invitation-only process involves the foundation only permitting a group of pre-selected organizations to submit applications to a grant program or grant cycle for consideration. The choice between these options may depend on (1) the time and capacity of the foundation team, (2) the number of potential applicants that fit the existing grant criteria, (3) the amount of funding available to be granted within a given grant cycle, and (4) the amount of control that the foundation wants to maintain over which organizations may be considered.

Grant Applications

- **Application Submission System:** Depending on the capabilities of the foundation, grant applications and related materials can be submitted via online submission systems (i.e., grant application software) or relatively simple PDF or Word documents. In the case of a PDF or Word document version, grant narratives oftentimes have a set format and length (i.e., a maximum of five pages). Additional documentation may be required, including a grant application form, financial statements/audited financials and other accompanying documentation.
- **Letter of Intent (LOI) Option:** The first portion of the grant application in all three grant programs can be used as either a means to gather essential information about the application or serve as a stand-alone LOI request method. Including an LOI as a first step may require additional time in the grant cycle process, as these organizations need to be notified of their preliminary acceptance and then have time to submit the complete application.
- **Tax-Exempt Status:** The foundation may choose to request the most up-to-date version of the IRS Letter of Determination or use another means to determine that the organization is a 501(c)(3) organization. Foundations can search for an organization's tax-exempt status for free via the IRS Tax Exempt Organization Search Tool (<https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/search-for-tax-exempt-organizations>). Some organizations choose to use subscription services or built-in tools within their Grants Management Software systems to conduct this same type of due diligence.
- **Supporting Organizations:** The Pension Protection Act added new requirements for supporting organizations, including the addition of two sub-types of Type III supporting organizations that affect grants by both private foundations and DAFs. Non-compliance with these rules may result in excise taxes and penalties. If the supporting organization's type is not listed on its IRS Determination Letter, then a grantmaker, acting in good faith, may rely on a written

representation from a grantee and a review of specified documents in determining whether the grantee is a Type I, Type II, Type III supporting organization (and which sub-type of Type III). Legal counsel should be sought when contemplating any grant to a 509(a)(3) supporting organization (as opposed to a charity exempt under IRC 509(a)(1) or 509(a)(2), as noted on grantee's IRS Determination Letter).

- **Tax-Exempt Status for Religious Institutions:** Churches that meet certain criteria set by the IRS are automatically considered to be tax-exempt organizations, meaning that they do not necessarily have their own IRS determination letter and are not required to file annual returns to the IRS (Form 990, etc.). If a church or other religious organization does not have an IRS determination letter, then a foundation would need to conduct additional due diligence prior to making a grant to this organization. For churches that are part of a known denomination, the foundation may be able to reference the denomination's letter of determination and a directory that lists all of the congregations affiliated with it. However, not all denominations have a letter of determination or directory.
- **Demographic Information:** The grantmaker may choose to include questions (open-ended or highly-structured) that gather information on the community served by the grantee. This may be focused on the broader geographic region of the nonprofit or a specific set of program participants reached by the organization. Regardless of the approach, the foundation should consider which information is required to best inform their initial decision about the grant application versus which data would be more important to gather in a final grant report. The extent to which this type of information is required is heavily dependent on the foundation's particular goals and mission.

Grant Rubric

- **Presorting Applications:** The foundation should create a structure for grant applications to be presorted by staff or a board member, ensuring each application fits all requirements set forth in the grant guidelines. This step should take place prior to grants being considered by a full grant committee or the foundation board.

Final Report

- **Expenditure Responsibility:** Grants that require expenditure responsibility, such as those directed to non-US public charities, do have IRS-mandated information that must be collected on the use of the grant, which are collected via a final written grant report.
- **Stewarding Funds for Charitable Purposes:** Foundations do have a duty to properly steward funds in order to ensure that they are used for charitable purposes. The foundation does not need to be the "guarantor" of the grantee's activities. However, in the case that the grantee mis-spends grant dollars, then the foundation should not grant to them unless and until the grantee has corrected the issue. Again, the written grant report oftentimes serves as the paper trail for recording and reporting these issues.
- **Evaluation and Data Needs:** Grant reports (written or otherwise) are also an important means for foundations to gather data to help them to assess the effectiveness of their grantmaking and

guide its future funding activities. Many organizations are eager to streamline their grant reporting process, especially given the increasing number of foundations looking to adopt trust-based philanthropic practices. This should be done with an awareness of the foundation's future learning and evaluation needs, including data that needs to be collected to properly assess its current actions at a future date. Additionally, the foundation should consider evaluation components that are within the ability of grantees to collect, as some data collection methods may be beyond the time, resources or skill level of some nonprofits and their personnel.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Bridgespan Group. "How to Research a Nonprofit – Light-Touch Approach.

<https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/library/philanthropy/nonprofit-due-diligence-donor-decision-tool/how-to-research-a-nonprofit%E2%80%94light-touch-approach>.

Bridgespan Group. "How to Research a Nonprofit – Moderate Approach.

<https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/library/philanthropy/nonprofit-due-diligence-donor-decision-tool/how-to-research-a-nonprofit%E2%80%94moderate-approach>.

Council of Michigan Foundations. "The Basics of the Grantmaking Process and Due Diligence."

<https://www.michiganfoundations.org/resources/basics-grantmaking-process-and-due-diligence>.

La Piana Consulting and Grantmakers for Effective Organizations. "Due Diligence Done Well: A Guide for Grantmakers." <https://www.geofunders.org/resources/714>.

Project Streamline. "Due Diligence." Guide to Streamlining Series.

<https://www.peakgrantmaking.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Due-Diligence.pdf>.

Trust-Based Philanthropy Project. "Practices." <https://www.trustbasedphilanthropy.org/practices>.

ABOUT ASK CMF

This document was authored by Brittany Kienker, Ph.D., Knowledge Insights Expert in Residence for the Council of Michigan Foundations (CMF). Legal aspects of this document were reviewed by Jennifer Oertel, outside legal counsel to CMF. CMF members can find answers to their most pressing questions through CMF's Knowledge Insights division, including Ask CMF, the Knowledge Center and the Sample Documents Hub. Ask CMF is a free service to CMF members, available through the "Ask CMF" link on the CMF homepage or by visiting <https://www.michiganfoundations.org/practice/ask-cmf>.

Legal Disclaimer:

The content of this communication is being provided for educational purposes only. This information should not be taken as legal or tax advice. The laws applicable to tax-exempt organizations are complex and change frequently, and further analysis may be necessary. Please consult your professional advisors.

Appendices

SAMPLE Grant Guidelines

Foundation Overview

The J.B. Sample family established the J.B. Sample Arts Foundation (hereafter "Sample Arts Foundation") in the year 2000 to further the state of arts and cultural organizations throughout the state of Michigan. The Sample family focus their giving primarily in Wayne, Washtenaw and Jackson counties, with an emphasis funding museums and music organizations throughout the region.

Grantmaking Program

The Sample Arts Foundation operates three grant rounds per year, each focused on a unique grants program.

- **Project Support:** This grants program supports project or program-specific activities of the organization. This may include specific events, educational programs, exhibits, concert series or other activities that serve a clearly-defined audience during a designated period of time. Most grants in this category are \$10,000-\$25,000.
- **General Operations:** This grants program supports the general operations and activities of the organization. This funding is "unrestricted" and can be used to support essential administration, utilities, staffing, and other functions that may not necessarily be covered by other forms of funding. Most grants in this category are \$10,000-\$25,000.
- **Capital Projects:** This grants program supports capital projects undertaken by the organization. This may include improvements to the organization's own facilities to ensure safe, accessible and continued operations for its staff and audiences. Examples may include funding of such projects as facility's roof, windows, HVAC, lighting, handicap accessible facilities, parking lot resurfacing and lighting, and other capital projects that further the function of the institution's property/facilities. Most grants in this category are \$25,000-\$50,000.

Organizations may apply to multiple grant programs each year. However, receiving a grant in a single year does not guarantee that the foundation will fund the organization's requests in future years.

Eligibility

Applicants must be Michigan-based arts and cultural organizations with 501(c)(3) status, including relevant programs of colleges and universities within the state. In the case of an abundance of qualified applicants, the foundation states a preference for museums (i.e., art, science, history) and music-oriented organizations (i.e., symphonies, chamber ensembles, community bands). The foundation also prioritizes activity focused in Wayne, Washtenaw and Jackson counties.

The Sample Arts Foundation does not fund conferences or events, efforts furthering advocacy or lobbying activity, grants to individuals, government units, or to support publications.

Programmatic and capital grants may be made to or in partnership with religious institutions to support efforts related to the foundation's primary purposes, although additional documentation may be required following application submission.

Grants may be used to support new programs or continue established initiatives. The foundation prefers to participate in matching opportunities, either to help complete existing matches or initiate matches to generate further donations toward the effort.

The foundation typically makes grants in the \$10,000-\$50,000 range, although exceptions may be made in limited circumstances with pre-approval from the foundation grantmaking team. Grants cannot comprise a majority of the charitable organization's project/operating budget and should not jeopardize the organization's public charity status.

Application Procedures (How to Apply)

Applicants must submit a fully completed application, including all required supporting material. All applications must include the completed signature page/cover letter completed by the executive director/president of the submitting organization.

Applications and materials must be submitted in PDF format via the online application system available at: www.sampleartsfoundation.org. Questions regarding the submission of grant application materials may be directed to grants@sampleartsfoundation.org before close of business on the deadlines listed below.

Timeline:

Grant Rounds:

- Spring (Applications Open January 1, March 1 deadline) – Project Support
- Summer (Applications Open April 1, June 1 deadline) – General Operations
- Fall (Applications Open July 1, September 1 deadline) – Capital Projects

Within each grant round, the following activities occur:

- **Application Submission and Deadline:** Organizations may submit an application at any time after the applications open date listed above (typically two months prior to the deadline). However, no applications will be accepted after 11:59 pm on the deadline date (i.e., March 1 at 11:59pm for Project Support application submissions).
- **Initial Review:** Internal staff and/or select grant committee members will conduct a preliminary review of all applications. This review ensures that all applications being considered are complete and fulfill the basic requirements of the grant round.
- **Full Review:** The full grant committee will conduct a full review of grant applications that pass the preliminary review, using the enclosed rubric for scoring each application. Their recommendations will be passed along to the full board.
- **Decision:** The full board will vote on the final slate of grants for that quarter.

Contact

Questions regarding the Sample Arts Foundation grant submission process may be directed to: grants@sampleartsfoundation.org or via the online form at www.sampleartsfoundation.org.

Grant Application

The following application fields may be incorporated into an electronic grant management system and/or online application. The foundation (grantmaker) should indicate preferred lengths and other descriptive instructions to ensure the most appropriate answers to each question. Preliminary information (or the LOI request) should be used with all grant program types, with specific elements of the grant program categories (capital, operating or programmatic) included below.

LOI/Preliminary Information

- Date of Request
- Legal Name of Organization
- Tax ID Number (Employee Identification Number - EIN)
- Tax Exempt Status
 - 501(c)(3) Organization or Other
 - IRS Letter of Determination (or another way to check nonprofit status) – Attachment
- Year Organization Founded
- Contact Information
 - Address (Street, City, State, Zip Code)
 - Website
 - Executive Director Name
 - Preferred Contact Name and Position
 - Phone Number
 - Email Address
 - Phone Number
- Organization Type (Checkbox listing or open question)
- Grant Program Category: Capital, Operations, or Programmatic
- Organization's Mission
- Geographic Region Served
- Project Title
- Purpose of Project/Request
- Amount of Request
- Total Project Budget Amount (Capital/Program)
- Annual Operating Budget Amount (Capital/Program/Operations)
- Existing/New Match – Does this grant assist in fulfilling an existing match or help establish a new match? (Checkbox listing or open question)

Capital Projects

Feasibility (Attachments and Narrative Questions)

- Attachments:
 - Project Budget (all expenses and revenue, including portion proposed for foundation funding)
 - Proof of Cost

- Concept Documents (architectural drawings, environmental surveys, etc.)
- Proof of Ownership of Facility
- Principal Staff (with qualifications and responsibilities)
- Board of Directors List
- Narrative Questions:
 - Project Concept – Describe the project being proposed for this grant.
 - Project Timeline (including portion covered by the foundation) – What is the timeline for the project?
 - Other Funding Sources – What other sources of funding are supporting this project?
 - Management/Oversight of Project – Who is responsible for the management/oversight of this project?

Fulfills Purpose/Established Need (Narrative Questions)

- Connection to Long-term Facility Strategy – How does the project support the organization’s long-term facility strategy?
- Establishes Need for Project – What is the need for this project, as it relates to the organization’s mission and primary activities?
- Best Solution – How did the organization determine that this project is the best solution to the need of the organization and stakeholders?

Serves Community (Narrative Questions)

- Audience – Describe the general audience served by the organization, including those groups who use the organization’s facility.
- Impact – What is the impact of the organization on its staff, audience, and/or community members?

General Operations

Feasibility (Attachments)

- Audit (with letter)
- Annual Report (or other evidence of regular activities)
- Principal Staff (with qualifications and responsibilities)
- Board of Directors List

Fulfills Purpose/Established Need (Narrative Questions)

- Mission/Purpose of Organization – What is the mission and purpose of the organization?
- Primary Activities of Organization – What are the primary activities of the organization?
- Preferred Use of Funds – How will these grant funds assist the organization in carrying out its work?
- Meeting Needs - What needs are met through the organization’s work?
- Evaluation - How does the organization evaluate its success?

Serves Community (Narrative Questions)

- Audience – Describe the general audience served by the organization, either its service area or the community served.
- Impact - What is the impact of the organization on the community it is intended to serve?

Project Support

Feasibility (Attachments and Narrative Questions)

- Attachments
 - Project Budget (all expenses and revenue, including portion proposed for foundation funding)
 - Principal Staff (with qualifications and responsibilities)
 - Board of Directors List
- Narrative Questions
 - Project Concept (with supporting documents) – Describe the project being proposed for this grant?
 - Project Timeline (including portion covered by foundation) – What is the timeline for the project?
 - Innovation vs. Continuation - Is this proposed program an innovation or continuation of the organization's work? Why is this a priority?
 - People and Resources – What people and resources are in place to ensure the success of this project?
 - Other Funding Sources – What other sources of funding are supporting this project?

Fulfills Purpose/Established Need (Narrative Questions)

- Establishes Need for Project – What is the need for this project?
- Mission Connection – How does this project support the organization's mission?
- Strategy Connection – What is the connection of this project to the organization's strategy and objectives (plan of work, strategic plan)?
- Evaluation – How will the effectiveness of this project be evaluated?

Serves Community (Narrative Questions)

- Audience – Describe the general audience served by this project.
- Impact – What is the impact of the project on the specific audience or community it is intended to serve?

Grant Rubric

Grant rubrics should be used by grant committee, staff or board members to evaluate each grant application on the same criteria. Final scores for each category should be notated in the far-right column.

Capital Projects

	Highly Satisfactory (5 points)	Satisfactory (3 points)	Acceptable (1 point)	Not Available (0 points)	Score Selected
General Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completes all required sections. • Good fit for stated grant program criteria. • Intriguing project concept that fits foundation grant program. • Assists with a match. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completes most required sections. • Satisfactory fit for stated grant program criteria. • Satisfactory project concept that likely fits foundation grant program. • May assist with a match. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completes most required sections. • Acceptable fit for stated grant program criteria. • Acceptable project concept that may fits foundation grant program. • Likely does not assist with a match. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not complete required sections. • Minimal/no fit for stated grant program criteria. • Minimal/no fit of project with to foundation grant program. • Does not assist with a match. 	
Feasibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very complete answers to feasibility questions. • Well-developed approach to capital project. • Ready-to-build status of project, including sufficient funding, planning, and project management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively complete answers to feasibility questions. • Developed approach to capital project. • Moderate readiness for project, with many elements of funding, planning, and project management established. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited answers to feasibility questions. • Limited development of capital project details. • Limited readiness for project, with few elements of funding, planning, and project management established. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal/no answers to feasibility questions. • Minimal/no development of capital project details. • Minimal/no readiness for project, including funding, planning, and project management established. 	
Fulfills Purpose and Established Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very complete answers to purpose/need questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively complete answers to purpose/need questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited answers to purpose/need questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal/no answers to purpose/need questions. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-developed need and solution described. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed need and solution described. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited development of need and solution described. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal/no development of need and solution described. 	
Serves Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very complete answers to audience/community questions. Well-developed impact described. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relatively complete answers to audience/community questions. Developed impact described. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited answers to audience/community questions. Limited development of impact described. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal/no answers to audience/community questions. Minimal/no development of impact described. 	
				Total Score	

General Operations

	Highly Satisfactory (5 points)	Satisfactory (3 points)	Acceptable (1 point)	Not Available (0 points)	Score Selected
General Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completes all required sections. Good fit for stated grant program criteria. Assists with a match. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completes most required sections. Satisfactory fit for stated grant program criteria. May assist with a match. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completes most required sections. Acceptable fit for stated grant program criteria. Likely does not assist with a match. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not complete required sections. Minimal/no fit for stated grant program criteria. Does not assist with a match. 	
Feasibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very complete answers to feasibility questions. Very qualified staff and board to achieve organization's mission and programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relatively complete answers to feasibility questions. Relatively qualified staff and board to achieve organization's mission and programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited answers to feasibility questions. Somewhat qualified staff and board to achieve organization's mission and programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal/no answers to feasibility questions. Little/no qualifications of staff and board to achieve organization's mission and programs. 	

Fulfills Purpose and Established Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very complete answers to purpose/need questions. • Well-developed need, purpose, and evaluation described. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively complete answers to purpose/need questions. • Developed need, purpose, and evaluation described. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited answers to purpose/need questions. • Limited development of need, purpose, and evaluation described. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal/no answers to purpose/need questions. • Minimal/no development of need, purpose, and evaluation described. 	
Serves Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very complete answers to community/audience questions. • Well-developed impact described. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively complete answers to community/audience questions. • Developed impact described. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited answers to community/audience questions. • Limited development of impact described. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal/no answers to community/audience questions. • Minimal/no development of impact described. 	
				Total Score	

Project Support

	Highly Satisfactory (5 points)	Satisfactory (3 points)	Acceptable (1 point)	Not Available (0 points)	Score Selected
General Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completes all required sections. • Good fit for stated grant program criteria. • Intriguing project concept that fits foundation grant program. • Assists with a match. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completes most required sections. • Satisfactory fit for stated grant program criteria. • Satisfactory project concept that likely fits foundation grant program. • May assist with a match. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completes most required sections. • Acceptable fit for stated grant program criteria. • Acceptable project concept that may fits foundation grant program. • Likely does not assist with a match. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not complete required sections. • Minimal/no fit for stated grant program criteria. • Minimal/no fit of project with to foundation grant program. • Does not assist with a match. 	
Feasibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very complete answers to feasibility questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively complete answers to feasibility questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited answers to feasibility questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal/no answers to feasibility questions. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-developed approach to project. High readiness for project, including sufficient funding, planning, and project management. High priority for organization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed approach to project. Moderate readiness for project, with many elements of funding, planning, and project management established. Moderate priority for organization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited development of project details. Limited readiness for project, with few elements of funding, planning, and project management established. Low priority for organization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal/no development of project details. Minimal/no readiness for project, including funding, planning, and project management established. No sense of priority for organization. 	
Fulfills Purpose and Established Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very complete answers to purpose/need questions. Well-developed need and effective solution described. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relatively complete answers to purpose/need questions. Developed need and effective solution described. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited answers to purpose/need questions. Limited development of need and effective solution described. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal/no answers to purpose/need questions. Minimal/no development of need and effective solution described. 	
Serves Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very complete answers to audience/community questions. Well-developed impact described. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relatively complete answers to audience/community questions. Developed impact described. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited answers to audience/community questions. Limited development of impact described. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal/no answers to audience/community questions. Minimal/no development of impact described. 	
				Total Score	

Preliminary Checklist

(Also applicable to LOI option)

- Is the organization a 501(c)(3)?
 - Check for updated IRS Letter of Determination or online check.
- Is the organization based in and serves Michigan communities?
 - Does it fit a foundation priority county/community (Wayne, Washtenaw, Jackson)?
- Is the organization an arts and cultural organization?
 - Does it fit a foundation priority (Museum or Music)?
- Is the application complete?
- Is the request amount at or below the amount stated within the grant guidelines document?
- Is the program description within the parameters of the foundation grant guidelines?
- Are there any potential conflicts between the submitted board of directors' list and the foundation?

Potential Red Flag and “Deal Breakers” List

(For preliminary or full grant applications)

- Missing audited financial statements or does not have an unqualified opinion provided by the auditor.
- Insufficient income or revenue to provide for expenses. Alternatively, the project budget is overly large for the general size of the organization.
- Tipping: Concern about the size of the grant in comparison to the size of the organization and the contributions of other donors.
- Capital Project: Minimal or no indication of planning or appropriate budgeting for the project.
- Board list that shows potential conflicts of interest with the foundation's board. Need to check for conflict of interest disclosures within foundation.
- Poor experience with the nonprofit handling grantmaking and grant review steps in the past.

Grant Rubric Tally Sheet

(For internal purposes to total grant scores)

An accompanying grant rubric chart may also be used to total final scores from a group responsible for evaluating a single grant (i.e., grant committee, staff, board members). It allows for easy computing of the final overall score and a useful reference to note variations in scores. Some foundations may choose to indicate a minimal acceptable score to be considered by the full board. For example, a perfect score on this rubric would receive a 20. A score of 12-15 may be required to move forward for the full board's consideration.

Grant Evaluator	General Requirements	Feasibility	Fulfills Purpose/Need	Serves Community	Final Score
Person 1					
Person 2					
Person 3					
				Total Score	

Board Grant List

The following list may be useful to boards considering a full slate of potential grants within a board meeting context.

Grant Name/ ID Code	Grant Program Type (Capital, Project, Operating)	Organization	Original Grant Amount Requested	Adjusted Grant Amount Suggested by Committee	Grant Summary (1 sentence)	Average Committee Score	Final Approval by Board (yes/no/requires further discussion)
Grant 1							
Grant 2							
Grant 3							

Final Report

Final reports should be connected to the original grant application and related materials within the grant management system. If necessary, several initial fields may be included to ensure up-to-date information and connecting the report to the appropriate electronic files.

The following final report fields may be incorporated into an electronic grant management system and/or online application. The grantmaker should indicate preferred lengths and other descriptive instructions to ensure the most appropriate answers to each question. Organizational information should be used with all grant program types, with specific elements of the grant program categories (capital, operating, or programmatic) included below.

Optional Organizational Information – to be included with appropriate grant report sections below.

- Legal Name of Organization
- Tax ID Number (Employee Identification Number - EIN)
- Tax Exempt Status
 - 501(c)(3) Organization or Other
 - IRS Letter of Determination (or another way to check nonprofit status)
- Contact Information
 - Address (Street, City, State, Zip Code)
 - Website
 - Executive Director Name
 - Preferred Contact Name and Position
 - Phone Number
 - Email Address
 - Phone Number
- Organization Type (Checkbox listing or open question)
- Grant Program Category: Capital, Operations, or Programmatic
- Project Title
- Purpose of Project/Request
- Grant Received
- Updated Project Budget Amount (Capital/Program only)

Capital Projects

Feasibility

- Attachments
 - Updated Project Budget, including Other Funding Sources
 - Proof of Cost
 - Proof of Project Completion, including Photos, Materials, etc.
 - Final Project Timeline
- Narrative Questions:

- People and Resources: What people and resources ensured the success of this project?

Fulfills Purpose/Established Need (Narrative Questions)

- Final Use of Funds – What did the organization use the grant funds for toward the completion of this project? How did the money help further the organization’s mission and the project’s intended purposes?
- Meeting Needs – What needs were met through the completion of this project?
- Evaluation – How did the organization evaluate the success of this project?

Serves Community (Narrative Questions)

- Impact – How did the project’s completion impact the organization’s staff, audience and/or community members?

General Operations

Feasibility (Attachments)

- Audit (with letter)
- Annual Report (or Other Evidence of Regular Activities)

Fulfills Purpose/Established Need (Narrative Questions)

- Final Use of Funds – What did the organization use the grant funds for? How did the money help further its mission and the intended purposes/needs of the organization?
- Meeting Needs – What needs were met through the organization’s work, specifically those efforts funded by the grant?
- Evaluation – How did the organization evaluate its success?

Serves Community (Narrative Questions)

- Impact – How does the organization impact the community it is intended to serve?

Project Support

Feasibility

- Attachments:
 - Final Project Budget (including portion proposed for foundation funding)
 - Proof of Project Completion (i.e., photos, published report)
 - Final Project Timeline (including portion covered by foundation)
 - Updated Board of Directors List
- Narrative Questions:
 - People and Resources: What people and resources ensured the success of this project?

Fulfills Purpose/Established Need (Narrative Questions)

- Final Use of Funds – What did the organization use the grant funds for toward the completion of this project? How did the money help further the organization’s mission and the project’s intended purposes?
- Meeting Needs – What needs were met through the organization’s work on this project?
- Evaluation – How did the organization evaluate the success of this project?

Serves Community (Narrative Questions)

- Impact – How does this project’s completion impact the community or specific audience it is intended to serve?