

# **DULUTH SUPERIOR AREA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITY FUND GUIDELINES**

## **MISSION**

The purpose of the Community Opportunity Fund is to improve the region by addressing the Opportunity Gap and fostering Generosity, Civic Engagement, and Inclusiveness (GIE) in the following five areas: Arts, Community and Economic Development, Education, Environment, and Human Services.

An important secondary purpose is to strengthen the organizational capacity of grantees to sustainably and effectively fulfill their missions.

Grants from the Community Opportunity Fund usually range from \$2,000 to \$20,000. Transformation Grants of \$20,000 to \$50,000 may be awarded in rare circumstances for projects that promise a transformational impact on a sector or geographic area and/or a systemic solution to critical or emerging needs.

Community Opportunity Fund grants cannot provide long-term support for any purpose. Therefore, agencies must have the financial potential to sustain a program after a Community Opportunity Fund grant has ended.

The vast majority of Community Opportunity Fund grants provide support for projects, programs, and/or capacity building.

The Community Opportunity Fund rarely provides grants for equipment or general operations, almost never provides grants for capital projects, and never provides multi-year grants.

For other unrestricted funds which lack their own guidelines, the guidelines of the Community Opportunity Fund shall apply.

## **PROPOSAL REVIEW PROCESS**

The Foundation utilizes a three-phase process to review and evaluate grant proposals:

**Phase I Review: Generosity, Inclusiveness, Engagement and Opportunity Rising;**

**Phase II Review: Organizational Capacity Building;**

**Phase III Review: Organizational Strength and Plan Strength.**

### **PHASE I REVIEW: GENEROSITY, INCLUSIVENESS, ENGAGEMENT AND OPPORTUNITY RISING**

**[Proposals must demonstrate the promotion of Generosity, Inclusiveness, Engagement and/or Opportunity Rising based upon the following definitions.]**

In order to be considered for funding from the Community Opportunity Fund, proposals must advance the Foundation’s vision by meaningfully fostering Generosity, Inclusiveness and Civic Engagement, and/or closing the Opportunity Gap.

**Generosity** – DSACF gives priority to Community Opportunity Fund proposals that foster or exemplify the willingness to generously give or share resources – including time, talent, knowledge, financial resources, credit, and influence – in order to advance the public good. In the area of Generosity, DSACF values Community Opportunity Fund proposals that:

- Inspire a community-wide attitude of generosity.
- Encourage nonprofit organizations to help each other (collaborate).
- Stimulate greater or more effective volunteer service.
- Encourage people to pursue careers in community service.
- Bring valuable knowledge, insight, and expertise that advance generosity.
- Support public policies that encourage and reward generosity.

**Inclusiveness** – DSACF gives priority to Community Opportunity Fund proposals that support the aim of advancing the opportunity for all people to participate substantively in all aspects of community life. In the area of Inclusiveness, DSACF values Community Opportunity Fund proposals that encourage individuals, institutions, and communities to:

- Foster trust, reciprocity, and understanding across lines of difference.
- Eliminate stereotypes, prejudices, and fear of diversity.
- Empower excluded groups to be full and effective participants in community life.
- Include all voices in public discussions and decisions.
- Remedy the exclusion of any group from any aspect of community life.
- Ensure that nonprofit leadership reflects the area’s diversity.
- Bring valuable knowledge, insight, and expertise that advance inclusiveness.
- Support public policies that encourage and reward inclusiveness.

**Engagement** – DSACF gives priority to Community Opportunity Fund proposals that foster effective individual and collective action to collaboratively identify and address issues of public concern. In the area of Engagement, DSACF values Community Opportunity Fund proposals that:

- Create new opportunities to participate.
- Support multi-sector collaborations to address issues of public concern.
- Provide leadership skills to youth and young adults.
- Support and develop community leadership.
- Convene nonprofits to discuss mutual challenges and opportunities.
- Support virtual and physical spaces where social interacting, public deliberation, and community activity thrive.
- Bring valuable knowledge, insight, and expertise to important public discussions.
- Support public policies that encourage and reward engagement.

**Opportunity Rising** - The mission of Opportunity Rising is to think in fresh ways about the nature and delivery of service to low-income children, youth and families, and to support innovative and collaborative projects that embrace and empower families, and create systemic change. Opportunity Rising aims to fill missed opportunities or gaps in parenting, education and community. Preference is given to projects that focus on early childhood intervention to build ladders of opportunities, increase opportunities to participate in community and/or school programs, and directly involve and

engage low-income children, youth and families, especially people of color and Native Americans. Within Opportunity Rising, DSACF values proposals that align with the following objectives:

- Inclusively provide children, youth and families wrap-around support and encourage community members to connect with one another to share, learn and grow together.
- Promote a holistic and empowering approach to combating family poverty by supporting projects that see the child in the context of the family and the family in the context of its surroundings, and that aim to empower families to achieve long-term resilience.
- Develop non-traditional ways of addressing the barriers for participation in community and/or school programs (transportation, accessibility, and/or participation fees), or build sustainable capacity for existing programs that have a successful history of filling the gaps and present opportunities.
- Increase the ladders of opportunities and eliminate systemic barriers to achieving success (as defined by participants).

## **PHASE II REVIEW: ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING**

**[A major capacity building component is required for proposals greater than \$20,000]**

Priority is given to Community Opportunity Fund proposals that enhance the ability of nonprofit organizations and government agencies to sustainably and effectively fulfill their missions.

In the area of organizational capacity building, DSACF values Community Opportunity Fund proposals that help grantees:

- Cultivate strategically important skills and knowledge of board, staff, and volunteers.
- Develop, implement, and/or expand new, more sustainable, business models.
- Explore and pursue strategic restructuring options including joint programming, informal partnerships, mergers, acquisitions, parent/subsidiary relationships, program transfers, and shared administrative services.
- Improve the understanding of supporters, customers, and other stakeholders.
- Develop strong, results-focused, strategic plans.
- Learn about and share best practices.
- Analyze improvements to internal systems such as accounting, financial planning, information technology, databases, and staff performance evaluations.
- Develop and implement program evaluations.

Special priority is given to Community Opportunity Fund proposals that have the potential to increase the capacity of multiple nonprofit organizations and government agencies or entire sectors.

For proposals for less than \$20,000, a substantial capacity building component is not strictly required but will increase the competitiveness of the proposal.

In order to be considered for funding, requests for more than \$20,000 must include a substantial organizational capacity building component that will significantly and permanently enhance the organization's ability to sustainably and effectively fulfill its mission.

## **PHASE III REVIEW: ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTH AND PLAN STRENGTH**

Community Opportunity Fund proposals that pass Phase I review will be assessed for organizational strength and plan strength.

**Organizational Strength** – In the area of Organizational Strength, DSACF values Community Opportunity Fund proposals that demonstrate:

- Strong board and staff leadership.
- Financial stability and capability.
- A track record of delivering programs effectively, on schedule, and on budget.
- Adequate resources, staff, and skills to carry out and sustain the project.
- A track record of effective inter-agency collaboration.
- Current board-approved strategic plan or other meaningful plan to prioritize goals and activities.

**Plan Strength** – In the area of Plan Strength, DSACF values Community Opportunity Fund proposals that include:

- A complete, realistic, and appropriate budget.
- A well-designed project with clear and realistic plans, goals, outcomes, and evaluation measures.
- Strong evidence-based demonstration of project need and program/service effectiveness.
- Meaningful collaboration with other service providers to maximize synergy and avoid duplication.
- A credible plan to financially sustain the project beyond the grant period.
- A strategy that maximizes the community benefit per grant dollar.
- A means to address underlying causes of community problems.

## **SPECIAL CASES**

### **ONE-TIME CORE MISSION GRANTS**

Sometimes referred to as core mission grants, DSACF core mission grants are Community Opportunity Fund awards that may be spent by grantees with greater flexibility than is normally the case with project, program, and capacity building grants. Core mission grants may be used by applicants for any core operating expenditure except capital purchases and the expenditures listed below under, “Prohibited Uses of DSACF Community Opportunity Funds.”

Requests for one-time core mission grants will be considered in those rare cases when:

- The applicant meets the Eligibility Requirements outlined below.
- The applicant and its programs are in exceptionally strong alignment with the priorities of the Community Opportunity Fund (detailed in, Proposal Review Process Phases I, II, and III, above).
- The project has a significant organizational capacity building component.
- The organization demonstrates that it is at a critical moment when a timely core mission grant is necessary to take advantage of major opportunities and/or respond effectively to major threats.

- The applicant demonstrates the ability to sustain the organization after the one-time core mission grant has ended.

Government agencies, colleges and universities, hospitals, and organizations with annual budgets in excess of \$5 million dollars are not eligible to apply for core mission grants.

## **MULTIPLE GRANTS FOR THE SAME PROJECT**

DSACF will permit an applicant seeking continued Community Opportunity Fund support for a previously funded project to request an additional Community Opportunity grant for the same project in those rare cases when:

- The proposed project is in exceptionally strong alignment with the priorities of the Community Opportunity Fund (detailed in, Proposal Review Process Phases I, II, and III, above).
- The proposed project powerfully advances Generosity, Inclusiveness, Engagement and/or Opportunity Rising.
- The organization demonstrates that an additional grant and additional time are unavoidably necessary to achieve the project aims.

The maximum number of Community Opportunity Fund grants an applicant may receive for the same project is 3.

DSACF will consider a 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> Community Opportunity Fund grant for the same project only after:

- The applicant has received an invitation from authorized DSACF staff to request an additional Community Opportunity Fund grant for the same project.
- The applicant submits a complete new project proposal for the additional grant.
- The grant period for the prior Community Opportunity Fund grant will end before the beginning of the new grant period.
- The applicant submits satisfactory project reports for work completed on the project through the date when each new application is submitted.

Please note: DSACF does not provide “multi-year” grants from any fund. The maximum term of DSACF grants is one year. All grants are subject to the standard review and approval process.

## **TRANSFORMATION GRANTS (\$20,000 TO \$50,000)**

Transformation grants of \$20,000 to \$50,000 from the Community Opportunity Fund may be awarded project support, capacity building, and/or core mission in those rare circumstances when:

- The applicant and its programs are in exceptionally strong alignment with the priorities of the Community Opportunity Fund (detailed in, Proposal Review Process Phases I, II, and III, above).
- The project has a significant organizational capacity building component.
- The project has the potential to effect permanent systemic transformation of a sector or geographic area and/or a systemic solution to critical or emerging needs.
- The project brings an innovative idea or best practice that is new for the community.
- The project changes the way a community or a sector thinks and acts.

## **ELIGIBILITY AND USES OF FUNDS**

### **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

To be eligible to apply for funding, an organization must:

- Be classified as a charitable organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code; or classified as an organization under Section 170(c)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code.
  
- Be located in or provide service to residents within the seven counties of northeast Minnesota (Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake and St. Louis) and/or the three counties in northwest Wisconsin (Bayfield, Douglas and Ashland).

### **GRANTS FOR CAPITAL EXPENDITURES AND EQUIPMENT**

Capital and equipment requests are a low priority for the Community Opportunity Fund and usually will not be considered for funding.

### **PROHIBITED USES OF DSACF COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITY FUNDS**

The Foundation does not make Community Opportunity Fund grants, or permit the use of core mission grants from the Community Opportunity Fund, for the following:

Endowments; religious organizations for religious activities; medical research; debt retirement; requests from re-granting organizations for funding to be used for their own grant making activities; individuals (except scholarships initiated or managed by the Community Foundation); political organizations or campaigns; tickets for benefits; telephone solicitations; fundraising drives or activities; organizations with a substantial part of their purpose the influencing of legislation; or replacement of government funding\*.

*\*The Community Opportunity Fund may provide gap or bridge funding that temporarily replaces government funds in those rare cases when an organization is responding effectively to a government funding cut and has a strong plan for financial sustainability beyond the grant period. Otherwise, DSACF grants may supplement, but not replace, government funding.*

## APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Potential applicants should first submit a Letter of Intent via the Community Foundation's website at <http://www.dsacommunityfoundation.com/apply-for-a-grant>. Please review the Grant Cycle Calendar for a competitive grants fund list to determine which fund may be appropriate for your needs and timing. Once you have contacted us with information about your project/program via the online grant application, staff will contact you regarding fund-specific guidelines and the application process. Applicants can also contact Community Foundation staff by telephone at 218.726.0232 or by email at [grantsinfo@dsacommunityfoundation.com](mailto:grantsinfo@dsacommunityfoundation.com).

The Letter of Intent must be submitted using the online grant application portal **at least 2 weeks prior to the deadline**. Based on the outcome of the LOI, an organization may be encouraged to submit a full proposal through the online portal. The Community Foundation's Grant Application Process is outlined on the website, along with a step-by-step tutorial for utilizing the online grant application. Please use the Community Foundation staff as a resource throughout the application process; contact staff with any questions by email at [grantsinfo@dsacommunityfoundation.com](mailto:grantsinfo@dsacommunityfoundation.com) or by telephone at 218.726.0232.

**The deadlines for receipt of proposals to the Community Opportunity Fund are April 1 and October 1. The Board of Trustees will determine grants at the June and December meetings, respectively. If awarded, funds would be available in July and January.** Grant awards may not be used retroactively. Complete proposals are to be submitted via the grants portal website before 5:00 p.m. on the deadline date. If the deadline falls on a weekend or holiday, complete proposals are due before 5:00 p.m. on the next business day following the deadline date.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION OR ASSISTANCE:

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Approved by the Grants Committee at its meeting on March 14, 2018