



## Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation Incentive Grant Program - Guidelines and Procedures

Effective January 2017

Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF) is a catalyst for economic growth in 20 Minnesota counties. We work to build a prosperous region with vibrant communities and innovative businesses. To accomplish this, we invest in early childhood and economic development initiatives.

SMIF's Incentive Grant Program is designed to support new asset-based collaborative approaches that demonstrate measureable results related to SMIF's early childhood and economic development goals.

### Focus Areas

#### Early Childhood Development

SMIF is seeking to support early childhood efforts so children are ready to learn and succeed. These projects should strengthen children's social and emotional health and school readiness. Examples include new projects that provide or enhance early literacy skills, kindergarten transition, skill training for child care providers, and regional partnerships or initiatives. *Note: Early childhood Incentive Grants are not intended to support expansion of existing early childhood education programs, home visiting programs, or workplace parent education programs. (Please contact our office for more information on home visiting program grants and workplace parent education efforts)*

#### Economic Development

The Economic Development focus area is designed to accelerate economic growth and foster more business activity in the 20 counties served by the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation. We work to strengthen and grow the local business community by supporting initiatives which leverage partnerships and collaborations to ignite and sustain long term impact.

Preference will be given to new projects that provide education and technical support for new or existing entrepreneurs and businesses. Examples include business incubators, coworking spaces, one-on-one technical assistance, business skill training, and business outreach.

#### Impact Measures

Applicants will need to identify and report on the following measures related to early childhood or economic development projects:

#### Early Childhood Development

Mandatory Impact Measures: (all applicants must measure and report)

- Identify how many children have been impacted by your project





- Identify number of parents you have impacted through increased connections and communications

Choose at least one of the following:

- At least 75% of children served demonstrate an increase in literacy skills according to the developmental milestones checklist (MDE) or other SMIF-approved method
- At least 75% of children served demonstrate an increase in social/emotional school readiness proficiencies according to the developmental milestones checklist (MDE) or other SMIF-approved method

Additional Impact Measures: (applicants choose at least one to measure and report)

- Identify number of at-risk families served access additional early childhood learning opportunities (with a target of at least 50% of at-risk families served)
- Increase effective, coordinated early care and education through training and/or alignment

Economic Development

Mandatory Impact Measures: (all applicants must measure and report)

- Identify number of entrepreneurs/businesses that have been impacted by your project
- Identify collaborations and how they have impacted leveraged resources

Additional Impact Measures: (applicants choose at least one to measure and report)

- Identify number of jobs created and/or retained
- Identify new enterprise created
- Identify new product(s) developed
- Increase funding sources or leveraged funding
- Increase business knowledge by entrepreneur(s)

## Funding

- Grants awards will be made up to \$20,000
- Only one application per organization will be considered
- All projects must be completed within a 12-month timeframe
- All grants require a 100% match, at least 25% cash (cash match must be in-hand before grant funds are released)

## Eligibility

To be eligible for a SMIF grant, organizations must meet the following requirements:

- Have Internal Revenue Service 501(c)3 status, are a unit/agency of government or a public school/institution.
- Located (or serve) within SMIF's 20-county region:

|            |          |          |         |          |
|------------|----------|----------|---------|----------|
| Blue Earth | Fillmore | Le Sueur | Olmsted | Wabasha  |
| Brown      | Freeborn | Martin   | Rice    | Waseca   |
| Dodge      | Goodhue  | Mower    | Sibley  | Watonwan |
| Faribault  | Houston  | Nicollet | Steele  | Winona   |





## Exclusions

Ineligible organizations or activities include:

- Individuals, businesses, or other for-profit organizations
- General operating expenses and expenses not directly related to the project/program
- Capital funding, fixed assets, campaigns or endowments
- Existing deficits
- Programs or services mandated by law
- Projects/programs already in progress or completed
- Funds for re-granting or to establish loan pools
- Strategic planning without tangible outcomes within the 12-month timeframe
- Organizations that have an “open” cash grant with SMIF or have not satisfied a grant obligation within the past 12 months
- Development or purchase of school curriculum without tangible outcomes within the 12-month timeframe
- Expenses directly related to AmeriCorps LEAP/VISTA members
- Feasibility studies without tangible outcomes within the 12-month timeframe
- Research projects or school-related internships
- Routine city, county, or township planning or zoning

## Priority Considerations

SMIF will give priority consideration to applications which best demonstrate:

- Measurable results—projects that can show quantitative results in SMIF focus areas
- Asset-based approaches—projects that maximize the strengths, talents, and resources of the local community
- Collaboration/partnership—projects that work with other organizations in unique and effective ways
- Sustainability of local or other funding streams—projects that have solid plans for continuation outside of SMIF funding
- Leveraged funding—projects that access all available resources and maximize SMIF’s investment
- Effectiveness—projects that effectively address an identified need and/or opportunity
- Impact—projects that demonstrate an overall impact within SMIF’s region

## Application Process

### Grant Review and Award Process

SMIF awards grants on a competitive basis. Eligible applications that evidence the seven funding priorities noted above will be given a full review, which may include a site visit, by SMIF staff members. Note: Site visits are intended to gain additional information about the organization and the proposal. The most successful site visits include all collaborative partners.





The Grant Review Committee, comprised of Board of Trustee members and community members, makes the final grant award decisions.

Grant award payment(s) will be made once all grant contract requirements are completed. SMIF requires all grantees to submit interim and final grant reports as outlined in the grant contract. (Projects/programs that will be competed in less than 12 months may be required to submit only a final grant report.) Failure to submit a report, incomplete reports, and/or late reports may jeopardize future grant funding from SMIF. Grantees that fail to submit reports will be ineligible for an Incentive Grant for 12 months from the project end date stated in the contract.

SMIF will provide a public announcement highlighting the project on behalf of the grant recipient.

### **Proposal Components**

- Completed application ([www.smifoundation.org](http://www.smifoundation.org))
- SMIF Project Budget Worksheet (balanced; available on website)
- Audited financials or filed tax forms if unaudited
- IRS 501(c)(3) determination letter (if nonprofit organization)
- Letter(s) of support from partner organization(s) other than the applicant organization and fiscal agent

For grant award consideration, **submit a completed online application by February 28, 2017 (end of business day)**. Incomplete grant applications or applications submitted after the deadline will not be considered. Applicants will be notified of award decisions by May 15, 2017.

Please contact our Grants Coordinator, Jennifer Heien, if you would like to discuss your proposed project prior to completing an application or if you have any questions. Jennifer Heien can be reached at 507-455-3215 x133 or [jenniferh@smifoundation.org](mailto:jenniferh@smifoundation.org).

*SMIF is a member of the Minnesota Council of Foundations and adheres to the Council of Foundation's Statement of Principles and Practices. SMIF's annual report is available on-line at [www.smifoundation.org](http://www.smifoundation.org)*

