

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION  
OF GREATER FORT WAYNE

# CONCEPT LETTER

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## GUIDELINES AND INSTRUCTIONS



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## CONTACT INFORMATION

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The Community Foundation is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Funding questions can be directed to:

Contact: Christine Meek, Director of Community Impact, [cmeek@cfgfw.org](mailto:cmeek@cfgfw.org)  
Lisa Buchanan, Administrative and Grants Assistant, [lbuchanan@cfgfw.org](mailto:lbuchanan@cfgfw.org)

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Fort Wayne, IN 46802

Phone Number: 260-426-4083

Fax Number: 260-424-0114

Web site: [www.cfgfw.org](http://www.cfgfw.org)

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## COMPETITIVE GRANTMAKING OVERVIEW

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The Community Foundation is made up of many different types of funds, including donor advised, restricted, field of interest, scholarship, and agency endowments. The majority of these funds do not accept unsolicited funding requests from nonprofits. The Community Foundation's Community Impact Fund and Clarke Endowment Fund do accept such requests through a formal process described herein. In addition, applications submitted to the Community Impact Fund and the Clarke Endowment Fund are screened to determine their funding eligibility through other funds of the Community Foundation. No additional application or information is required for this consideration. The following grant guidelines apply only to grants awarded from the competitive grant program.

These guidelines offer general guidance and are not a guarantee for success in obtaining a grant. Each proposal is evaluated on its potential value to Allen County; the quality of planning, leadership, support, and vision expressed; the relative need for the program proposed; and the current funds available for distribution. Due to the large number of funding requests, the Community Foundation can fund only a small portion of the requests received. An unsuccessful application does not reflect the worthiness of a particular project.

The Community Foundation is required to fully review and evaluate all funding requests, resulting in a decision-making and approval process that normally takes several months. The grant review committee reviews grant applications four times a year and presents recommendations to the board of directors at the board meetings in February, May, August, and November. A lack of requested information or an incomplete concept letter or application will delay the decision-making and approval process by several months.

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## ELIGIBILITY

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Grants are made only to nonprofit organizations that have federal tax-exempt status as a section 501(c)(3) public charity or to government agencies (see limitations for government agencies under "What the Community Foundation Does Not Fund"). The nonprofit or government agency must serve the Allen County area. No grants are made to individuals other than those made through designated scholarship funds.

An agency can only apply for one grant, unrestricted agency support or technology support, in a 12-month period. Additionally, the foundation does not respond to annual appeals for support or to widely circulated, generalized funding requests. Although the Community Foundation does not award grants from the competitive process for religious purposes, grants for religious purposes may be awarded from other funds at the Community Foundation. Grants from other funds will be made in accordance to their specific guidelines.

The mission of the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne states, in part, that we strive to “improve the quality of life” for the citizens of Allen County. We believe that our community can best be served by a wide variety of charitable organizations that both reflect and serve different constituencies.

Our mission calls us to serve everyone regardless of race, color, ancestry, national origin, sex, age, religion, disability, familial status, sexual orientation, gender, or gender identity. Funding from our unrestricted endowments may be provided to a variety of charitable organizations that reflect the diversity of our community, and is subject to our “Funding for Religious Purposes” policy stated elsewhere.

We seek grantees and partners that incorporate diversity and inclusion into their mission, governance board, staff, volunteers, and constituents served. To receive a grant from the Community Foundation’s unrestricted endowments, your organization must affirm that no person is excluded from services due to discriminatory reasons including race, color, ancestry, national origin, sex, age, religion, disability, familial status, sexual orientation, gender, or gender identity.

We recognize that many high-quality charitable organizations are motivated by their unique religious values and beliefs. While we encourage charitable organizations to strive to strengthen themselves through the value of a diverse group of staff and volunteers, and will give funding preference to such organizations, we support organizations that provide a unique community service regardless of their hiring and volunteer recruitment policies involving religion, provided they are in compliance with applicable local, state, or federal laws.

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## **FUNDING PRIORITIES**

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### **WHAT THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FUNDS**

The Community Foundation encourages requests that are developed in consultation with other agencies and planning groups, increase coordination and cooperation among agencies, and reduce unnecessary duplication of services. Preference is given to funding requests that:

- Address priority community concerns;
- Encourage more effective use of community resources;
- Test or demonstrate new approaches and techniques in the solution of community problems;
- Are intended to strengthen the management capabilities of agencies; and
- Promote volunteer participation and citizen involvement in community affairs.

### **WHAT THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION DOES NOT FUND**

The Community Foundation cannot meet every community need. We do not make grants from the Community Impact Fund or the Clarke Endowment Fund for the following:

- Annual fund drives;
- Operating deficits or after-the-fact support;
- Endowment funds, except for endowment–building matching grants for funds held at the Community Foundation;
- Direct or grassroots lobbying;
- Religious purposes;
- Hospitals, medical research, or academic research;

- Public, private, or parochial educational institutions, except in special situations when support is essential to projects/programs that meet critical community needs;
- Governmental agencies, including public school systems, except in special situations when support is essential to projects/programs that meet critical community needs;
- Limited special-interest organizations, except when such support significantly benefits the disadvantaged; and
- Funding for sponsorships, special events, commercial advertising, films or videos, television programs, conferences, group uniforms, or group trips.

## FUNDING FOR RELIGIOUS PURPOSES

The Fort Wayne community is the home of various faiths. We are fortunate to have many faith-based agencies that serve our community, some located in houses of worship and some at separate locations. The Community Foundation, with its mission to “serve all the people of Allen County,” provides funding to faith-based groups that meet certain guidelines through the Community Impact Fund and the Clarke Endowment Fund as well as various other funds it manages. The Community Impact Fund and the Clarke Endowment Fund allow funding to religious organizations for charitable purposes; the funds do not allow funding for religious purposes. **These guidelines apply only to the Community Impact Fund and the Clarke Endowment Fund.**

Grants and scholarships awarded from other funds at the Community Foundation are distributed according to their individual fund agreements, with recommendations from donor advisors, and final approval by the board of directors. Many of these funds do award grants and scholarships for religious purposes.

To assist your agency in determining its eligibility to receive funding from the Community Impact Fund and the Clarke Endowment Fund, we have included a sample list of eligible program characteristics and descriptions of previously funded faith-based organizations below. The lists are not comprehensive and should be used only as a guide. We encourage you to contact the director of community impact or the grants manager should you have questions about your agency’s funding eligibility.

Characteristics of eligible programs may include, but are not limited to:

- May be located in a house of worship;
- Separate nonreligious programs from religious programs;
- May use the same room, but not at the same time, for religious and nonreligious programs;
- Are open to all, regardless of religious affiliation;
- Abstain from religious worship, instruction, or proselytization (recruitment); and
- Eliminate required statements of belief from participants.

Descriptions of previously funded programs include:

- A soup kitchen operated out of a church;
- Transitional housing for homeless families run by a faith-based organization;
- Case management for families in need at a faith-based social service agency;
- Emergency housing located in various churches; and
- A food bank serving the unemployed out of a faith-based ministry.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REQUESTS

Grants made for economic development purposes are intended to stimulate Allen County’s economic vitality. Grants may be awarded to specific municipal, government, or nonprofit projects and organizations that have a direct positive impact on the economic development of Allen County communities that meet certain criteria.

The ultimate goal of an economic development grant is to help create vibrant, economically-integrated neighborhoods and to increase opportunities for low-income residents, ultimately improving quality of life.

Economic development grant recipients, whether direct or indirect, must serve the poor, distressed, or disadvantaged in some way.

The Community Foundation must ensure that any grant made will provide a public benefit and not serve private interests. To ensure that funds are furthering a charitable purpose, economic development grants must generally fit into one or more of the categories listed below. Charitable activities may, and often do, serve more than one of these purposes. Promoting economic development is not, by itself, a charitable purpose. Any economic or community development grant proposal must have a clearly identified charitable purpose.

IRS recognized charitable purposes:

- Relief of the poor and distressed or of the underprivileged;
- Advancement of education or science;
- Erection or maintenance of public buildings, monuments, or works;
- Lessen the burdens of government; and
- Promote social welfare, eliminate discrimination, or combat community deterioration.

For a grant by the Community Foundation to be considered charitable, it must achieve one of the IRS-listed purposes. The Community Foundation must ask itself, at every point, can we state the charitable purpose for which this grant will be used.

Legally the Community Foundation may not support activities that have a “substantial” non-charitable purpose or result in inurement to private entities or persons. Unfortunately there is no clear method to differentiate substantial from insubstantial; each request must be evaluated on its specific facts and circumstances. The key is to make certain the primary focus and beneficiaries of the grant area a broad-based group that fits within the tax code definition of a charitable purpose.

Examples of projects that fit the legal definition of charitable purpose include:

- Encouraging businesses to locate new facilities in economically depressed areas;
- Construction or renovation of housing for low income families;
- Buying blighted land and converting it into an industrial park by providing tenant businesses with attractive lease terms but binding them to hire and train local unemployed persons;
- Programs that benefit the disabled by providing training and/or job opportunities;
- Development of a blighted area into a biotechnological research and development center;
- Support to attract new industry to the community or encourage development of, or retention of, an industry in the community that is for the public benefit;
- Preservation and renovation of an historic attraction in a blighted area;
- Scientific research aimed at attracting new industry to the community for the revitalization of a depressed residential area.

To determine if a grant request fits within the IRS definition of a charitable purpose, the Community Foundation due diligence process may include many of the following steps:

- Obtain a government ruling that the area is blighted or requires redevelopment.
- Ensure that a project benefits a charitable class such as offering training or employment to historically unemployed or under-employed people.
- Carefully document the nature of expenditures to show a charitable purpose through written grant agreements describing sponsored activities, budget, personnel, and objectives.
- Identify that the economic development project will benefit the targeted community as opposed to individual investors.
- Determine how the project will contribute to the economic development of individuals or groups who are otherwise unable to progress economically.

- Assure follow-up reporting as to details of progress made in achieving charitable goals (the larger the grant, the more details required).
- Preference should be given to low skilled businesses or those that will employ minorities or other disadvantaged persons.

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## GRANT CATEGORIES

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### AGENCY SUPPORT

- For general operating support or existing programs and projects.
- Agency support requests are eligible for multi-year awards of up to \$75,000 a year for three years, totaling no more than \$225,000.
- Agencies that receive a multi-year award are not eligible to receive another agency support grant until the multi-year grant has expired.

### TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT

- Funding is for the purchase of computers, computer-related technology, telephone systems, audiovisual systems, security systems, etc.
- Technology support requests are eligible for single year awards of up to \$50,000.
- Technology requests with support from more than one funder are encouraged.

### LIMITATIONS

An agency can only apply for one grant, unrestricted agency support or technology support, in a 12-month period. Exceptions to the one grant per organization, per 12-month policy, may be made in cases when the organization requesting funding serves as the fiscal sponsor for another organization. The maximum grant award normally does not exceed the amounts referenced above. It is strongly suggested that requests not exceed these guidelines.

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## COMPLETING THE CONCEPT LETTER

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After thoroughly reviewing these guidelines, the completion of a concept letter is the first step in the formal grant application process. One original and five copies for a total of six are needed.

### DEADLINE FOR CONCEPT LETTER

We strongly encourage grantseekers to submit their concept letters as early as possible. We do not accept e-mailed or faxed concept letters. Please schedule enough time to secure the required signatures for the Concept Letter Fact Sheet. In fairness to all, we do not accept late and/or incomplete concept letters for any reason. See the Grant Schedule for concept letters deadlines.

## ITEMS TO INCLUDE IN YOUR CONCEPT LETTER

Please attach the original and five copies (for a total of six) of the following items, in this order:

1. **Concept Letter Fact Sheet**  
An additional “cover page” is not requested or necessary
2. **Original, dated narrative letter**  
Two pages maximum, describing your program and funding request;
3. **A detailed program budget if requesting program support OR a full organizational budget for general operating support**  
Clearly explain the program and/or technology expenses, existing and/or anticipated funding sources for the program, and the amount being requested from the Community Foundation or agency budget for those applying for unrestricted operating support
4. **Most recent fiscal year-end financial statements, audited if available**  
To apply for a competitive grant, grantees must have an audit completed at least once every five years
5. **A copy of the organization’s 501(c)(3) determination letter**  
For agencies using a fiscal sponsor, see Fiscal Sponsorship section
6. **A list of your board of directors and their principal affiliations**  
Should include full name, address, telephone number(s), employment and/or volunteer affiliation), with board meeting dates, times, and location.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Please use paper that copies legibly and attach all materials using a paper clip. Do not enclose your concept letter in any sort of cover. Do not provide any materials other than those specifically requested at this time. This includes display materials, videotapes, audio cassettes, etc. Due to the volume of requests, materials not requested will not be reviewed or retained.

For agencies not currently recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit, attach a copy of the sponsoring organization’s Internal Revenue Service Letter of Determination. The sponsoring organization’s chief executive officer must also sign the concept letter fact sheet.

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## WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER SUBMITTING YOUR CONCEPT LETTER

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Staff will process the request and notify you on how to proceed. Possibilities include:

- Invitation to complete a formal application; the appropriate application form will be provided.
- A request for more information.
- Advise to not pursue funding at this time.

## APPLICATION PROCEDURES AND HELP FOR ELIGIBLE GRANTSEEKERS

Those grantseekers selected to complete an application will be provided with the appropriate grant application: agency support or technology support. The program staff will be available to provide guidance and answer any questions you may have.

## GRANTSEEKERS WORKSHOP

Grantseekers invited to apply for funding are encouraged to attend an informal meeting designed to help with any remaining questions about completing the grant application. Dates for the grantseekers’ workshop are noted on the yearly schedule. Attendance is not a requirement and is open only to those grantseekers selected to submit applications for the current funding quarter. Grantseekers may bring a draft of their application package to the workshop to ask specific questions or may get general advice as needed.



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## **CONFIDENTIALITY AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

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### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Although the deliberations and discussions of the grant review committee are strictly confidential, the program staff will share information with other individuals and agencies as needed. To assist the grantseeker, the program staff may discuss general concerns and questions with the grantseeker.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY**

The Community Foundation maintains a strict conflict of interest policy for its board, staff, and grant review committee to ensure independence and integrity in its recommendations. Staff and grant review committee members may not accept any form of compensation, gifts, or favors from any organization or representative that anticipates submitting a grant proposal to the foundation, has submitted a proposal, or has received a grant.

Paid staff members of the Community Foundation may serve on the board of nonprofit organizations. Those organizations, however, are disqualified from applying for or receiving an agency or technology support grant from the Community Impact Fund, the Clarke Endowment Fund, or any named unrestricted fund of the Community Foundation. The staff of the Community Foundation may not participate in fundraising feasibility studies.

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## **FISCAL SPONSORSHIP**

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If your organization is not currently recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) tax exempt nonprofit, you may identify another agency to act as your organization's fiscal sponsor. The fiscal sponsor must be recognized as a publicly supported, charitable organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code.

A copy of the sponsoring organization's Internal Revenue Service Letter of Determination showing 501(c)(3) status must be included with your proposal, along with copies of the sponsor's most recent annual financial statements (audited if available). The sponsoring organization's chief executive officer must complete and sign the fiscal Sponsor section at the bottom of the Concept Letter Fact Sheet. If a grant is approved, payment will be made to your organization through your fiscal sponsor.

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## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

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### **DOES THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FUND CAPITAL CAMPAIGNS?**

From time to time, if the funds remain available after the competitive grant requests have been addressed, the grant review committee may recommend to the Community Foundation Board of Directors special grants designated for capital campaigns in the community. Such grants would typically support organizations that meet some or all of the following criteria:

- Are transformational for clients and the community;
- Provide support to a broad segment of the community;
- Are leaders in their respective service areas; and,
- Have previously been vetted by the grant review committee for annual support.

In addition, any organization may use unrestricted agency support grant proceeds for any purpose, including for capital purposes.

### **CAN I APPLY FOR AN AGENCY SUPPORT GRANT AND A TECHNOLOGY GRANT?**

An agency can only apply for one grant, agency support or technology support, within a 12-month period.

### **HOW MUCH FUNDING SHOULD I REQUEST?**

Due to the limited amount of funds available, it is recommended that you request a funding amount similar to the amount you may have received in the past. At this time, grantseekers are also encouraged to ask for single year funding rather than multi-year funding.

If your organization has never received funding from the Community Foundation, it is highly recommended that the funding request be under \$10,000. Should you have any questions regarding your eligibility, funding opportunities, grant request amounts, or other questions, please contact program staff at 260-426-4083.

### **ARE THERE ANY UNIQUE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION INITIATIVES?**

Depending on the grant funds available, and in response to community needs identified by the Community Foundation, the foundation may, at times, award multi-year and/or larger grant amounts than those listed on the previous page. Additionally the foundation may award special grants to organizations that have not submitted a grant request. These situations occur in rare instances and only through the initiation of the Community Foundation. All grantseekers are advised to follow the timetable guidelines and limitations listed on the grant calendar.

### **WHAT ARE THE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS IF I RECEIVE A GRANT?**

The Community Foundation is interested in the impact of its grantmaking to area nonprofit organizations and the community. Recognizing the importance of effective evaluation, grant evaluation should augment your organization's ongoing planning and evaluation process. Full financial accounting of the expenditure of grant funds and narrative reports on the grant-supported projects are required as a condition of the grant.

If the program lasts for more than six months, interim or progress reports should be submitted. They may be brief but should include a financial summary, indicating how foundation funds have been expended during the period, and a narrative comment on development of the program or project.

A final report is required within 60 days after the end of the grant period. This report should include a complete financial statement showing all funds received and expended for the programs covered by the grant, and a narrative report on the project and its significance and success. The financial and narrative reports should, in each case, compare actual expenditures and accomplishments with the budget and objectives cited in the original proposal. Failure to submit the report by the specified date could result in a loss of future grant dollars.

### **HOW DOES THE GRANT PROCESS WORK?**

Upon receipt of completed applications, requests go through a competitive grant review process. As a steward of community dollars, the Community Foundation requires thorough evaluations of all requests received. The evaluation process may include requests for additional information, site visits, third-party interviews, and other steps as deemed appropriate. Final decisions on all grant requests rest with the board of directors on the advice of grant review committee recommendations.

## **WHEN WILL I FIND OUT IF MY ORGANIZATION HAS RECEIVED A GRANT?**

Due to the volume of requests, program staff will not call to inform grantseekers of funding decisions.

**Grantseekers are invited and welcome to call program staff to discuss the agency's funding status on or after the dates listed in the Grantmaking Schedule.** The agencies will also be notified in writing as indicated in the Grantmaking Schedule.

## **IS AN AUDIT REQUIRED TO RECEIVE FUNDING?**

While the Community Foundation recognizes that some nonprofits may not have conducted an audit due to cost, we believe that the value of an audit goes beyond the initial cost. To apply for a competitive grant, organizations must have an audit completed at least once every five years.

Although some organizations use an independent contractor to prepare financial statements, an audit examines not only financial records and accounts, but also business transactions, accounting practices, and internal controls. Neither a review nor a compilation are substitutes for an audit as they do not provide the same level of assessment an audit provides.

## **WHO CAN I TALK TO AT THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION ABOUT GRANTS?**

As part of its mission, the Community Foundation strives to serve as a community leader and convener to help create a brighter future for the residents of Allen County. We welcome opportunities for our board and staff to learn more about the needs of the community.

At the same time, please keep in mind that the Community Foundation strives to maintain a fair and equitable grant application process, equally open to a broad range of charitable interests. The only method to apply for funding from the Community Foundation is through the application process described in this document, and only information included in this process will be used by our volunteers in their funding decisions.

As outlined in Community Foundation policies and procedures, staff and volunteers must report all conflicts of interest and abstain from funding deliberations accordingly.

We understand that you may, from time to time, have questions about the application process. We ask that you direct those questions to the Director of Community Impact, Christine Meek at 260-969-3318, or via e-mail at [cmeek@cfgfw.org](mailto:cmeek@cfgfw.org) or the Administrative and Grants Assistant, Lisa Buchanan at 260-969-3301 or via email at [lbuchanan@cfgfw.org](mailto:lbuchanan@cfgfw.org).