

# KNOX COUNTY FOUNDATION GUIDELINES FOR GRANTMAKING

(Revised 12/2021)

## INTRODUCTION

For more than 75 years the Knox County Foundation, formerly the Community Foundation of Mount Vernon/Knox County, has awarded grants and scholarships from a variety of unrestricted, donor-advised and designated funds. As a group, these awards reflect the diversity of charitable interests defined in the Foundation's mission statement:

- To improve the quality of life in Knox County through charitable giving;
- To provide a vehicle for donors of varied interests to support charitable and community activities;
- To assess and respond to emerging and changing community needs in the fields of education, youth services, recreation, health, arts and culture, social services, and civic and community development; and
- To develop a permanent endowment for the community, and to serve as a catalyst for the initiation of vital projects.

The Board of Directors of the Knox County Foundation is committed to identifying and initiating projects that fulfill this mission, and invites funding proposals from organizations operating in Knox County that share its vision. Grant-seekers typically apply to the Foundation for financial support from its unrestricted funds, which are distributed based on availability and upon a proposal's merits measured against the following criteria: **Eligibility, Foundation Priorities and Coordination of Funding**. Each of these criteria is discussed in detail below.

## Types of Foundation Grants

All requests for funding must be approved by the Foundation board or by its designated Grants Committee. Applicants should be aware grants are awarded on a competitive basis and that deadlines for submission of requests must be strictly observed. To expedite consideration of **Small Grant** requests, and to provide adequate time for the review of **Major Grant** requests, two distinct applications procedures have been established by the Foundation:

**Small Grant** applications (up to \$10,000) are invited 4 times a year and must be received by January 15<sup>th</sup>, April 15<sup>th</sup>, July 15<sup>th</sup>, and October 15<sup>th</sup> for consideration the following month. Applicants are encouraged to apply for funding earlier in the year as more of the funding pool will be available at that time.

**Major Grant** applications (more than \$10,000) are invited twice each year, and must be received by January 15<sup>th</sup> for February consideration or July 15<sup>th</sup> for August consideration. The Foundation encourages organizations applying for funding of \$50,000 or more to do so in the January round, as the majority of its large grant pool will be available for distribution at that time.

## **CRITERIA**

**Eligibility.** Grants are made to tax-exempt private agencies classified as 501(c)(3) organizations, and to public charities as defined by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. Public schools, governmental entities and Knox County colleges and universities are also eligible to apply for Foundation grants. Prospective applicants are urged to contact the Foundation before preparing an application if there is a question concerning eligibility, as proof of eligibility must be provided to the Foundation before grants are considered.

Certain projects and organizations are **generally not eligible for funding**, including but not limited to:

- Grants to individuals or projects where facilities or equipment of non-qualifying entities are improved or benefitted
- Routine operating or payroll expenses
- Projects/Programs that are restricted to members of a particular faith community or promote a specific religious doctrine
- Purchase of computers, unless proven to be used solely for the project/program
- Paying off existing obligations, debts or liabilities
- Travel (when it is the proposal's primary focus)
- Projects which have been completed prior to allocations decisions

- Organizations that do not operate programs in Knox County, or for the benefit of Knox County residents
- Political campaigns
- Capital improvements to privately held property, including property held by a religious organization

**Foundation Priorities.** The Foundation seeks to maximize its impact in the community and has adopted the following strategic priorities to guide its grantmaking. Proposals that address one or more of these priorities have a greater likelihood of receiving funding. They are listed here in no particular order of importance.

- A pilot project which can serve as a model of excellence in the community
- A project which proposes a creative solution to an identified, but unmet need, in the community
- A project or program which encourages volunteer involvement
- A project that is a collaborative effort among nonprofit organizations in the community and will eliminate duplication of services
- A project which is likely to make a clear difference in the quality of life for a substantial number of people
- A project which promotes economic vitality in the community.

**Coordination of Funding.** The Foundation prefers to support projects in which it is a funding partner, rather than the sole funding source. Applicants are strongly urged to include some degree of match funding in their proposals, and Foundation grants should be the final dollars committed to a project. An additional factor in considering an award is an organization's demonstrated ability to sustain the project, if applicable, when Foundation funding has ended.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

• While the Foundation's board of directors does not establish distribution quotas, either by geography, project type, or any other criterion, it makes every attempt possible to fund a broad spectrum of needs throughout Knox County.

- Incomplete grant proposals are not eligible for consideration. The Foundation may on occasion request an applicant to submit an addendum, addressing specific questions, or request to visit the site of a proposed project, prior to making its final determination.

- First time applicants for major grants and any applicants requesting a grant over \$50,000 are typically required to personally present proposals to members of the Grants Committee and/or the entire Board of Directors.

- Interested major grant applicants who intend to request a grant over \$50,000 are encouraged to meet with the Program Director as soon as possible to provide applicants with an assessment of potential Foundation interest and support. As the Foundation runs a competitive grant program, large grant requests may need 3-5 years advance notice of intent to be eligible for funding over \$50,000.

- The Foundation Board of Directors does not issue statements of explanation for applications they elect not to fund. Unsuccessful applicants who plan to submit a similar request for funds at a later date are urged to discuss the Foundation's application requirements and funding priorities with the Program Director prior to re-submission.

- Contributions and bequests to the Foundation are often the result of publicity concerning a funded project. Therefore, the Foundation requires all grantees to appropriately acknowledge its financial support in news releases, internal publications, announcements, and, where appropriate, on building plaques, equipment and other capital items. Please refer to the *Publicity Strategies* document available on our website for ideas on communicating your grant to the community.

## **GRANT ACCEPTANCE REQUIREMENTS**

Upon receiving a letter indicating your grant is selected for funding, grantees must complete the Grant Acceptance Statement within 30 days and request distribution of funds within 180 days of grant notification. Funds should be requested at the approximate time project expenses will first be incurred. If funds will not be utilized within the 180 days, it is the grantee's responsibility to notify the Foundation. If it appears implementation of the project or program will be delayed, the grant recipient must submit a written explanation that contains a request to extend the funding date. Otherwise, granted funds not requested within 180 days of award are

subject to rescission by the Foundation. The Foundation reserves the right to verify that disbursed funds have been timely utilized for costs associated with the project.

Grant funds may not be used for unbudgeted purposes. Unspent grant funds must be returned to the Foundation for re-distribution. The grant recipient must maintain the grant funds in a separate account, or adequately track funds, so that charitable funds are identifiable from non-charitable funds.

The Foundation has both a fiduciary and a community responsibility to prudently manage resources that have been entrusted to it. Grantees share in this responsibility and are required to submit the Foundation's *Grant Follow-Up Report*, found on the applicant's dashboard in the grants portal, at six-month intervals after funding is received or as soon as the funds are used, whichever is sooner. Failure to complete a *Grant Follow-Up Report* will result in ineligibility for future Foundation grants.

### **HOW TO APPLY**

Applicants are required to submit applications through the Foundation's Online Grant Portal. Once an account is created through the portal, applicants will have access to all grant applications available. Grant applications can be saved and returned to at a later date if needed, but must be submitted by the deadlines listed above. Additional information may be requested by phone: 740-392-3270 or e-mail: [lisa@knoxcf.org](mailto:lisa@knoxcf.org).