Nonprofit Infrastructure Grant Program 2019-2021 Request for Proposals (RFP)

Release date: September 3, 2019

SUMMARY

The Nonprofit Infrastructure Grant Program (NIGP) is aimed at supporting the missions of small, culturally led organizations by strengthening their infrastructure. Increasing the capacity of small organizations that work with historically underserved cultural communities helps position these organizations for greater impact in their community. The Nonprofit Infrastructure Grant Program will provide grants as well as ongoing support to grow the organizational capacity of small Minnesota nonprofits. This is a government reimbursement grant, so Propel Nonprofits staff will also work with grantees to navigate the reimbursement process.

Propel Nonprofits is seeking proposals that lead to meaningful improvement in an organization's infrastructure, including technology investments, staff development, relationship building, or other opportunities to increase nonprofits' core mission support. We anticipate making between 10-12 grants of up to $40,000 for a grant period of either 12 or 18 months. Grantees will be required to receive post-award support from Propel in terms of managing the tracking and reporting requirements of this grant; they'll also be asked to share lessons learned through mid-term and final grant reports and at a grantee convening.

Propel Nonprofits fuels the impact and effectiveness of nonprofits with guidance, expertise, and capital. We provide loans, technical assistance, financial education, fiscal sponsorship, and consulting services in accounting, and strategy and governance.

Key dates

RFP announced:	September 3, 2019
Community RFP informational webinars:	Friday, September 6, 2019, 12-1 pm Monday, September 9, 2019, 12-1 pm
Technical assistance sessions with applicants:	Thursday, September 19, 2019, 9 am-4:30 pm Monday, September 23, 2019, 9 am-4:30 pm
Proposals due:	Monday, September 30, 2019, at 5 pm
Follow-up calls with applicants, if needed:	October through early November 2019
Awards announced:	Early November 2019
Grant agreements signed:	Late November 2019
Grant period begins:	December 1, 2019

Key Contacts

Mario Hernandez
Strategic Services Director
612-249-6688
mhernandez@propelnonprofits.org

Sarah Alfaham
Fiscal Sponsorship Manager
612-249-6748
salfaham@propelnonprofits.org

GUIDELINES AND APPLICATION

Purpose of Grant

The Nonprofit Infrastructure Grant Program (NIGP) will support the missions of small, culturally led organizations by providing grants and technical assistance that strengthen vital organization infrastructure needed for long-term sustainability. The program focuses on increasing the capacity of small organizations focused on historically underserved cultural communities. Grantees will also have access to intermittent technical assistance focused on financial administration and other nonprofit finance, strategy, and governance areas.

Legislative Intent

The Nonprofit Infrastructure Grant Program is funded by an appropriation from the state legislature. Eligibility criteria align with the legislative intent of the original appropriation language (MN Laws of 2017, SF 1456 Chapter 94, Article 1 Appropriations).

Eligibility Organization Criteria

The primary organization eligibility criteria are:

1) Small, culturally specific organizations that primarily serve historically underserved cultural communities. This includes organizations where the majority of management or board of directors' positions are held by members of these cultural communities and the programs are designed to serve these cultural communities.
2) Nonprofit organizations, including 501(c)(3) organizations and unincorporated groups which have a fiscal sponsor.
3) Organizations with current annual budgets with expenses less than $500,000.

Grantees from the pilot 2017 grant cycle are NOT eligible for this grant round. This decision was made in order to ensure other emerging organizations have access to this grant program.

Eligible Program Activities

Organizational Administrative Improvement

Grants under this activity area can be used to improve internal administrative infrastructure. Eligible activities under this category include hiring staff or consultants to assist with: developing database management systems; developing financial systems; and, building other administrative systems needed to increase the organization's ability to access and sustain new funding sources and deliver on the organization's mission. Other eligible expenses include investments in technology to improve internal infrastructure.

Organizational Workforce Development

Grants under this activity area can be used to increase workforce capacity that builds the organization's infrastructure. Eligible activities include hiring culturally competent staff or consultants to expand programming capacity; providing training and skills development; and, implementing other methods of increasing staff capacity.

Organizational Partnerships

Grants under this activity area can be used to create partnerships with other organizations to increase capacity. Eligible activities include the creation and expansion of partnerships with existing organizations that possess specialized expertise; and, the creation of partnerships to increase the capacity of the grantee organizations to improve services for the community.

This is not an exhaustive list of activities that can be funded by this grant program. Propel Nonprofits will work with grant applicants to determine how and if their proposed activities fit within the eligible activities listed above.

Anticipated Grant Term and Amount

Propel Nonprofits is seeking to fund 10-12 proposals that lead to meaningful improvement in an organization's infrastructure and position the organization to be financially sustainable. The anticipated grant terms and goals are:

1. Award between 10-12 grants
2. Award grants up to $40,000 for either 12-month or 18-month terms
3. Provide post-award technical assistance to grantees in financial administration and other nonprofit finance, strategy, and governance areas
4. Grantees will be asked to share lessons learned through mid-term and final grant reports and 1 grantee convening

Anticipated Payment Structure

The grants awarded under this NIGP will be administered similar to how state grants are administered. One of the additional outcomes sought by this program is to better position small organizations to compete in Minnesota state competitive grant programs. The technical assistance to grantees will focus on achieving this goal.

Grants will be paid out on a reimbursement basis. This tool is to align with how state grants are administered. Once grantees are selected Propel Nonprofits will work with the grantees to determine the reimbursement scheduled best suited for the grantee. All grantees will be required to submit intermittent financial and program reports.

Timeline for RFP Process

The RFP process will include two informational webinars to provide an overview of these grant guidelines and to answer questions organizations may have with regards to applying. Two technical assistance days will include a 30-minute session for applicants who want to receive assistance in preparing their application. Follow-up calls may also be scheduled and conducted only with organizations for which the selection committee feels it needs clarifying information.

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RFP Review Process

Propel Nonprofits will engage and train a grant selection committee to review and select the grant recipients. Committee members will include community members, and the selection process will be facilitated by Propel staff. The committee will ensure that applicants meet the

organizational eligibility criteria and allowable activities. In addition to these base requirements, other priorities will guide the selection process. These priorities include:
- Organizations that support multiple cultural communities
- Organizations in Greater Minnesota and the Twin Cities
- Organizations that provide different types of services – arts, workforce development, education, etc.
- Supporting both established and emerging organizations

There will be no firm requirements for these priorities. They will guide the selection process, knowing that different factors, such as the number of applicants, can make achieving some of these priorities difficult.

Applying for a Grant
All grant applications must be submitted using the online form located at https://www.propelnonprofits.org/nonprofit-infrastructure-grant-program/application/. The form will close on Monday, September 30, 2019, at 5 pm. No late applications will be accepted.

Two informational webinars will be held to review this RFP with interested organizations and to answer questions. Register for one of the two informational webinars here, https://register.gotowebinar.com/rt/4406648391262142220 and select either:
- Friday, September 6, 2019, 12-1 pm
- Monday, September 9, 2019, 12-1 pm

There will be two technical assistance days to help applicants with their application preparation. During the previous grant round, we found that many applicants wanted support in thinking through and writing their work plan. The following two dates have been set aside for providing technical assistance during 30-minute appointments.

Technical Assistance Day 1
Thursday, September 19, 2019, between 9 am-4:30 pm

Technical Assistance Day 2
Monday, September 23, 2019, between 9 am-4:30 pm

Information on how to sign up for either of these technical assistance days will be shared soon on the grant web page.

Applicants can also call and email the grant contacts, Mario Hernandez and Sarah Alfaham, if they need technical assistance but can't make an appointment on either of these dates.

For additional information, visit https://www.propelnonprofits.org/nonprofit-infrastructure-grant-program/.

Key Contacts
The two individuals below will be available to answer questions about the grant program.

Mario Hernandez
Strategic Services Director
612-249-6688
mhernandez@propelnonprofits.org

Sarah Alfaham
Fiscal Sponsorship Manager
612-249-6748
salfaham@propelnonprofits.org

Additional Documentation Requested
In addition to the narrative questions, the following documentation will be requested in the application:
- Current year, board-approved organizational budget
- 501(c)(3) determination letter or fiscal sponsor agreement
- List of board members and affiliations
- Most recent Form 990 or recent year-end statement of activities and balance sheet

NARRATIVE QUESTIONS

1. *Organizational Description:* Provide a summary of your organization's mission, history, strategic priorities, and key accomplishments.
   (350-word maximum)

2. *Building Internal Infrastructure:* The Nonprofit Infrastructure Grant Program will support organizations that are seeking to strengthen their organizational infrastructure to amplify impact; to increase financial sustainability; to strengthen the ability to meet goals; and, to build strategic competitive advantages. Please describe the following areas as they relate to your organization:
   a. What three key areas of your organization infrastructure are a priority at this point in time? (examples include staff expertise, financial systems, grants compliance, partnership structures and agreements, policies and procedures, technology, etc.)
   b. What are you currently doing to address these infrastructure priorities?
   (350-word maximum)

3. *Leadership in Cultural Communities:* The Nonprofit Infrastructure Grant Program will support organizations led by cultural communities who are using cultural-relevant strategies to address historical inequities in these communities. Please describe the following:
   a. Describe how your organizational leadership – board and management – reflect the cultural community your organization serves.
   b. Describe the cultural community your organization serves.
   c. Describe how your programming or services are strategically designed to achieve impact in the cultural community you serve.
   (350-word maximum)

4. *Strategy for Building Infrastructure:* Explain how your organization is strategically addressing the current infrastructure priorities.
   a. Describe how you are currently deploying resources for your infrastructure priorities. For example, are key objectives part of staff annual goals; are you

using volunteers to help fill capacity needs; are you securing in-kind contributions of equipment, technology, etc.?
    b. Describe how you engage your stakeholders – employees, board members, volunteers, and others – in your infrastructure strategies.
(300-word maximum)

5. *Organizational Work Plan:* Please describe your work plan for this grant project. The grant can be for a maximum of 18 months (December 2019-May 2021). Please include the following:
    a. Describe your key activities to be funded through this grant.
    b. List your goals and how you will measure progress on those goals.
    c. Describe your timetable for carrying out the activities and achieving the goals in your project.
(600-word maximum)

6. *Technical Assistance in Financial Administration:* Propel Nonprofits seeks to help organizations improve their financial administrative infrastructure during the course of this grant program. Many small nonprofits can't adequately compete for state and local government grants or contracts because of limitations in this area. Please describe the areas in your organization's financial administration where technical assistance would be helpful, such as budgeting, cash flow projections, cash management, accounting systems, etc.
(300-word maximum)

7. *Sustaining the Infrastructure:* What is your strategy for sustaining the infrastructure improvements you've described in this application? How are you involving staff, board members, and key allies in your sustainability strategies?
(300-word maximum)

PROJECT BUDGET AND FINANCIAL QUESTIONS

1. *Project Budget:* Please list your proposed project's revenue sources and expenses:

Revenue source	Amount
Nonprofit Infrastructure Grant Program	
Other Grants	
Earned revenue	
Other	
Total Revenue	
Expense	Amount
Personnel	
Fringe benefits	
Consultants	
Equipment	
Supplies	
Travel	
Professional development	
Other	
Total Expenses	

Please note: Do not enter your organizational budget here. You will be asked to submit that as an attachment.

2. *Other Funding Sources:* If this grant is meant to cover part of the costs of an infrastructure project, please describe the large project and other sources of funding currently prospected or secured. Please disregard this question if this is a stand-alone project.
(300-word maximum)

3. *Organizational Financial Health:* Describe your organization's recent financial health. Please describe:
   a. Is the organization building up reserves?
   b. Has the organization recently faced financial difficulties?
   c. What steps you are taking to ensure good financial health for your organization?
   d. Is there information you feel is relevant to share about the financial health of the organization?
(300-word maximum)

4. If you are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, please attach your most recent 990 (if your organization does not file a 990, please attach their most recent 990-EZ or 990-N). Please disregard this question if you have a fiscal sponsor.

5. If you have a fiscal sponsor, please attach the following documents.
   a. The fiscal sponsor's most recent audited financials
   b. Your organization's year-end income and expense report; and
   c. Your organization's year-end balance sheet