Nonprofit Infrastructure Grant Program 2021-2023 Request for Proposals (RFP)

RFP Announcement Date: September 27, 2021
Application Open Date: October 4, 2021

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 35 - 45 grants of up to $45,000 for a grant period of 12-18 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:	October 4, 2021
Community RFP informational webinars:	October 11, 2021, 12-1 pm October 18, 2021, 12-1 pm
Technical assistance sessions with applicants:	October 20, 2021, 9 am-4:30 pm October 25, 2021, 9 am-4:30 pm
Proposals due:	Monday, November 1, 2021, at 5 pm
Follow-up calls with applicants, if needed:	November 2021
Awards announced:	Mid-December 2021
Grant agreements signed:	Mid-December 2021
Grant period begins:	January 1, 2022

Key Contacts

Naima Farah
Capacity Building Program Manager
612-249-6671
nfarah@propelnonprofits.org

Glyn Northington
Senior Program Director
612-249-6672
gnorthington@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 appropriation language (MN Laws of 2021, Chapter 10, 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 that have a fiscal sponsor.
3) Organizations with current annual budgets with expenses less than $500,000.

Eligible Program Activities

Organizational Infrastructure Improvement

Grants under this activity area can be used to improve organizational 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 35 - 45 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 35 - 45 grants
2. Award grants up to $45,000 for 12-18-months
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 similarly 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, but a session is not required to apply. 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 external 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
- Organizations that have not been part of the Nonprofit Infrastructure Grant Program in the past

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

The online application portal opens on **October 4**, but all the questions on the application are here: https://www.propelnonprofits.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Word-doc-of-NIGP-Online-Application.docx. All applicants must apply through our online form after October 4, but this resource lets you start working on your responses now. The form will close on Monday, **November 1, 2021, at 5 pm**. No late applications will be accepted.

Two optional 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:

- October 11, 2021, 12-1 pm https://www.eventbrite.com/e/nigp-informational-webinar-tickets-173611796557
- October 18, 2021, 12-1 pm https://www.eventbrite.com/e/nigp-informational-webinar-tickets-174213917517

There will be two optional 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
October 20, 2021, between 9 am-4:30 pm

Technical Assistance Day 2
October 25, 2021, between 9 am-4:30 pm

Click on the links above to sign up for either of these technical assistance days.

Applicants can also call and email the grant contacts, Naima Farah and Glyn Northington, 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.

Naima Farah
Capacity Building Program Manager
612-249-6671
nfarah@propelnonprofits.org

Glyn Northington
Senior Program Director
612-249-6672
gnorthington@propelnonprofits.org

NARRATIVE QUESTIONS

These are only the narrative questions for the application. The entire application can be found here: https://www.propelnonprofits.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Word-doc-of-NIGP-Online-Application.docx. All applicants must apply through our online form after October 4, but this resource lets you start working on your responses now.

PLEASE NOTE: For this application, proper phrasing, language, and exact details are not our main priority. The priority is to provide community-based organizations with the support they need in a timely manner. Please tell us about your work, what organizational infrastructure, workforce development, or partnership support you're asking for. Character limits are to keep proposals simple and concise.

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. *Capacity Building Initiatives:* Are you currently engaged in any other formal capacity building initiatives or programs with Propel Nonprofits or anyone else? If yes, describe what you are prioritizing with that project. How would participating in the Nonprofit Infrastructure Grant Program further your organization's impact?
   (350-word maximum)

4. *Leadership in Cultural Communities:* The Nonprofit Infrastructure Grant Program will support organizations led by cultural communities that 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)

5. *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)

6. *Organizational Work Plan:* Please describe your work plan for this grant project. The grant can be for a maximum of 18 months (January 2022-June 2023). 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)

7. *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)

8. *Building on the Infrastructure:* How will you build on 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	
Expenses	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 it as an attachment. This is the project budget.

2. *Other Funding Sources:* If this grant is meant to cover only part of the costs of an infrastructure project, please describe the larger 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)

Additional Documentation Requested
In addition to the narrative questions, the following documentation (attached as pdfs) will be requested in the application:
- 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 your most recent 990-EZ or 990-N). Please disregard this question if you have a fiscal sponsor.
- Current year, board-approved organizational budget
- 501(c)(3) determination letter or fiscal sponsor agreement
- List of board members and affiliations
- List of staff and their titles/roles

If you have a fiscal sponsor, the following information will be requested in the application (documents must be pdfs):

- Fiscal sponsor name
- Fiscal Sponsor Employee Identification Number (EIN)
- The fiscal sponsor's most recent audited financial statements
- Your organization's year-end income and expense report
- Your organization's year-end balance sheet