



2023-2024 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT DOES IMPACT FFC FUND?

Impact FFC's mission is to provide transformational grants that fund a broad range of community and nonprofit needs. We provide restricted funds to develop new programs; expand or strengthen existing programs; and improve organizational capacity that advances the nonprofit organization's core mission. Our process unites, educates and engages women in local philanthropy to promote meaningful progress in our community. For the first 5 years of Impact FFC, funding was limited to new or significant expansions of projects or programs. In line with best practices in the philanthropy sector and in recognition of the challenges nonprofits face in today's economic climate, Impact FFC now also funds strategic efforts to expand an organization's capacity and reach.

DOES IMPACT FFC FUND GENERAL OPERATING EXPENSES?

Impact FFC grants are provided for initiatives that are transformational to the community or the nonprofit organization. While we do not provide grants for general operating expenses, we do allow up to 20% of the grant to be used to support general operating costs.

WHAT IS THE APPLICANT INFORMATION SESSION?

Impact FFC will host an information session for potential applicants on September 19, 2023 at 10:30 AM at the Pequot Library in Southport. At this session we will review the application and eligibility requirements and answer questions from attending nonprofits.

IS THE APPLICANT INFORMATION SESSION MANDATORY?

No, it is completely optional.

WE CURRENTLY DO NOT HAVE A 501(C)(3) DETERMINATION LETTER AND ARE GOING THROUGH THE PROCESS OF OBTAINING A 501(C)(3) DESIGNATION; HOWEVER, WE ARE A PROGRAM SPONSORED BY A 501(C)(3) ORGANIZATION AND WE ARE USING THEM AS OUR FISCAL PARTNER. DO WE QUALIFY?

No. We do not accept fiscally sponsored organizations at this time. Your organization would need to operate under its own 501(c)(3) status for 36 months prior to applying for an Impact Grant.

OUR ORGANIZATION IS EXEMPT FROM PAYING SALES TAX IN THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT AND WE HAVE A CERTIFICATE FROM THE STATE. CAN WE USE THIS TO PROVE OUR NONPROFIT STATUS IN OUR LOI SUBMISSION?

No. Sales tax exemption for the state of Connecticut does not necessarily mean that you are a “Public Charity” with tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. If your organization is a 501(c)(3) public charity, you should have a determination letter from the IRS stating this. A copy of the determination letter must be attached to your LOI.

WE ARE APPLYING AS A SUBSIDIARY OF A LARGER ORGANIZATION. CAN WE SUBMIT AUDITED FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS FROM OUR PARENT ORGANIZATION?

Yes. As long as the parent organization has representation within the applicant’s governance structure and the applicant represents a significant portion of the parent organization’s business, a subsidiary may apply for an Impact FFC Grant. In addition to the parent organization’s audited financial statements, the subsidiary applicant must submit three years of independent financial statements, even if not required by the IRS.

OUR ORGANIZATION DOES NOT MEET THE IRS OR CONNECTICUT STATE THRESHOLD FOR REQUIRING AN AUDIT, CAN OUR ORGANIZATION STILL APPLY FOR AN IMPACT FAIRFIELD COUNTY GRANT?

No. While it is true that both the IRS rules and Connecticut state statutes do not require audited financial statements for charitable entities with gross receipts under \$500,000, Impact Fairfield County does. An independent auditor attests to users of your financial statements that they are free of material misstatement and conform to generally accepted accounting standards. This means that our organization can use the information you present in your financial statements to make conclusions about the overall health of your organization. During the attestation process, your independent auditor must also consider the internal controls of your organization, and in doing so can make recommendations for critical improvements as your firm grows and develops. It is a necessary step to securing many other funding opportunities. We believe the independent audit benefits both Impact Fairfield County, and our applicants.

OUR ORGANIZATION OPERATES WITHIN FAIRFIELD COUNTY, CAN WE APPLY FOR A PROJECT OUTSIDE OF FAIRFIELD COUNTY?

No, the project must serve residents of and expend funds fully in Fairfield County.

WE ARE A FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATION. CAN WE APPLY?

Fairfield County has many nonprofits that are faith-based or out-growths from churches, temples or other religious institutions. In order to be eligible for our grant, the projects must be open to all, including volunteers, regardless of religion; and the overall mission must not be to draw participants to one faith. Inherently religious activities within the organization would need to be separate, in time or location, from programming funded by Impact Fairfield County. Impact Fairfield County will not fund a project that restricts participation because of religion (i.e. participation in the project or program or use of the facility requires that you profess a certain faith), and/or is principally guided by or requires religious activities (i.e. the project or program is designed for the purposes of engaging or bringing others into a religion).

WHAT TYPES OF PROJECTS DO YOU PREFER TO FUND?

As a collective grant-making organization, we have a diverse group of women who make up our voting membership. The committee members reviewing proposals change each year, so a project that generally appeals to a committee one year may not the next year. Our grant recipients are spread over a range of focus and service areas, and include projects or programs, as well as capital projects directly related to the projects or programs. In general, our members are most enthusiastic about projects that are transformative to the organization and the populations they serve. We want to hear about organizations that, if empowered with our funding, would be taking a huge step forward to advance their mission and improve the lives of an underserved population.

HOW DOES IMPACT FAIRFIELD COUNTY DECIDE WHO GETS THE GRANTS?

We accept Letters of Inquiry and then request Full Proposals by invitation. Members join committees that perform the review of the proposals. These committees review and evaluate the applications, invite organizations to host site visits, then select its finalists. Committee members attend training sessions about the grant process and learn how to evaluate grant proposals. This training teaches committee members to consider the credibility and merit of the applicant organization and the feasibility and significance of the proposed project. After each committee selects its finalist, all Impact Fairfield County members receive information on the finalists for review. The finalists attend our Annual Meeting in May and make presentations about their projects. Members vote by individual ballot at the Annual Meeting (or by absentee ballot if they are unable to attend), and that vote determines the grant recipients. Grant awards are announced at the Annual Meeting.

HOW CAN WE MAKE OUR LETTER OF INQUIRY RISE TO THE TOP?

Take the LOI phase very seriously. While this is the first step to our process, it is critical that your organization be very thoughtful about the request being made. Once you have submitted your LOI, you cannot change the scope of the request or how you plan to use the funds if you are moved forward in the process. Submissions that really stand out are from organizations that have a clear and thoughtful mission, fill a defined, unmet need by reaching out to underserved populations in Fairfield County, are financially healthy, and have a well-conceived project that needs funding. Our review committees carefully consider the number of people served by a project and the intensity of services proposed. We talk about the depth and duration of the impact on the target population, and whether the impact might extend beyond the scope of the project and have a ripple effect, either in the broader community or over time. For requests to fund programs, a clear explanation of how a program can be sustained after the Impact Fairfield County \$100,000 award is spent is important to us. We would like to know that we are jump-starting or investing in a program that has a strong probability of being funded beyond our two-year involvement. We recommend that you do not try to guess what kind of project, program or focus area Impact Fairfield County “prefers” to fund. Each year the organizations with the most impactful grant projects will inevitably rise to the top as finalists and award recipients.

WHAT TYPES OF EXPENSES DO YOU ALLOW IN A PROJECT BUDGET?

Impact Fairfield County as a whole has no preference for funding one type of project expense over another. If your project involves capital purchases, we will be looking at the use of funds and the impact that will be generated by the capital expense. In terms of programming expenses, we understand that being properly staffed is critical to implementing any project. If staff expenses are a large part of the project budget, our primary concern may be the sustainability of the project after the grant period, and how staff salaries will be funded after our grant funds are expended. We will not accept a project budget in a Letter of Inquiry that requests more than \$20,000 from Impact FFC towards general operating expenses of an organization.

BETWEEN THE TIME WE SUBMITTED OUR LOI AND WERE INVITED TO SUBMIT A FULL PROPOSAL, OUR FUNDING REQUIREMENTS AND/OR PROJECT NEEDS CHANGED. MAY WE SUBMIT A NEW PROPOSAL IN OUR GRANT APPLICATION?

No. New proposals will not be accepted at the Full Proposal stage. They would need to be held for LOI submission in the next year's grant cycle. We anticipate some restructuring of funding needs or updates on costs or bids from the LOI submissions; however, the committee members reviewing a Full Proposal will be expecting the project defined in the LOI to be comparable in nature to the Full Proposal. Any significant updates between the two submissions must be clearly identified in the Full Proposal or made known to Impact Fairfield County by notifying us by e-mail at grants@impactffc.org.

THE FUNDING NECESSARY FOR OUR POSSIBLE LOI PROJECT IS LESS THAN THE \$100,000 IMPACT FAIRFIELD COUNTY GRANT AMOUNT. CAN WE SUBMIT A PROPOSAL FOR LESS THAN THE FULL AMOUNT?

No. Impact Fairfield County requires LOI projects to use the full \$100,000 grant. LOI submissions requesting funding under \$100,000 will not be considered.

ARE THERE ANY GRANTS AWARDED FOR LESS THAN \$100,000?

Our grant model is based on the number of members in our organization each year. For every 100 members, each having donated \$1,000, we will award a \$100,000 Impact Fairfield County Grant. The residual funds are awarded to the finalists. The amounts of these grants are not determined until January. Our desire is to acknowledge the achievement of these organizations in becoming finalists and the wonderful services they provide. If your organization is chosen as a finalist but does not win an Impact Fairfield County Grant, you would receive a portion of the residual funds as a general operating grant.

HOW SHOULD I SUBMIT MY LETTER OF INQUIRY OR FULL PROPOSAL?

Letters of Inquiry are submitted online through our website, with the deadline of November 13, 2023, under Apply for a Grant> Apply Now. Nonprofits invited to submit Full Proposals will be given instructions on how to submit their complete applications upon receiving their invitations, with a deadline of February 2, 2024.

WHOM CAN WE CONTACT TO DISCUSS OUR GRANT APPLICATION?

Impact Fairfield County is committed to a fair, unbiased process. We are unable to engage in unsolicited communication on topics other than questions about the guidelines or application process. For questions regarding Impact Fairfield County's guidelines or process, you may email grants@impactffc.org. For questions regarding our online grants management system, SlideRoom, you may contact them directly by telephone, on-line conversation, or you may review the SlideRoom guide which addresses many frequently asked questions.

WHAT KIND OF COMMUNICATION CAN WE EXPECT FROM IMPACT FAIRFIELD COUNTY DURING THIS PROCESS?

Impact Fairfield County strives to provide consistent and transparent communication. Impact Fairfield County notifies all applicants at each stage of the application process, even if they are not invited to submit a Full Proposal, host a site visit, or become a finalist.

IF OUR ORGANIZATION IS NOT A GRANT RECIPIENT, WILL SOMEONE LET US KNOW HOW WE CAN IMPROVE OUR APPLICATION?

Our policy is to provide direct feedback as much as possible upon request.

CAN OUR ORGANIZATION SUBMIT MORE THAN ONE LETTER OF INQUIRY?

No. Each organization may submit only one grant application per year. If an organization has already submitted an application, they may not be included as a partner or sub-applicant to another organization in any other applications.

WILL YOU CONSIDER A PROPOSAL FROM A GROUP OF ORGANIZATIONS COLLABORATING ON A PROJECT?

Yes. However, one of the collaborating organizations must be the "lead organization," applying as if it were an individual organization on behalf of the collaboration. The lead organization must be willing to take on all the potential rights, responsibilities, restrictions and liabilities of the grant, if it is received.

YOUR GUIDELINES INDICATE YOU WILL NOT FUND CAPITAL CAMPAIGNS. WILL YOU FUND CAPITAL EXPENDITURES AS PART OF A PROPOSAL?

Yes. We will fund capital expenditures that are clearly related to the proposed project or program.

ONCE AN ORGANIZATION RECEIVES A GRANT FROM IMPACT FAIRFIELD COUNTY, CAN IT REAPPLY THE FOLLOWING YEAR?

An organization that receives a \$100,000 Impact Fairfield County Grant may not apply again for 36 months (e.g. If you were awarded a \$100,000 Impact FFC Grant in May 2020, you are not eligible to apply for an Impact FFC Grant until after May 2023). If an organization receives a general operating grant as a Finalist, it may reapply the following year.

IF WE SUBMIT A LETTER OF INQUIRY AND/OR FULL PROPOSAL THIS YEAR THAT IS NOT FUNDED, HOW SOON CAN WE SUBMIT ANOTHER PROPOSAL?

You may apply again the following year.

HOW DOES IMPACT FAIRFIELD COUNTY PAY OUT THE GRANT FUNDS?

Prior to the release of grant funds to the \$100,000 Impact FFC Grantee, the recipient must complete a grant agreement. Impact Fairfield County may distribute project grants in installments or a one-time payment, depending on the nature of the project. Grantees must submit periodic reports on the project detailing the progress of both the project and its budget to Impact Fairfield County as specified in the grant agreement and prior to installment payments.

WHAT IS THE PERIOD OF TIME THE MONEY MUST BE SPENT?

Impact Fairfield County requires that the organization uses the full amount of the grant funding within 24 months of the grant.

IF THE PROJECT BUDGET IS NOT APPROVED BY THE ORGANIZATION'S BOARD BY THE LETTER OF INQUIRY DEADLINE, CAN THE "DRAFT" BE SUBMITTED?

Yes. For the LOI, Impact Fairfield County is interested in your project budget even if it is not officially approved, however it must still be a realistic budget. Please note that the final question of the LOI asks that your Executive Director certify that he/she has received the information provided in the LOI and it is accurate and complete