Responses to Pre-Submission Inquiries Received from Potential Applicants
Strengthening Community Capacity to Advocate for Healthy Food

October 6, 2023

One of the organizational characteristics listed is, "focused, even moderately, on local policy and systems change" – what do you mean by moderately?
By moderately, we mean that the organization has done some analysis of the root cause(s) of food insecurity and healthy food access in their community and allocates some staff time to address these barriers. We will look at answers to question 3 on the application to help us understand each applicant's involvement in policy and systems change.

Can a center at a university/a nonprofit academic medical center/a local government entity apply or partner with a community group?
The purpose of this funding opportunity is to support grassroots and community-based organizations with deep connections and accountability to the communities they serve to expand their ability to advocate for systems change. Community-based organizations can partner with whomever they choose to help them increase their capacity to advocate for the change needed to address the root causes of food insecurity for the community that they serve. Any key partnerships can be described in answering question 5 of the application.

It is expected that the community-based applicant (or fiscally sponsored program/coalition) will be directly involved in the management and execution of the grant including, and not limited to, advocating for changes to increase access to healthy food related to the priorities of the funding opportunity.

Would EDI training for staff, agency partners, or both be considered eligible spending? And, what about adding advocacy staff?
Allocation of grant funds should be based on organizational needs to advocate for changes resulting in increased access to healthy food for those most impacted by food insecurity. Please refer to the funding opportunity for specific examples. Funds can be utilized for staffing, training and supplies, or other overhead costs that are connected to expanding your organization's capacity to advocate for healthy food access.

In the Description of the Funded Work, could you please provide a few examples of "Relationship building work and collaboration with other organizations, advocates, and decision makers at the institutional, municipal, county, state, or federal levels?"
Here are a few examples (note that this is not an exhaustive list):
- Staff time to develop relationships and shared priorities.
- Strategic communications work to assist with outreach.
- Hosting and attending meetings and convenings.
- Communications and other training to support relationship building and collaboration.

Can we make changes to our originally planned activities after the grant is awarded if they aren't effective or if we have new staff and new ideas over the course of the grant?
Yes. We expect that things will change based on your learning and early action. Our grantees can shift funds as needed over the course of the grant to accomplish their goals.

Can an organization apply to work on advocacy related to equitable sourcing of food or rights of workers who are part of the food system?
For this specific funding opportunity, the advocacy must be focused on advancing access to healthy food. Any advocacy efforts would need to connect to the ability of the community's ability to access and afford healthy food.

Could you provide some examples of what you consider to be "community accountability mechanisms" that an organization may have in place (application question 2)?
Here are a few examples (note that this is not an exhaustive list):
- Community member input and feedback is gathered for projects that impact them.
- There are mechanisms in place so that community needs and assets are integrated into organizational planning and implementation.
- Community members receive training, support, and/or compensation for their engagement with the organization.
- There are processes and policies in place to engage members of the community as organizational advisors and/or board members and influence the organizations priorities and day-to-day operations.
- Staff are from the community the organization serves.
- There are established feedback loops to adjust approaches and activities based on community experience.

For question 4 on the application, can you please clarify if "our barrier" refers to our barriers as an internal organizational barrier or our barrier as a wider community collective?
We are primarily interested in community barriers to food security and healthy food access.

How many new applications does the Foundation typically receive for similar opportunities and what percentage is funded?
Given the uniqueness of each of our open funding opportunities, the number of applicants varies widely in each instance. As such, the percentage funded also varies.

What are the most common flaws in the proposals you receive?
The most common flaw we see is when potential applicants do not fully address the questions being asked.

Do you foresee any opportunities to increase or extend funding past 3 years to support successful projects?
At this point, there are no plans for continued funding beyond the grant period.

Frequently Asked Questions
Strengthening Community Capacity to Advocate for Healthy Food

September 2023

We collaborate with another organization in our food insecurity work, what is the best way to apply?
Please choose one eligible organization to apply and detail your collaboration in your application.

Can faith-based organizations apply?
Yes, if their organizational characteristics meet the eligibility criteria. The Foundation provides grants to organizations with 501(c)(3) exempt status, and places of worship, including churches, mosques, synagogues, and other faith-based organizations which generally qualify for 501(c)(3) status. According to the **IRS**, churches (used by the IRS in a generic sense to mean a place of worship, including mosques and synagogues, for example) and religious organizations that meet the requirements of IRC section 501(c)(3) are automatically considered tax exempt and are not required to apply for and obtain recognition of tax-exempt status from the IRS.

The faith-based organization applying for the grant should already be doing work related to the focus area addressed in the grant (e.g., increasing access to healthy food). Any grant given to a faith-based organization should benefit the larger community beyond the church, mosque, synagogue, or organization's membership.

If we use a fiscal sponsor, do they submit the application on our behalf?
Yes, the fiscal sponsor should complete the application on behalf of the sponsored organization. The sponsored organization should work closely with the fiscal sponsor to complete the application and provide the necessary information. The fiscal sponsor will assume the fiduciary responsibility for the grant, including receiving and disbursing grant funds, as well as reporting.

Is the role of the fiscal sponsor included in the evaluation of the application submitted or does the evaluation only include a review of the community-based organization and their responses to the application questions?
Responses to Part 1 application questions are the primary focus of the initial review process. The narrative questions should be answered based on the work of the sponsored organization, program, or project. For those that move forward to Part 2 (Finalist Conversations), we will seek to learn more about the fiscal sponsor relationship including reviewing a copy of the MOU between the sponsored organization/project and fiscal sponsor to better understand the nature of the partnership.

Is it okay that my fiscal sponsor is out-of-state?
Yes, as long as the other eligibility criteria are met.

Does the Foundation cover administrative fees for fiscal sponsors?
Most fiscal sponsors require a reasonable fee in return for managing the grant; these fees can be covered by the grant funds.

What can grant funds be used for?
Allocation of grant funds should be based on organizational needs to advocate for changes resulting in increased access to healthy food for those most impacted by food insecurity. Please refer to the Funding Opportunity for specific examples. Funds can be utilized for added staff capacity, training and supplies, or other overhead costs. Grant funds cannot be used to cover costs that were incurred prior to the start of the grant.

Is there a cap on indirect or overhead expenses?
The Foundation does not have an established cap on indirect or overhead expenses. We understand various expenses are needed to operate an organization and can discuss any questions related to budget in the second phase of the grant application process. When developing your budget, we encourage you to consider the full cost of carrying out your programmatic plans.

Can the grant funding be spent on food, nutrition education, or other direct services to individuals?
These grant funds are to be used to increase your organization's ability to advocate for healthy food access at the community or broader level. Generally speaking, these funds are not intended to support direct service to individuals through activities such as emergency feeding or nutrition education.

Can applicants apply for less than $300,000?
Yes, applicants do not need to apply for the full grant amount. We understand that some smaller or newer organizations may prefer to apply for less funding. Applicants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged if they do not seek the full grant amount.

Where do we indicate how we want to use the funds?
A project budget will be requested from those applicants that advance to Part 2 of the process.

When will grantees be expected to start the project after being funded?
The grant period officially starts May 1, 2024 and lasts until June 2027. Payment for the first year of funding will be issued after grant agreements are signed starting in May 2024. Grant funds cannot be used to cover costs that were incurred prior to the start of the grant.

What are the reporting requirements?
The Foundation requires annual reporting on multi-year grants. We employ conversational reporting and do not require organizations to submit a written report. We will also require a limited amount of annual financial reporting.

How important is it that applicants focus on *local* healthy food?
It is not a requirement that applicants focus their efforts on increasing access to *local* healthy food. We know that it will take many systems changes and solutions to increase access to healthy food for those most impacted by food insecurity. We also know that every community faces different barriers and needs different solutions. We hope that some applicants will choose to focus on increasing access to local healthy food which has added benefits, such as impact on North Carolina farmers and local economies and lower environmental impact.

What do you mean by "healthy food?"
The Foundation has not adopted a specific definition of "healthy food." Generally speaking, healthy food is food that provides the nutrients needed to be healthy, feel well, and have plenty of energy.