



Part 1: General Information

How flexible is the community foundation's grant deadline?

Our grant application deadline is firm. Paper applications must be postmarked on or before the deadline. Online applications will not be accepted after midnight on the deadline date. Late applications will not be reviewed.

Can I e-mail my proposal?

Most of our grant programs do not accept applications by e-mail. Please check the guidelines for the individual program to see whether or not you may e-mail your proposal. Please note that many of our grant programs now offer an online application. Go to www.mainecef.org/grantapp.aspx for more information

Can we include additional documents with our application, such as brochures, photographs, and letters from supporters?

It depends on the grant program to which you are applying. Most grant programs do not accept additional material. However, some grant programs do request additional support documents. For more information, please consult the guidelines for the grant program to which you are applying.

Can I apply to more than one grant program at a time?

Yes. The grant application allows you to list the grant programs for which you want your proposal to be considered. Do not submit multiple copies of the same proposal for review by several different committees.

I've never filled out a grant application before. Can you give me some advice?

Yes. Please take a look at our Tips for Creating a Strong Grant Application (www.mainecef.org/strongapptips.aspx) for some general information. Also, if you "like" our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/mainecef) and subscribe to our News for Nonprofits e-mail newsletter, you'll receive updates about upcoming grant writing workshops and other resources you may find helpful.

I've applied for a grant through the County & Regional Program. My project is serving more than one county. Do I need to submit a separate application for each county fund?

No. In the space provided, check off the counties where your services will be delivered. Community foundation staff will forward your proposal to all appropriate county and regional committees.

When we are applying to the Community Building/County & Regional Grant Program, can we submit a proposal for a project grant and a proposal for capacity building support on the same deadline?

No. An organization can only submit one proposal to a grant program per year to the Community Building/County & Regional Grant Program.

We are not sure if our project fits into the Issue Areas listed. Where can we find out more about each of the Issue Areas?

The Issue Areas we list are part of a larger list of standard categories that many nonprofit organizations and funders use. You can review a longer list, with the subcategories of each of the major issue areas and definitions at the NCCS website (<http://nccsdataweb.urban.org/PubApps/nteeSearch.php?gQry=all&codeType=NTEE>).

Who makes the grant award decisions?

The community foundation engages community members, our board members, donors, and staff in our grant review process.

When will I know whether my application has been approved or declined?

Applicants are typically notified of committee decisions within 10 weeks of the deadline date.

We submitted an application in February and received a grant. Can we apply for a different grant in September?

Yes. You are eligible to submit one grant application to each grant program each year.

My organization recently merged with a local social service agency. Can I still apply for a grant if another program at the agency is applying too?

It depends. The community foundation will accept more than one application from large organizations (with budgets of \$2 million and more), if the applicants are separate programs and serve different counties in Maine. Most large organizations have procedures to determine which departments or units can apply. Be sure to consult with the appropriate members of administration before submitting an application.

My program is part of a larger organization. How do I apply using the online application system? Do I use the name of my program or the name of our host organization?

Please use the name of the organization that holds the EIN. Each organization should have only one profile in our database, so when you use the online grant application, please contact your host organization to get their login credentials before applying. There is also a “share with colleague” function that will allow you to share information and application access with others.

Your directions say that I must apply using the name of our umbrella organization. There are three programs at the university applying for grants. How will you tell us applications apart?

Be sure to begin your project description with the name of your program. For example, “the Square Club seeks funding to support their lobster pot building program in area high schools.”

Part 2: Capacity Building

What is “capacity building”?

Capacity building is quite simply any activity designed to improve an organization’s ability to do its work and be more sustainable in the long term. These activities may include the staff, board, and independent consultants. Here are a few examples of capacity building activities: professional development training; specialized technical assistance for financial record keeping; or fundraising, technology, or management training. Capacity building grants generally do not support conference fees and travel.

How will reviewers evaluate proposals for capacity building support?

When reviewing a capacity building grant proposal, grant review committees will consider the following:

- Are the proposed capacity building activities clear and logical?
- How will these activities impact the organization over time? Can they improve the organization’s effectiveness or sustainability?
- Does the organization have appropriate leadership and staffing to effectively implement these changes and sustain the organization?
- How will the organization know it is making progress toward its goals?
- What impact will these changes have on the community served by the organization?
- What is the organization’s record of success?

Part 3: Using the Online Grant Application

I have a dial-up internet connection. Will I be able to use the online application?

Yes. The online application is designed to work well at any connection speed.

I’ve already completed a paper version of the application. Do I have to fill out the online application instead of sending you the paper version?

If you can use the online application, we’d prefer that you do. You don’t have to start all over again—you can copy and paste all of the information from your paper application into the appropriate places in the online application. We think you’ll actually find the online application easier to complete than the paper version, and you’ll be able to edit your application right up until the day of the deadline.

Are there instructions for how to fill out the online grant application?

Yes. You can find and download them from the Grant-Related Documents page at the Maine Community Foundation website.

The online grant application is acting really weird. What's going on?

The online grant application has been tested in all modern web browsers, but if you haven't upgraded your browser in a while, this might be the problem. It works fine for:

- Mozilla Firefox on any platform
- Safari on Mac OS X 10.4 "Tiger" or newer (Some applicants have had success with older versions of Safari, but these are not officially supported)
- Internet Explorer 5 or above on Windows
- Google Chrome for Windows

I click on the link to the application and nothing happens. What's going on?

You might need to adjust your browser's pop-up blocker. Here's how:

- Internet Explorer
 - Go to: Tools - Popup Blocker Settings
 - Enter the name of the site: www.quickbase.com
 - Click "Add"
- Google Chrome
 - In the URL bar at the top, there will be a document icon with a red X on it
 - Click the Popup Blocker icon, and click on the Grant Application link
 - Click "Done"
- Firefox
 - If you have the Adblock Plus extension installed, click on the Adblock Plus icon in the top right-hand corner of your browser window (it looks like a Stop sign)
 - Select "Disable on Quickbase.com" from the menu that appears.

I don't have electronic versions of my collaboration letters or other documents I need to upload so my proposal is complete. What do I do?

Fill out the check boxes in the Additional Information section of the application, download the Grant Upload Cover Form from the Grant-Related Documents page at the Maine Community Foundation website, and mail the documents and the cover form to Applications, Maine Community Foundation, 245 Main Street, Ellsworth, ME 04605.

I've tried everything and I just can't get the online grant application to work. What can I do?

We've tested the online application as thoroughly as possible, but we know some people will be unable to get the application to work. We don't want to keep those people from being able to apply for grants. You can download the paper version of the application from the Grant-Related Documents page at the Maine Community Foundation website.

Part 4: Financial Information and Budget

We have an audited financial report. Can we attach this to our application instead of completing the financial information section of the common grant application?

No. It is important that we have comparable financial information from all applicants in a similar format. This will help insure a fair and accurate review.

What do you mean by fiscal year start and end dates?

The term “fiscal year” refers to the twelve-month period or financial calendar that your organization uses. Nonprofits start and end their fiscal year according to their own policy, so the start and end dates of the fiscal year can vary dramatically from organization to organization. Your accounting staff, board treasurer, or bookkeeper should be able to tell you when your fiscal year starts and ends.

What kind of items should I include in the project budget table?

You should provide a list of any part of your project that is an expense, and for which you are seeking funding. For example, you can list materials, meeting expenses, printing costs, postage, services from other organizations or individuals, or transportation. Remember that community foundation funds do not typically support capital expenses (for example, large equipment purchases or repair or purchasing costs related to real estate). See [Tips for a Strong Grant Application](#) for a sample budget.

We’re a start-up with no financial history. How do we complete the financial section of the grant application?

Estimate the amount of in-kind support and volunteer hours your organization has received; include either actual or projected operating budget for the next year.

What is in-kind support?

In-kind support means items or services that are provided for your project at no cost, and items that your organization will contribute to the project. For example, if a consultant has agreed to provide free services for the project, you should list the fee that s/he would normally charge for the same service. If a business or landlord has donated office space to your organization, you should list the rent you would normally pay. The dollar amount you list here should be the actual or estimated cost of obtaining the same item.

I noticed that some of your grant programs provide project support but not operating support. What’s the difference?

Project support is funding for activities that have a clear start and end, and defined goals that are related to, but not the same as, an organization’s mission.

Operating support, on the other hand, includes support for ongoing activities that are part of the organization’s mission. It also includes regular overhead expenses such as rent, insurance, utility bills, office supplies, or staff salaries. Most Maine Community Foundation grant programs will not provide funding for operating support. Review the guidelines for the specific grant program more information

For example, a fictional organization called The Purr Project has a mission to reduce the number of homeless cats and kittens.

If The Purr Project is seeking funding to hold a spay/neuter clinic in an area town, that would be considered project support. The spay/neuter clinic is a one-time activity with a clear beginning and end, and providing low-cost spay/neuter services is related to the mission of reducing the number of homeless cats and kittens.

If The Purr Project is seeking funding to buy a new copy machine, pay the executive director's salary, and buy food for the cats in its care, that would be considered operating support.

What are capital expenses and are they eligible for funding?

Capital expenses include purchasing, servicing or repairing large equipment, materials or real estate (any item over \$250 that will be depreciated over time). For example, purchasing a building or repairing its roof or doors would be considered capital expenses but purchasing office supplies, seeds or small tools would not. Many Maine Community Foundation grant programs do not provide funding to cover these expenses. (See the grant program guidelines.)

My organization is raising money for an endowment fund. Can I apply for a Maine Community Foundation grant?

It is very rare for any of our competitive grant program to fund an endowment, but there are a few programs that do. We suggest you review the Available Grants page (www.mainecef.org/availablegrants.aspx) and look for a grant program that will suit your needs.

We don't have a plan for future funding of this project. Do we really need one?

Yes. We tend to think of our grants as seed or start-up funding, invested to help get a project going. While we know that it is often difficult to make long-term predictions about the funding of a project, we expect that you will have a plan to keep your project going after our grant funding has been exhausted. Examples of future funding may include an expectation that the project will generate sufficient revenue to support operating costs, changes in your organization's finances that will allow it to absorb project costs as part of its operating budget, or even other foundation or donor support that you expect to pursue.

Part 5: Collaboration and Fiscal Sponsorship

What is a fiscal sponsor, and do I need one?

If your organization is not a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit, you will need to make an agreement with an organization that does have this status in order to qualify for Maine Community Foundation grant funding. Please read the [Fiscal Sponsorship FAQ](#) for more information about fiscal sponsors and how to secure a fiscal sponsor if you need one.

What do you mean by collaboration? We've asked another organization to partner with us on this project. Does that mean that we are collaborating?

A project is considered a collaboration when more than one organization is contributing resources that are critical for the success of the project. If your partner organization is providing a resource necessary to achieve the project's goals, then you can consider it a collaboration. Note that not all assistance or partnerships are considered collaborations. Of course it is possible for an organization to provide support that helps but isn't critical to the success of the project.

We're a collaborative of nonprofits seeking support for a joint project. How do we apply?

One member of the collaboration must take fiscal responsibility for receiving and expending the grant. This organization should complete the grant application. Letters from the collaborating organizations should explain the approach and shared responsibilities.

We're a community collaborative applying with another agency serving as our fiscal sponsor. What is required?

If you do not have an eligible tax-exempt status and are applying with a fiscal sponsor, you must submit the Maine Community Foundation's Fiscal Sponsorship Agreement form (available in [PDF](#), [RTF](#), and [Word Document](#) format) with your application, as well as a copy of the sponsor's federal IRS 501(c)(3) ruling letter. For more information about fiscal sponsorship, read the [Fiscal Sponsorship Overview](#) or [Fiscal Sponsorship FAQ](#).

Part 6: The Paper Application

Why is the common grant application available in three file formats, and which one should I use?

If you have Microsoft Word installed on your computer, download the Word Document version. *Mac users* should choose the Word Document version.

If you use Open Office, WordPerfect, or other non-Microsoft word processing software, download the RTF (Rich Text Format) version.

If you do not have any word processing software, download the PDF version.

All of these forms are available from the Grant-Related Documents page at the Maine Community Foundation website.

I clicked on the link to download the grant application, but nothing is happening. What's going on?

Our website needs to open a pop-up window in order to allow you to download the application. If your browser has a pop-up blocker, this could be the problem.

If you don't want to play with your pop-up blocker settings, there is another way to download the application. Right-click (option-click for Mac users) on the version of the application you wish to download, and select "Save Target As" (Internet Explorer) or "Save Link As" (Firefox). Save the *mcfggrantapplication* file in the folder of your choice.

I've downloaded the RTF version of the common grant application, and it's not working. I can't fill in the form fields properly and there's a lot of extra space in some of the text boxes.

We've encountered this problem before, almost always with applicants using Macintosh computers. We suggest that Mac users download and fill out the Word Document version of the application.

We have an application that is bound and ready to go. Can I send that?

No. All documents should be sent unbound (no binders or staples), on paper that can be readily scanned and filed.

How do I fill out the project budget table?

Please look over the sample budget in our Tips for Creating a Strong Grant Application (www.mainecef.org/strongapptips.aspx) for an example of how to fill out the project budget form.

I need to include some notes about my project budget, but they don't fit in the project budget form.

The fields in the budget form are for items, funding sources, and dollar amounts only. If you want to include any other information about your project budget, please use the Additional Budget Information space at the bottom of the page.