the EARL & KATHRYN CONGDON *family foundation*

Capacity Building Grants
Critical Community Needs Focus
Frequently Asked Questions

Three Key Grant Requirements:

1. Our grants are specifically for High Point. An organization doesn't have to be based in HP, but they should be building capacity to serve in High Point. If they serve across Guilford County or the region and they have a $100k budget and they're getting $30k from us, then we'd expect to see over 30% of their total staff and services to be in HP (roughly). The scrutiny is a bit higher if you're not in High Point to demonstrate that you serve here.

2. When we say "Critical Community Needs," we mean that we are focused on organizations that address vital issues in High Point. Because we have separate focus areas in education and economic development, this cycle will not fund projects related to one of those two focus areas. Some of the most vital Critical Community Needs we have identified through work with our nonprofit partners include, but are not limited to: food security, mental health services, homelessness, veterans support, and building a strong sense of community across the city.

3. We are funding capacity building, which is contrasted with direct service. We aren't investing in programs that are a dollar in/a dollar out. We want to see the organization grow and develop to better serve its mission.

FAQ

Q: **Can an organization that provides education support apply?**

A: The foundation funded education-related projects in its 2024 Capacity Building Grant cycle. So projects that are focused on improving the educational outcomes of kids from birth to high school graduation would not fit in this call for proposals. However, if a youth-serving organization is also providing food, housing, therapy or other basic needs to youth and families, then they could apply to build the capacity of those services.

Q: **If we received a capacity building grant in the past, can we apply for this one too?**

A: If you are a current recipient of a capacity building grant, then you are not eligible for another one. Organizations can only hold one capacity building grant at a time.

Q: **Can grant dollars be used to cover general operating expenses? Are they restricted/unrestricted?**

A: The foundation wants the funds to be used for capacity building for the core mission of the organization and would look to see how the funds will be leveraged to take the organization to the next level. This isn't direct service funding.

For most organizations the funds will be part of their general operating budget. It might be part of a program budget if it's building the capacity of a specific program.

The evaluation of the grant will be a conversation with Joe Blosser and sharing the financial documents you provide to your board. The foundation is not evaluating the grant based on specific program outcomes, but rather, we will be looking to see how the funds support the growth of the overall organization and mission. The way an organization demonstrates that impact is up to them.

Q: **Would arts and culture organizations/programs be eligible for this grant?**

A: The foundation does not generally fund in the space of arts and culture. The exceptions are if arts and culture programs are aiding a critical community need (that is, they directly contribute to a strong sense of community, they are part of a mental or physical health therapeutic program, etc.). Arts programs that are vital to economic development are encouraged to apply for the foundation's economic development grant cycle in 2026.

Q: **What type of planning and dollars need to be shown for the continuity/sustainability portion of the application?**

A: The foundation is looking to see that an organization has a plan in place. In Year 4, when these funds go away, how will the organization sustain the work the grant has allowed? This might be plans to seek other funds. It might be that the Congdon Family Foundation grant funded a fundraising professional, who by Year 4 will be raising enough in donations or through other grants to cover the three-year investment made by the foundation. It could be that the expenses covered by the grant won't be incurred in Year 4 because the foundation's grant dollars were invested in one-time costs like strategic planning, website development, or other costs that are not made on an annual basis.

The goal is to use the foundation dollars as an investment that will position the organization for future success well beyond the three years of funding.

Q: **What counts as a character in the online system?**

A: Each letter and space counts as a character. For example, the question above is 48 characters in the system. An easy way to track this is to use the "word count" feature in Word documents. When you use this feature, you will see "Characters (with spaces)" with an associated count. In the application, there are sections that have a 500 character count and a 1,000 character count. The goal is to make the writing process easier for your organization and to take away barriers to submit a grant to the foundation.

Q: **Will a budget template be provided? Or will we use an existing budget template?**

A: The foundation will not provide a specific budget template; you can use your typical budget template.

Organizations should provide their entire organizational budget. If it's not clear from the organizational budget how the foundation's funds will be used to build capacity, please include a second budget that shows how the foundation's investment (up to $30k per year) would be used.

Q: **Where do we submit the application?**

A: While the foundation provided a PDF example of the application questions, the actual application will be available on the foundation website from January 1-31, 2024. A link on the website will take you to our online grant portal. You will have to create a login and submit the application in that system. You are strongly encouraged to write the grant in a google doc or Word before putting it into the grant application system, so you have a backup in case the online system crashes.

General Questions:

Q: **What are some suggestions for new nonprofits when grant writing?**

A: Follow the tips shared by the Guilford Nonprofit Consortium, including:

- Ask someone else to read your application before submitting the grant.
- Read and follow the requirements/instructions before you submit the grant.
- Give the funder what they ask for (do not provide attachments that aren't requested)
- Do not let the allure of a grant cause you to lose focus or change your mission.

Q: **How much of a prior grant application is acceptable to use when applying to the same foundation?**

A: It depends on the situation. You can (and should) reuse content as long as the content addresses the questions being asked in the new RFP. Grant requests aren't always turned down because the application wasn't solid; sometimes it's a question of timing or availability of dollars. If the program officer encourages you to reapply, just ask if there are any changes they'd like to see.

In some cases, a grant request is rejected because the application wasn't written well. In this case, it's appropriate to make changes to improve the application. Make sure you have someone else review the grant proposal, ask questions to make sure you are covering the right information accurately, and provide feedback.

In either case, always update the grant application with current information to reflect the current reality and current data about the organization.