The Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund

Frequently Asked Questions

(REV. 11/13/14)

Eligibility

Q: Our budget is under $150,000. If we have volunteers who do in-kind services, could their value be calculated in so we could reach the minimum budget requirement?

A: No, unfortunately. There is no fair and objective way to be able to calculate volunteers' value. Only organizations that have reported at least $150,000 annual expenses on their IRS 990 form are eligible.

Q: Over the past few years, we have hovered around $150,000 with some years closer to $145,000 and other years closer to $155,000. Can we apply?

If you can make a case that there has been only minor variations from an average of $150,000, you can apply and should explain the variations in your narrative. We recommend you first call the partner agency that you are applying to in order to discuss your situation.

Q: Are there other exceptions to the minimum budget requirement?

A: No, unfortunately not. We need the groups who are funded to already have the capacity to successfully fulfill the requirements within six months. The future of the Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund depends on this year's success. If your organization is not eligible and you would have liked to apply, please let us know so that we can keep a record of this and present it to City Council next year.

Q: Can a coalition or network of organizations apply?

A: There can only be one organization applying for the grant.

Q: Can arts organizations or faith-based organizations apply? How about a private foundation serving children?

A: Any organization that meets the eligibility criteria can apply. Any application should make its best case as to how they directly benefit a community of color, even if their contribution is not a traditional direct social services model.

Q: Can we apply if we have a fiscal conduit?

A: No. The organization must file its own IRS 990 forms.

Q: Can we apply for more than one project?

A: No. You can only apply for one project.

Q: How do I know which funding partner to apply to?

A: You may only apply to one funding partner agency (Hispanic Federation, Coalition for Asian American Children and Families, or New York Urban League). Each partner will have their own Allocations Panel to review applications. If you serve more than one race/ethnicity, you must still choose just one funding partner to apply to. If you serve another community of color that you feel does not fit into the African American, Asian American or Latino categories, please contact the individual funding partner that you feel most closely aligns to your community's needs to discuss your application.

Applications

Q: Why are we being vetted and what do we have to submit for that vetting?

A: There is a list of attachments that are required for the RFA on page 5 of the document. City Council will vet all applicants to ensure they have no outstanding liens or other issues regarding misuse of funds, illegal activity, or failure to comply with city regulations as necessary. If you have any issues that have been resolved, you should include an explanation in your narrative.

Q: Our organization has sites in the DOE where we cannot control the violations of the corrective actions that accompany the violations. How can we sort that out so we could apply?

A: Explain any extenuating circumstances in your narrative.

Q: Why do we need to submit all the forms again if we already have DYCD funding? Can we use a Conflict of Interest form that we submitted recently to DYCD on another city contract?

A: Even if you receive DYCD funding already, you must still download all the forms as they are listed in the RFA and complete them. Please note that the attachment checklist in the packet is missing two of the required forms, so be sure not to miss those. The checklist will be updated soon.

Q: Will any of this require us to use the HHS Accelerator at any point?

A: No.

Q: Is there a page requirement for this RFA?

A: Yes. Five pages is the maximum. There is no minimum.

Q: Can this funding be used in combination with other awards?

A: Yes, however the money that you apply has to be used between January and June 2015. You need to be clear about the activities done in that time frame.

Q: Is there a match requirement?

A: No.

Q: Do you have to apply for $35,000, or can you apply for less?

A: You may apply for less than $35,000. You should apply for whatever amount you believe will realistically make you successful in capacity building within the project period.

Q: Is the requirement of 501(c)(3) status for 3 years from the application date or project start date?

A: Application date.

Q: Will we be penalized if our organizational budget is over $2 million?

A: The funding is intended to enhance capacity in community-based organizations. In general, smaller organizations have greater capacity building needs and thus these applications are likely to receive preference. However, we recognize that larger organizations also have capacity building issues, especially if their growth is recent. Your narrative should make the case clearly why your organization, despite the higher budget, would benefit from this funding. You may also note if there are any special considerations the reviewers should know, such as a percentage of your budget being designated as pass-through and not reflective of your actual operating budget.

Q: Is there any quota for funding areas, geography, or types of organizations?

A: There are no quotas. Reviewers will be encouraged to consider a wide range of project types and geographical location.   Organizations will be evaluated on their individual project, not their primary mission.

Q: How do I demonstrate outreach to recruit people of color for the senior leadership or Board of Directors, especially if there have been no recent changes in Director or Board?

A: In general, you can describe your efforts in the narrative of your application. In addition, the RFA requests a list of Board of Directors and their race/ethnicity, and if your Board has representation from your community, that can show sufficient efforts.

Consultants

Q: Are we required to hire consultants to work on our projects?

Consultants are permitted but not required. When deciding whether to hire a consultant, you should consider the type of project and what expertise you need to implement it. Many projects will require outside assistance, especially considering the short project period.

Q: Are there any restrictions on consultants?

All consultants must be vetted by City Council. They will need to submit full name, business address, and their EIN or Social Security number. All consultants will have to sign a Conflict of Interest form and

submit work plans to you. In addition, City Council requires that no more than 60% of your total budget can be applied to a private, for-profit consultant. There is no percentage cap on nonprofit consultants.

Q: Do we already need to have the consultant selected for the application?

No. If you already have secured a consultant, you should submit their name, address, and EIN or Social Security number with your application to facilitate the vetting process (see above). If you do not have a consultant in mind, please indicate on your application the type of consultant you intend on hiring and include the area of expertise and expected outcomes.

Q: How can I find a consultant?

We are compiling a list of possible consultants that have demonstrated success and cultural competency in working with community-based organizations and communities of color. This list is provided for your information only, and a grantee is not required to work with one of these consultants.   Even if you do wish to work with one of these consultants, you should still consider if they are right for your particular organization and project. Your application will not be given preference if you choose one of these consultants.

Q: Can we apply for funding to pay IT consultants?

A: Yes. In your narrative, make sure to include how hiring an IT consultant would help build your capacity. You could also include that you will be paying staff salaries of 15% of the total budget to learn how to use and implement the new software, if you can show that this will help build the capacity of your organization.

Q: Is there preference for the consultants to be people of color as well?

A: No. We recommend only that all consultants be culturally competent.

Q: Can we use volunteer consultants, provided by non-profit membership organizations?

A: Yes.

Staff

Q: Can I include staff salaries in the budget?

A: DYCD has limited the total amount allowable for staff salaries to 15% of the proposed project budget. This does not include fringe. The maximum fringe allowed is 7.65% of the 15% (or less) of staff salaries.

Q: Can I hire new staff?

A: No. Any budget allocation for staff salaries should involve training existing staff, but as long as it does not negatively impact any direct services by diverting staff time. You can also apply to develop a plan

for hiring staff, such as a development specialist if stabilizing your funding is your capacity-building priority.

Q: Can the funds be used to improve staff skills?

A: Funding can be used to pay for sending staff to training or to bring in a trainer for the staff members. Staff time, travel expenses, and the cost of the training are examples of acceptable costs. Another approach could be to bring in a consultant to build a performance evaluation process and then train the staff on that process.

Other Allowable Expenses

Q: Can the funds be used for direct services? Can they be used for enhancing the effectiveness of existing programs?

A: No, funding cannot be used to cover direct services. However, you can use funding to develop the capacity of the organization to better deliver direct services. For example, this might involve an assessment and planning for new needed services, or to develop an evaluation process to better measure your existing direct services.

Q: Can the funds be used to purchase software and hardware?

A: This is limited to hardware and software only as it relates to the capacity building initiative (for example accounting and fundraising software).   There is a 15% cap in total - assuming the grant award is 35K this would be approximately $5250. Phones are considered an operational expense, similar to copiers or office furniture and would not be considered an allowable expense.

Q: Can eligible projects for "new program planning and development" be to implement a project that was already been designed?

A: As long as the fund is used for development during January-June period.

Q: Can program activities begin on November, or must it start only after January?

A: January-June period. Project cannot start earlier than January.

Q: Can we include membership fee in budget?

A: Yes, if related to capacity building.

Trainings

Q: Which are the three areas you would provide core competency training in? And when?

A: All grantees will be required to attend core competency trainings in Board Development, Fund Development, and Financial Management. The dates are TBD, but will occur in the winter and spring of 2015.

Application Review

Q: Who sits on the Allocation Committees?

A: There are three Allocation Committees, one for each community of color. On each Committee there are five voting members. Their names are not public information in order to protect our reviewers from outside influence and to maintain a fair and equal review process. The voting members are professionals with expertise in philanthropy, capacity building, community-based organizations, and cultural competency. All Allocations Committee members will also sign a Conflict of Interest form. In addition, the NSF partners will sit on each other's Allocations Committees as nonvoting members.

Q: How are the assessments done? Is there a scorecard?

A: All three Allocations Committees will use the same evaluation rubric. We are not releasing the rubric, but it matches the criteria listed on the RFA. The narrative for your grant application should ultimately make a case for how this grant would be able to help your organization build its capacity between January and June 2015.

Receipt of Funding

Q: Once the awards are announced in January, how will they be distributed?

A: The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families, the Hispanic Federation, and the New York Urban League will be dispersing the awards directly to the grantees. Once you have signed the contract with the funding partner, the funding partner will provide you with 50% of the award. Your contract and initial payment do not need to be processed through DYCD.

We are still negotiating with DYCD on how and when the remaining award will be disbursed throughout the six months. It may be monthly, or it may be a lump sum at the end of the grant period. You will need to complete an interim report with receipts to show how the money is being spent. All funds must be spent by June 30, 2015 to comply with the city fiscal year.

Q: Is it possible that the remaining 50% could be held by City Council?

A: Yes, if your interim report with receipts was not up to par. The program report should be aligned with budget goals.

NOTE: ANY UPDATES WILL BE POSTED ON OUR WEBSITES.