Grantmaking
Community Grant Program Grant Reviewer Position Description

Grant Purpose
We envision a thriving and enriching community for all. The Community Foundation of Elmira-Corning and the Finger Lakes works to address the current needs of the community through a multiple avenue approach to correct the problems that exist and find creative solutions to avoid the problems in the future. We award grants to non-profit organizations whose programs make a positive impact on the needs and issues that face our community.

To do this, we look for community members to volunteer as grant reviewers for the foundation's largest grant cycle, the Community Grant Program. A group of 18-20 diverse mix of community volunteers, civic and nonprofit professionals, business leaders, and educators with unique knowledge and experiences are needed to help guide the Community Foundation's grantmaking. Experience evaluating grant applications is helpful but is not required.

Responsibilities
Grant Reviewers represent broad expertise, knowledge, and experience with the types of projects being reviewed and help guide the grantmaking program investment strategy and is not limited to the following:

- Review and evaluate grant applications
- Determine and submit grant recommendations to the Vice President of Programs
- Bring knowledge and perspective to inform grant review discussions in alignment with the Community Foundation’s mission, vision, and grant strategy.
- Attend relevant learning/celebratory events

Qualifications and Experience
The Grant Review Panel’s represent a diverse range of experience of people who live/work in the finger lakes region. Individuals appointed to review panels will:

- Have a unique perspective and voice
- Have knowledge of various communities, strengths, challenges, and community assets in the finger lakes region
- Have some understanding of issues related to fields of arts and culture, education and youth, the environment, health and human services, civic affairs, community development, and animal welfare, from diverse sectors, including philanthropy, nonprofit, academia/research, policy, and government
- Be a consensus builder
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Time Commitment
The time commitment for grant review panel members varies from person to person. The Community Grant Program cycle begins in June and ends mid-August. Grant applications and panels are sorted by issue area:

- Arts & Culture
- Environment and Animals
- Health & Human Services
- Capacity Building & Technology
- Civic Affairs & Community Development
- Education & Youth
- General Operating Support

Grant reviewers only need to select one issue area to review and evaluate grants for.

Application review begins mid-July followed by 1-2 in-person panel meetings held at the end of July to August. Grant Review Panel members are expected to participate in the following meetings that will be held during business hours:

- Orientation (1 hour, virtual)
- Independently read and review grant applications (~10 hours)
- Participate in a grant panel meeting to finalize grant recommendations (one to two 2.5-hour meetings in-person)

We also invite every Grant Review Committee member to join us for a grant awards ceremony typically held in October.

To Apply
If you would like to be a member of the Community Foundation’s Grant Review Committee, please complete the interest form. Email ses@communityfund.org if you have questions.
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Guidelines for Grant Panel Participants

Members of Community Foundation grant panels represent broad expertise, knowledge, or experience with the types of projects being reviewed. The following guidelines have been developed to assist panelists as they review grants before the panel meets and throughout the grantmaking process.

Before the Grant Review Panel Meeting

Each grant review receives an email linking them to the online grant portal (Foundant Grant Lifecycle Manager) with the following items at least ten days prior to the panel meeting:

- Guidelines for Grant Panel Participants
- Rubric, Review and Rating System
- First Reader Assignments
- Logon information to access grants online

Conflict of Interest Statement & Confidentiality Form will be available at the in-person meeting.

PHASE 1: Independent Grant Application Review

1. **Grant Application Review**
   Familiarize yourself with the remaining grants you’ve been assigned to allow for a robust and meaningful discussion of each application at the panel meeting. Assign an initial color rating, funding recommendation and comment on each application within the online grant portal.

2. **First Reading Assignments**
   Each panelist will act as a “first reader” for 2-3 grants (assigned in your email). Panelists should take extra care reviewing their assigned grants; the “first reader” will provide a summary and present their grants to the rest of the panel prior to full panel discussion.

3. **Questions?**
   If you have any questions about the grant requests, please contact the Vice President of Programs. Under no circumstances are you to contact the organization representative, schedule a meeting with the organization or go on a site visit regarding the organization’s grant application.

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PHASE 2: The In-Person Grant Review Panel Meeting

1. **Review each application separately.**
   “First readers” will introduce and summarize each application. The review panel will then discuss the project description, budget and supporting materials. We address the current needs of the community through a multiple avenue approach to correct the problems that exist and find creative solutions to avoid the problems in the future. The Community Foundation looks at the holistic needs in the community, including education, arts, infrastructure, animals, the environment, and wellness. Our priorities align with our values that we hope to model together with our nonprofit partners. Our priorities also guide the application review which include:

   - **Advance equity** - The voices of the underserved and economically diverse are important, and programs designed to foster access for community connections are a priority. Funded programs will provide clearly stated goals for the incorporation of diverse cultures, philosophies, and experiences. Diversity should be present not only in program delivery but also in the leadership, mission, boards, and operations of the organization.
   - **Community Impact** - We support organizations whose work is guided by clear goals for the growth of individuals and communities in the areas of human services, arts and culture, education and youth, health, animal welfare, the environment, and civic affairs.
   - **Collaborate with community** – We strive to create healthier conditions for people in our community by collectively improving and developing them together. We believe in authentic community relationships.
   - **Innovation and creativity** - We support promising solutions whose results may be unpredictable.
   - **Sustainability** – We encourage proposals that will use awarded funds to strengthen their capacity and expertise to serve our most underserved.

2. **Assign a final color rating and funding recommendation to each application.**
   Following the discussion, the grant review panel will determine a final color rating reached by consensus to the application under review.

   *If a panelist feels that they are faced with a conflict of interest due to Board membership or other affiliation with the application under review (please refer to the enclosed Conflict of Interest Statement), the panelist shall not participate in the scoring process.*

3. **Determine where the cut-off colors are for full funding, partial funding, and no funding.**
   Grant review panels ultimately recommend to fund or not to fund a project without assigning dollars to the application. Dollar amounts are assigned to grants at the Grant Distribution Panel which is comprised of 1 representative from each grant review committee.

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Phase 3: In-Person Grant Distribution Panel

1. The Grant Distribution Panel assigns grant award amounts.
   The Grant Distribution Panel is comprised of panelists, members of the executive committee, the President, and Vice President of Programs. The Vice President of Programs will ask for 1 volunteer from each of the Grant Review Panels to participate on the Grant Distribution Panel. The Grant Distribution Panel assigns grant award amounts based on a panel’s recommendations in relationship to the funds available for allocation.

Phase 4: The Board of Directors votes to approve the grant recommendations.

The Community Foundation Board does not attempt to revisit staff, panel, or committee recommendations except when the following occurs:

- Non-representation of information by staff or panelist.
- Misrepresentation of information by staff or panelist.
- Improper procedure due to biased, arbitrary, or capricious actions.

The Board assumes fiduciary responsibility for the entire grantmaking process.

1. Staff sends notices of grant awards and initiates program review procedures.