

Princeton Area Community Foundation

promoting philanthropy
to advance the well-being
of our communities forever

Greater Mercer Grants Guidelines

Fall 2010

The Greater Mercer Grants Program is a competitive program for projects benefiting residents of Mercer County, New Jersey, and the immediately adjoining areas of surrounding counties.

Grant applications are accepted twice annually from tax-exempt 501(c) 3 nonprofit. Grants are awarded three months later. Please check our website www.pacf.org for upcoming grant deadlines.

Applications must be delivered by 5:00 p.m. to the Princeton Area Community Foundation, 15 Princess Road, Lawrenceville, NJ 08648, or postmarked on or before the proposal deadline.

Please do not fax or e-mail applications.

What We Fund

Organizations that Address the Needs of Low-Income Individuals and Families

Grants up to \$25,000 are made to 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations whose applications demonstrate they are capable of helping low-income individuals and/or families. Applications can be submitted for program support or operating support.

Program support may be directed at one or more project areas, such as economic self-sufficiency, education, health, housing, nutrition, safety, supportive services, or youth development, among others. Projects with the greatest potential to make a sustained difference in people's lives have the best chance of being funded.

Operating Support is available to organizations demonstrating solid management in the current economic climate. Organizations who demonstrate keen strategic thinking about their current capacity, and contingency plans for conducting their business in a difficult economic climate have the best chance of being funded.

Building Community Within and Among Municipalities

Grants up to \$50,000 are made to 501(c)(3) nonprofits to form community-wide efforts that address a shared problem or take advantage of a shared opportunity, among multiple municipalities or within a single borough, city, or township.

We seek to increase the number and strength of social networks in the region. We value social connections and the ways they motivate people to do things for each other. Communities with strong bonds have higher educational achievement, better performing governments, faster economic growth, less crime, and less violence. People who live in these communities report being happier and healthier, and they enjoy a longer life expectancy. In communities with strong bonds, it is easier to mobilize people to tackle problems and undertake activities that benefit everyone.

The Community Foundation identifies projects that develop these social networks and use them to address problems and opportunities in such areas as planning, economic development, civic engagement, service sharing, service delivery, philanthropy, volunteerism, care of the environment, and participatory arts. Projects in these areas are eligible for support. So are activities that bring people together to examine barriers to relating to each other, such as study circles. Ongoing activities, as opposed to one-time events, receive priority.

Grant Term

Grants are for one year.

Renewal Funding

Current grantees are welcome to submit applications. Organizations that have received prior-year funding, or funding for consecutive years, are not guaranteed continued support for the same project. All reporting requirements for previous funding must have been met.

What We Do NOT Fund

- Building renovations and new facility construction
- Capital and endowment campaigns and projects
- Fundraising appeals and events
- Scholarships and individual sponsorships
- Field trips, unless part of a larger educational effort
- Sports activities, unless part of a larger educational effort
- Sponsorship of events (Sponsorships are occasionally made as part of the Community Foundation's marketing efforts, and solely at the Foundation's initiation)
- Lobbying and other political activities
- Fraternal and religious activities
- Tax-supported and government-operated basic programs and services, such as core curricular school activities, and essential police and fire services

Application Restrictions

Nonprofits may submit **one application per calendar year**.

Non-Discrimination

The Community Foundation values projects that promote inclusiveness and that do not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, age, national origin, disability, or any other characteristics protected by law.

Eligibility Criteria

For Nonprofit Organizations

Nonprofit organizations that have tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code are eligible. They must be registered with the State of New Jersey as a charity, unless they are religious organizations, or schools that file their curricula with the Department of Education and are exempt from the provisions of the New Jersey Charitable Registration and Investigation Act. (For more information on New Jersey charitable registration, go to the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs web site at <http://www.njconsumeraffairs.gov/ocp/charities.htm>)

Selection Criteria for All Categories

- How well the request fits with the Greater Mercer Grants guidelines
- The quality of the application (on time, complete, clearly written)
- Clear statement of the need for the project and/or services
- How success will be defined, measured and documented
- Appropriate, realistic budget

Additional Selection Criteria for Program Support Grants

- How well the project is planned
- How well the applicant has researched and understands what others have tried and what works best
- Involvement of the people who will benefit from the project

Additional Selection Criteria for Operating Support Grants

- Extent to which your organization can demonstrate its capacity in a difficult economic climate
- Identification of leaner ways to conduct business
- Consideration of new and creative ways to be more effective
- Strategic thinking about consolidations and/or taking on new efforts.

Additional Selection Criteria for “Building Community” Grants

- How well the project is planned
- How well the applicant has researched and understands what others have tried and what works best
- Involvement of the people who will benefit from the project
- Extent to which the project connects and develops social networks among diverse individuals and groups
- Ability to attract other funding and support
- Ability of the project to continue beyond grant, if applicable

Assistance with Preparing Applications

The Community Foundation offers **Grant Information Sessions** at its office, located at 15 Princess Road, Lawrenceville, New Jersey. These sessions walk participants through the grant guidelines and application forms, and provide an opportunity to ask questions.

Attendance is not required to apply for a grant.

Follow-up Questions and Site Visits

Follow-up questions from the Community Foundation and site visits by members of its staff and volunteer Grants Committee are a routine part of the application process.

How Grants Are Announced

The Community Foundation first notifies all applicants of its decisions by mail, then issues a press release to area media that identifies the organizations and projects awarded grants. Grantees are encouraged to publicize their awards themselves through press releases, newsletters, web sites, and annual reports, and to acknowledge Community Foundation support.

Use of Grant Money

Grant money must be used exclusively for the purposes and activities specified in the grant application. Grantees may be required to return grant funds not used in the manner described in their grant proposal. Grantees should notify the Community Foundation as soon as possible if their needs or circumstances change.

Reporting Requirements

Grantees are required to submit brief six-month and end-of-grant narrative and budget reports on their projects. The Community Foundation provides reporting forms in advance of the due dates. Failure to complete and submit reports will affect future grant eligibility. Building Community grantees may be asked to present a status report in person during and/or after the completion of the grant year.