

# Grant Guidelines

## I GOAL OF SCCF GRANTMAKING

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*SCCF Mission: Connecting people who care with needs that matter to our community*

The Steuben County Community Foundation (SCCF) acts as a leader of the philanthropic community; identifying and exploring important needs and concerns, addressing serious problems, and shaping effective responses. Each year, SCCF grants more than \$1.6 million dollars to our community.

We are proud to be a partner with the many nonprofit organizations and community groups that help make Steuben County a great place to live. In order to serve Steuben County, the SCCF Board of Directors has identified several broad categories in which community needs exist and in which grant requests are encouraged. The SCCF is particularly interested in ideas that shed new light on Steuben County's needs and aspirations, with emphasis on providing long-term solutions.

## 2 GRANT CYCLES & APPLICATION PROCESS

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The majority of grantmaking at SCCF is through designated funds established by donors to support specific nonprofit organizations on an annual basis. In addition, donor advised fund holders recommend grants to projects and organizations they support. The remaining grants made by SCCF are known as discretionary grants, for which grant applications are accepted and reviewed by a volunteer board. **Final approval of all grants is made by the SCCF Board of Directors.**

**Discretionary Grant Cycles:**<sup>1</sup> [steubenfoundation.org/grants](https://www.steubenfoundation.org/grants)

- Education: *Applications due January 31*
- Arts & Culture, Environment, Recreation, Community Development, Other: *Applications due April 30*
- Health & Human Services: *Applications due July 31*
- Impact Grants:<sup>2</sup> *Letter of Inquiry due August 15, select groups are invited to submit applications due October 15*
- Women's Fund: *Applications due in February, May, June, August, and October*
- Humanities Fund: *Applications considered throughout the year*
- Community Funds: Angola, Ashley-Hudson, Clear Lake, Fremont, Hamilton, Helmer, Metz, Orland, Pleasant Lake, and Salem Center: *Applications considered throughout the year*

SCCF's grant application process is electronic. Each applicant must create an account and submit documents through our online grants portal, accessed via the SCCF website. SCCF can only fund a small portion of the requests we receive. An unsuccessful application is not a reflection of the worthiness of a project.

Recipients of Impact Grants are not eligible to receive funding in the Education, Arts & Culture, Environment, Recreation, Community Development, Other, and Health & Human Services cycles for the duration of their Impact Grant funding.

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<sup>1</sup> Additional explanation of each grant category is included in the appendix.

<sup>2</sup> See page 4 of Grant Guidelines for more information.

## 3 ELIGIBILITY

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### Who We Fund:

- Nonprofit organizations serving Steuben County. Requests may be approved for nonprofits headquartered outside Steuben County if a majority of the people benefitting from the grant funds reside in Steuben County.

### Who We Do Not Fund:

- Individuals
- Organizations with outstanding grant reports due to SCCF
- Organizations that do not serve Steuben County

### What We Fund:

- Projects and programs intended to improve quality of life in Steuben County, with special consideration given to collaborative projects and those which consider and attempt to address root causes
- Projects that fit within a nonprofit organization's mission and strategic plan, and that have support from their board demonstrated by board approved meeting minutes supporting the application

### What We Do NOT Fund:

- Projects normally fully funded by government or schools
- Religious activities that do not serve the community at large
- Political organizations or campaigns
- Projects that duplicate existing services without collaboration
- Projects where SCCF is the sole funder
- Requests for projects that have already occurred or debt reduction
- Requests for a project that SCCF has **funded for 3 consecutive years**
- Fundraising campaigns

## 4 FUNDING GUIDELINES

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### Proposals are reviewed based on the following criteria:

- Duplication of services - Are other groups already offering this service to Steuben County residents?
- Collaboration - How are you partnering with other organizations (such as businesses, nonprofits, schools, government entities, etc.) to have greater impact?
- Sustainability – What happens if your organization's request isn't funded by SCCF? What's your plan for continuing this project in future years? How do you expand sustainability with future partners?
- Additional Funding Sources - Who else is invested in this project?
- Community Impact - How do you know the community is in need of this project? How will the community be impacted? Consider short term, intermediate, and long term intended outcomes.
- Project Outcomes - What specific metrics<sup>3</sup> will you use to track progress? What outcomes do you hope to achieve, and how will you know you've been successful?

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<sup>3</sup> See the distinction between metrics and outcomes, as well as resources for developing SMART goals, in the appendix

**SCCF funds projects in three general categories:**

1. Capacity Building: Investments in board, director, and staff training, office or program equipment, or infrastructure to improve organizational efficiency and the ability for a nonprofit to have impact
2. Existing Programs: Direct program support for costs associated with a project in at least its second year of existence
3. New Initiatives: New programs or a drastically updated program that better reflects current needs and new partnerships

**Tips for Strong Applications**

- Partner with other organizations to gain access to different resources and skills
- Engage your clients to be sure the project you are proposing is needed and wanted
- Share evidence of your previous success to show your expertise in this area

## 5 GRANTEE REQUIREMENTS

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- Big thinking: Inspired ideas that demonstrate considerable thought into the effectiveness and need for this request
- Follow-through: Every grant must be accompanied by a signed grant agreement that details how the organization will use the funding they receive and evaluate their impact
- Feedback: Final grant reports must have specific outcomes. Please utilize the resources available on our website ([steubenfoundation.org/resources](http://steubenfoundation.org/resources)) to draft specific and measurable outcomes, and describe your plan for collecting data to support these.
- Photos: Telling the story of a grant requires some visualization. All grantees must take photos that represent their projects or programs. This allows SCCF to see the impact of the grant, and provides content for grantees to share with their other funders.

## 6 CONTACT AND FAQ

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If you have not previously applied for a grant with SCCF or if you have questions about eligibility, grant requirements, or the online portal, please contact our office at (260) 665-6656.

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**What's the average grant size for SCCF?**

The average grant size varies widely based on the grantmaking fund. However, for the Education Cycle, Arts & Culture, etc. Cycle, and the Health & Human Services Cycle, the average grant size is \$3,000-\$5,000, with a maximum of \$10,000.

**If my organization receives a grant, when will we receive the funding?**

Typically, the grants committee meets in the month after each grant cycle ends. Their recommendations are sent to the SCCF Board of Directors for final approval. Recipients must sign a grant agreement, and checks will be mailed afterwards. This process takes 60-75 days from the end of the grant cycle.

# Specific Guidelines for Impact Grants

## I INTRODUCTION

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In 2020, SCCF began offering a new type of grant for special projects with the potential to make a unique difference in Steuben County. Each year, SCCF will award a single Impact Grant payable over 3 years for a project that is **innovative, collaborative, and sustainable**, as defined below. Approximately half of the unrestricted dollars allocated to SCCF's grants committee each year will be used to fund the Impact Grant Cycle. SCCF will offer a series of trainings to help prepare nonprofits for their applications. Attendance may be a requirement for applying. Details will be available on the SCCF website. In addition to the first 3 pages of grant guidelines, these specific points apply to SCCF Impact Grants.

## 2 APPLICATION PROCESS

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1. A Letter of Inquiry describing the project need and partners involved is due August 15.
2. The grants committee and staff will review Letters of Inquiry and contact applicants with questions. By September 15, select groups will be invited to submit a full application, due October 15.
3. The SCCF grants committee will review applications and make recommendations for final approval by the SCCF Board of Directors in November.
4. The final decision will be announced in December. At this time, SCCF will work with the grantee to draft a grant agreement and outline annual feedback expectations for receiving future years of funding. Site visits and ongoing communication with SCCF are key requirements of Impact Grants.

## 3 GRANT GUIDELINES

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The terms innovative, collaborative, and sustainable were chosen because they are interconnected. Projects involving partnerships with other organizations encourage creative problem solving, engage new perspectives, and help with the development of sustainable strategies. Impact Grant proposals will be evaluated as follows:

Innovative:

- Is this a new idea, solution, and partnership? Does it represent a fundamental change in a program, possibly to align with emerging solutions that are gaining traction in an industry?

Collaboration:

- How do you work with clients/recipients to build your program? I.e. engage your stakeholders
- How do you share resources and ideas with another organization(s) for a common project?
- Nonprofits headquartered outside of Steuben County must identify a local partner organization.
- Nonprofits with an annual operating budget of more than \$500,000 are **strongly encouraged** to collaborate with a smaller Steuben County organization and vice versa

Sustainable:

- All Impact Grants require a local match of 25% to demonstrate community buy-in. This monetary (not in-kind) match must be documented each year before grant funds will be released.
- What is the plan for future funding beyond the Impact Grant's 3 year period? Will it be built into an organization's budget or earn revenue in future years? How will it help your nonprofit gain attention of local donors who will support future years of this project?

If your request for an Impact Grant is denied, you may reapply for a scaled-down version in the remaining grant cycles (Education or Arts & Culture, Environment, Recreation, Community Development).

# Appendix

## Definitions:

- **Education Grant Cycle:** Projects that are related to education, training, and advancement of skills to participants of all ages
- **Arts & Culture, Environment, Recreation, Community Development, Other Grant Cycle:**
  - Projects that increase the number and quality of artistic offerings in the community
  - Projects that promote the preservation/appreciation of Steuben County's natural resources
  - Projects that improve access to and the facilities available for recreation, such as parks, bike trails, walking paths, etc.
  - Projects that develop the heart of the community and promote the gathering of local community members for collective action and relationship building
  - SCCF operates on a July 1-June 30 fiscal year. This grant cycle provides an additional opportunity for applications not received during the appropriate cycles from July-January.
- **Health & Human Services Grant Cycle:** Health grants are for projects that address both physical and mental health, providing additional healthcare services or improving the existing services for Steuben County residents. Human Services is broadly defined as any projects or organizations that meet basic human needs and improve quality of life, both through the prevention of issues and by addressing current problems.
- **Impact Grants<sup>4</sup>:** Larger, multi-year grants for big projects that are innovative, collaborative, and sustainable in nature.
- **Women's Fund:** Projects that address women's issues and which primarily serve Steuben County women and girls.
- **Humanities Fund:** The Humanities Council supports programs that help boost local talent and bring the arts and humanities to Steuben County.
- **Community Funds:** Angola, Ashley-Hudson, Clear Lake, Fremont, Hamilton, Helmer, Metz, Orland, Pleasant Lake, and Salem Center: Projects that primarily benefit the residents of each community to meet local needs, offer local services, or make county-wide services more accessible.
- **Innovative:** Projects that address new problems and future concerns, or are fundamentally new solutions and ideas for addressing old problems
- **Collaborative:** To seek partnership with an organization(s) with which one is not immediately connected, sharing resources and working on a common project to have greater collective impact
- **Sustainable:** Able to offer a project/program on an ongoing basis, maintained at a certain level with additional funding sources likely, i.e. via sponsorships, sliding scale fees, or other fundraising

## Other Grant Resources:

**Metrics vs Outcomes vs Goals** - Metrics are indicators, i.e. number of people served. Outcomes are changes in behavior and attitudes. A goal is the desired impact of a project, i.e. a safe place for kids to play.

**SMART Goals** – Establish goals for your program or project that are strategic. These should be **Specific** and well defined, **Measurable** by dates and amounts, **Attainable** and realistic, **Relevant** to the mission of your nonprofit, and **Time-bound** with a deadline.

**Program Budgets** - This should be detailed and include expenses and revenues. Identify which costs are covered by other funders or the operating budget. The expenses should match your grant narrative.

SCCF's website has more information about logic models. <https://steubenfoundation.org/nonprofit-resources/>

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<sup>4</sup> See page 4 of grant guidelines for more information.