



Overview of the Capacity Building Program

The Nelson Foundation is piloting a capacity building grantmaking program with the goal of improving the performance of grantee organizations. Through the program, The Nelson Foundation seeks to:

- Strengthen the organizational capacity of organizations so that they are better positioned to augment existing programs and services; not necessarily to serve more people or expand programs, but to deepen and widen positive impacts for children, youth, and consequently their communities
- Enhance the organizational effectiveness of grantee organizations so that they are better able to sustain high-quality programs and performance over the long-term

Grant funds will:

- Support organizations to identify and prioritize capacity building and organizational effectiveness opportunities, as well as the steps needed for improvement, and/or
- Support organizations during the implementation of capacity building initiatives so that they achieve improved organizational effectiveness

The capacity building program is by invitation only. The Nelson Foundation will not review or consider unsolicited proposals. The Nelson Foundation will invite applications from a limited number of current and recent grantees that are aligned with the foundation's mission of supporting children and youth, and that demonstrate the readiness and commitment to realize the potential of a capacity building grant.

The anticipated grant range is \$30,000 to \$100,000 per year for up to three years (totaling up to \$90,000 - \$300,000 over a three-year period). Grant sizes are likely not to exceed 10% of an organization's budget, and may vary from year to year; e.g. a grant may be lower in first year if an organization uses funds for an organizational assessment and/or planning. Not all grants will have three-year terms.

The Nelson Foundation seeks to amplify the learning and capacity building opportunity of the program by coordinating a grantee learning cohort of all grantee partners in the program. The CEOs/Executive Directors of selected grantee organizations will be invited and required to participate in regular convenings of the grantee cohort (anticipated to meet four to six times per year). In addition, recipient organizations will be expected to participate as partners in an evaluation process to track and assess the impact of the program, to identify the contributors to success and areas for improvement, and to offer recommendations for possible future iterations of the capacity building program.



ELIGIBLE REQUESTS

Eligible requests from grantees:

- Capacity building focus:
 - Resource development (i.e., fundraising and business planning)
 - Communications and marketing
 - Program evaluation and design
 - Technology and information systems (note: could include hardware and software, and expert assistance)
 - Board recruitment and development
 - Strategic planning
 - Community engagement
 - Collaboration development
 - Administrative operations (e.g., financial management systems and consultation, facilities improvements and upgrades, legal counsel, human resources management and systems development)
- Capital expenses, new staff positions/hires, and consultant expenses related to the capacity building project
- Organizational staff and expenses directly involved in or related to the capacity building project (e.g., Executive Director time)
- Workshops and learning opportunities that complement the capacity building project

Note: Applicant organizations may apply for and receive grants through the Foundation's core grants program and capacity building program at the same time.

Not eligible/exclusions:

- Capital campaigns
- Endowments
- Financial deficits and debt service
- One-time events that do not build long-term capacity (e.g., fundraising event sponsorships)

LEARNING AND EVALUATION

Grantee partner cohort:

- CEOs/Executive Directors of the grantee organizations in the capacity building program will be required to participate in a peer learning cohort with other grantees in the program to exchange lessons learned, support each other's capacity building, and provide feedback to The Nelson Foundation about the process and impact of the capacity building program.



Grantee reporting:

- Interim reporting on 6-month basis on activities, progress, challenges, and any changes to the work plan; changes to plans and expectations of the project are anticipated and welcome, reflecting an understanding of the nature of capacity building.
- If consultants are hired, grantees must provide evidence that at least three viable consultants were interviewed for the role.