DuPage Community Transformation Partnership

Frequently Asked Questions – Transformational Grants

General Questions

What kind of federal dollars are these?
The federal dollars are from the American Rescue Plan Act that were given to DuPage County. The County Board in turn approved $10 million to DuPage Foundation to conduct application processes for local not-for-profits to support those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Will this be a reimbursement grant?
Funding will be distributed at the beginning of the grant period after the grant agreement has been signed. For multi-year grants, funds will be distributed for year one of the project and second year funding would be distributed after an annual progress report has been submitted showing that appropriate progress toward outcomes has been made.

I read that this grant may be renewable in 2024. Should we articulate our vision for the 4 year impact?
For a transformational project, it makes sense to articulate the vision over a four year period. However, the grants are not technically renewable so the proposal should focus specifically on what will be done over two years. Organizations will need to submit a new application in 2024.

How important is sustainability? For instance, if we want to hire more staff, would we have to show how we will continue the position(s) after the grant period is over?
The purpose of the Transformational grant is to support a change or investment that will increase the effectiveness or efficiency of service delivery. If staff is hired for the project, it will be critical to know how the project will be sustained when funding through the Partnership is no longer available. How will the organization cover salaries and benefits beyond the grant period? If it is not expected that staff will be needed to keep the program going after it is up and running, an explanation as to why staff is not
needed would be important. Ultimately, we will want to make sure that the project will continue on well beyond the grant period.

**Do we have to have a fully fleshed out plan? What room is there for flexibility and change over time?**
Through the LOI, we are looking for the project idea with some details. If invited to submit an application, a more fully fleshed out plan will be required. With regard to flexibility, we realize projects can evolve and change over time which is why there will be six-month reviews to discuss any modifications or changes that might need to be made. However, the main scope or purpose of the project should not change.

**Do you anticipate any preference for fully funding a program vs. seeing other funders/operating funds provide additional funds that contribute to the total program budget?**
While we are not requiring that there are other funding sources available to support the project at this time, the ability to sustain a program beyond the grant period is critical so having other funding streams will contribute to the confidence that the project will be sustained beyond the grant period.

**We understand that you have devoted more dollars to this grant. What is that total dollar amount?**
It is anticipated that we will distribute the greater proportion of the $10 million to support Transformational grants. However, we do not yet know the exact dollar amount that will be allocated to Transformational or Immediate Intervention.

**How do you define "evidence-based"?**
The proposed strategy has been performed elsewhere, measured objectively and there is evidence that this intervention will have the desired impact. Usually some sort of academic research or best practice write-ups will provide this.

**Eligibility Questions**

**Can applications include both direct and indirect costs?**
Yes, as long as the overall project results in measurable impact in one of these issue areas.

**Can these funds be applied to an endowment or reserves that are drawn down over the grant period?**
No, Treasury specifically prohibits the use of these funds for an endowment.

**Is collaboration a requirement? We are a multifaceted organization that provides a wide range of services. Other agencies would have to collaborate in order to be able to provide these.**
No, collaboration is not a requirement. Often transformational projects are multifaceted and collaboration can foster greater efficiencies and success which is why we are interested in collaborative projects even though it’s not required.
Within the four areas, are there defined areas of preference and/or restrictions in which the funding can be used (i.e. capital improvements, staffing, technology, etc.)?
It is not the intention for these funds to be used to support brick and mortar projects but smaller capital expenses may be eligible. Staff and technology are eligible expenses, however, the case needs to be made that the investment will result in measurable impact in one of the stated issue areas.

Is funding for facility rent considered 'bricks & mortar'? Is funding for office lease an eligible expense?
We do not consider rent bricks & mortar. Rent is an operating expense which is eligible. However, you need to show the impact in one of the four issue areas. If it’s just an operating expense to support your facility, it likely will not resonate with the evaluation team.

Would support positions in administration areas such as fund development departments be considered as part of an entire project so that a more long-term sustainability path could be achieved?
No, grants are not intended to support fundraising efforts.

Are only direct services and expansion eligible or can the transformational grant fund infrastructure, such as moving to a new space?
Direct service and expansion expenses are eligible as long as you can measure the project outcomes relative to one of the stated issue areas. We don’t anticipate supporting acquisition or construction of a building.

Can an organization propose more than one program/service and if so, do we need to complete more than one LOI or should we detail all programs into one LOI?
Yes, you are eligible to propose more than one idea but need to submit separate LOIs for each. However, funding is limited so we would suggest that you focus on the best and most impactful idea you have.

Do we need to show a tie/link to COVID in our needs statement and outcomes?
Yes, in the Program Description of the LOI, you will be asked to provide a description of the program, how it addresses local needs that are the result of the COVID pandemic and the measurable outcomes you expect to achieve.

If a 501(C)(3) organization wanted to act as fiscal sponsor for a partner organization that couldn’t provide the financial documents, would that disadvantage their consideration for other projects?
Organizations that do not have the necessary financial documents are not eligible to apply and we would not consider funding a project for that agency if another 501(C)(3) organization is submitting an application only as a fiscal sponsor. If an organization is
serving as the fiscal sponsor for a collaborative effort in which multiple organizations (including the fiscal sponsor) are working together on a project, it would not necessarily be a disadvantage in their consideration for another project.

**We are a Township in DuPage County, if we are already getting ARPA funds through the Township, would our 501(C)(3) be eligible for this?**

Yes, as long as it is for a different project than the one already supported through ARPA funds.

**Is a village office eligible to apply or be a partner?**

The lead agency submitting the LOI must be a 501(C)(3) organization so a governmental entity, such as a village office, is not eligible to apply. However, they can certainly be part of a collaborative project with one or more not-for-profit agencies.

**Would an economic development project focused on sustainability of a family in strengthening immunity and developing their capacity to maintain good health be eligible?**

Would developing a community garden in a park district property be eligible as it will promote mental health and food security? Would you consider employee retention goals a COVID impact? Would staff professional development be eligible? Would home repairs for needy families and older adults be eligible (vs. new building) as long as it doesn't affect the overall structure?

American Rescue Plan Act funds are specifically intended to respond to COVID-related needs. Food insecurity, housing instability, mental health and substance use disorder issues have been significantly impacted by the pandemic in DuPage County which is why this grant program is focusing on those areas. With all programs, applicants must show how the need being addressed in one of these areas was created or enhanced by the pandemic. Also, the impact of the program must have measurable outcomes related to one of the four issues.

**Documentation Questions**

**What financial documents will need to be submitted with the application?**

For Transformational grants, organizations will be required to submit the following financial forms:

- Current Fiscal Year Operating Budget
- 990 Form
- Audited Financial Statements – Two most recent
- DuPage Foundation Financial Indicators Form
- Project/Program Budget

Organizations that do not have all of these financial documents are not eligible to apply.

**Is a financial review instead of an audit acceptable for financial documentation?**

No, an audit is required from all grantees.
What if the 501(C)(3) organization does not have three years of financial info (start up)?
We will not fund any organization that does not provide three years of financial information.

Our audit for our current fiscal year will not be done by September 15th, 2022. Is it to submit the prior two years audits?
Yes, that’s fine.

Due to COVID, our 2020 990 and audited statement looks skewed as most of our budget went towards admin and fundraising to keep afloat that year. Will that disqualify us?
Not necessarily. We realize that many organizations’ audits may look skewed due to the pandemic. We have financial professionals who will be reviewing the financial information that is submitted and they will be looking at the whole picture of the organization so a lot will depend on what that looks like.

We are a 40+year old Christian ministry in DuPage County who has never been behind in our rent but we do not have a payroll nor interesting financial statements. Our audits are solid but scary, not "secure" because it is by faith not our planning and marketing. We serve 200 families each month with free items. I’m not sure if your committee would approve of our financial statements or budgets without payrolls or marketing plans.
Without more details, it’s hard to answer that question so you may want to submit an LOI. We are conducting an LOI process which gives organizations an opportunity to present their idea before going to too much effort to submit a full application.

What kind of supporting data are you interested in for the case statement? City, County, Org-level?
Most importantly, we are looking for local data, including organizational data, showing the need in the county.

Collaboration Questions

Do all organizations applying together have to have a DuPage county advisory board?
The organization submitting the application and serving as the fiscal sponsor needs to be located in DuPage. With a collaborative project, we are looking for multiple DuPage entities to work together. However, if there is an organization that is not DuPage-based and doesn’t have a local advisory board but provides a very specialized service
that supports the collaborative effort, it may not be necessary to have a DuPage advisory board.

**What kind of documentation is necessary for a collaboration?**
In the LOI, applicants will need to list the collaborative organizations and the applicable representatives from each. If invited to submit a full application, documentation will need to show a formal agreement, such as a Memorandum of Understanding, showing that organizations are working side-by-side to serve the same clients. The MOU should include the roles each organization is playing and must be signed by the Executive Director/President from each partner agency.

**Do all organizations collaborating have to have 501(C)3 status? What about a 501(C)(3) collaborating with local government entities such as police departments?**
With collaborative efforts, our main interest is that the project represents collaboration among multiple 501(C)(3) not-for-profit organizations working side-by-side to achieve impact. However, it’s understandable that there may be a governmental agency (school, library, police department, etc.) that is part of the collaborative effort.

**Would DuPage County qualify as a collaborator?**
No, that would be a conflict of interest since the funds are from the County.