

Guide for Grantseekers

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Mission

Sisters of Mercy of North Carolina Foundation, Inc. operates exclusively for the benefit and support of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas South Central Community and assists it in furthering its charitable, religious and educational mission.

The Foundation is managed in accordance with the teachings and traditions of the Roman Catholic Church and the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. Animated by the Gospel and Catherine McAuley's passion for those who are poor, the Foundation seeks to promote systemic change and assist individuals to empower themselves, especially women, children and those who are elderly, to improve the quality of their lives.

Grant Cycles

Upcoming Deadlines

Full Application Deadline – December 1, 2010
Grant Application Summary Cutoff – November 16, 2010

Grants will generally be awarded three times per year. Applications must be in the Foundation's office by the close of business on the deadline for submission or the first business day thereafter if the deadline falls on a holiday or weekend. The following dates in the application and review cycle apply:

Application Deadline:*	Grant Decision Made:
December 1	February
April 1	June
August 1	November

*Note that these deadlines pertain to the submission of completed full Grant Applications. Grant Application Summaries must be submitted at least ten business days prior to the completed application deadline in order to be considered. The specific Grant Application Summary cutoff date for the upcoming cycle is noted above.

SISTERS OF MERCY OF
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Foundation Focus

Program Focus and Decision Making Factors

The Foundation provides grants to tax-exempt health care, educational and social service organizations which meet its criteria and effectively assist women, children, those who are elderly and those who are poor to improve the quality of their lives.

The Foundation values working with organizations whose efforts are collaborative, ecumenical and multicultural. Its grantmaking focus is on organizations that serve the unserved or underserved.

Geographic Focus

Grants are made primarily to organizations serving the Metrolina and Western North Carolina regions. Grant requests are also considered from organizations serving other areas of North and South Carolina.

Decision-Making Factors

The Foundation will award grants only to organizations qualified as tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Grant award decisions are contingent upon the availability of Foundation funds and will be based on various organizational and programmatic factors including:

- Organization mission acceptable to the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas South Central Community and the Foundation
- Demonstration of need
- Qualifications to carry out the purposes of the grant
- Empowerment of those persons who are served by involving them whenever possible in the design, implementation and evaluation of the program
- Contribution to systemic change
- Demonstration of program sustainability over time
- Acceptable cost versus benefit comparisons, i.e. reasonable numbers served and depth of impact for the investment
- Clearly defined and measurable program outcomes that demonstrate impact on the population to be served
- Completeness of the application, including the submission of a current audit, compilation report and Form 990 (if applicable)

Types of Grants Considered

Applications for the following categories of projects, programs and services will generally be eligible for consideration by the Foundation. However, decisions regarding eligibility, approval and the amount of the grant are at the sole discretion of the Foundation.

- Start-up grants for new organizations
- Ongoing operating expenses for individual organizations. The organization must show evidence in the grant application that it is self-sufficient or moving towards self-sufficiency.
- Specific program or project expenses
- Building renovation and equipment.

Items/Organizations Generally Ineligible for Grants

The Foundation does not award grants to individuals or private foundations nor does it award grants to organizations to be used as pass-through funds for another organization that is not a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization or a governmental entity. The Foundation does not ordinarily support:

- Projects, programs or organizations that serve relatively few people
- Conferences and travel
- Capital or annual fundraising campaigns
- Administrative overhead
- Scholarships
- Private schools
- Research studies
- Units of federal government
- Political activities
- Publication of newsletters, magazines, books and the production of videos
- Endowment funds

Application Process

Organizations seeking financial assistance must apply through the Foundation's grant application process.

1. Telephone Inquiry
2. Grant Application Summary
3. Full Grant Application

1. Telephone Inquiry

All potential applicants must first inquire to the Foundation by phone to discuss the funding request with a Program Officer and request a Grant Application Summary. In that conversation, the organization representative should be prepared to discuss background information about the organization including mission, budget, board, target demographic, current service levels and impacts, collaborators and sustainability as well as provide basic information about the intended request, such as the use of funds, project budget, timeline and planned outcomes. If the request is consistent with the Foundation's interests and priorities, the Program Officer will invite the organization to begin the formal, two-stage application process by submitting a Grant Application Summary.

2. Grant Application Summary

The Grant Application Summary is a one-page form that the applicant completes and submits along with a cover letter signed by the organization's Chief Executive Officer or Chair of the Board asking for consideration of funding. It is intended to provide the Foundation staff with enough preliminary information to assess whether or not the request can be considered, without requiring as much depth and detail as the full Grant Application. Grant Application Summaries are considered on a rolling basis; however, in order to be eligible for consideration in a particular full Grant Application cycle, Grant Application Summaries must be submitted and received no later than 10 full business days prior to that full Grant Application deadline. (See current Grant Cycle deadlines). Grant Application Summaries should be submitted in hard copy. Emailed or faxed submissions will not be accepted. For more information and tips on the completion of this requirement, please visit the Grant Application Tutorial.

3. Grant Application

If the Grant Application Summary receives an affirmative decision, the Foundation will provide the applicant with a Grant Application in order to proceed with formal consideration of the funding request. The applicant must submit the completed Grant Application along with any required attachments to the Foundation by one of the three Grant Cycle deadlines each year. Grant Applications should be submitted in hard copy. Emailed or faxed submissions will not be accepted. For more information and tips on the completion of this requirement, please visit the Grant Application Tutorial.

At the Foundation's discretion, interviews at the applicant's office, the project site and the Foundation office may be a part of the review process.

Once the Grant Application is deemed complete, the Foundation will begin its formal review process. The Foundation discourages unsolicited phone calls from applicants during the review period.

Please note that the Foundation may amend these guidelines and procedures at any time without notice to applicants or grantees.

Terms and Conditions Under Which Grants are Awarded

Grant decisions are made based upon Board action. If a request for funding is approved, the Foundation will notify the applicant via a Grant Award Letter. Returning the executed copy of the Grant Award Letter to the Foundation constitutes an agreement to the terms and conditions of the grant. No organization should make commitments or plans based upon discussions about a grant until an executed copy of the Grant Award Letter has been returned to the Foundation.

Procedure for Exercising Supervision Over Grants

Periodic follow-up consistent with the terms and conditions of the grant award occurs during the term of the grant. Organizations receiving grants will be required to submit annual written reports to the Foundation regarding the use of grant funds. Evaluation forms are supplied by the Foundation. Depending on circumstances, more frequent reporting may be required by the Foundation. Monitoring may also include site visits and interviews with the grantee's staff.

FAQ

Q: What does the Foundation do?

A: As a supporting organization to the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas South Central Community, the Foundation supports the Sisters' religious, educational and charitable mission. As a part of that mission, the Foundation makes grants to selected tax exempt organizations and units of local government in North and South Carolina, with special emphasis on the Metrolina region and western North Carolina.

Q: How do I submit an application?

A: Applicants submit an application to the Foundation in accordance with the Grant Application Process identified in this brochure and in the Foundation's website.

Q: Why does the Foundation use a two-stage grant application process?

A: The Foundation uses a two-stage grant application process in order to give applicants an opportunity to make a preliminary case for their request and to give the Foundation an opportunity to determine interest in the request without requiring excess time and effort on the part of either.

Q: Once I have the Grant Application, can I submit it for an amount or purpose other than what was approved in my Grant Application Summary?

A: Grant Applications must be consistent in terms of purpose and the amount requested with what was discussed with the Program Officer and approved in the Grant Application Summary.

Q: Who is eligible to apply?

A: Tax-exempt health care, education, and social service organizations or units of local government in North and South Carolina, which meet the Foundation's criteria, as listed in Foundation Focus, are eligible to apply to the Foundation for a grant.

Q: Do you fund capital requests?

A: The Foundation will consider requests for equipment and furnishings and, to a limited extent, renovation projects. Capital campaign requests for new buildings are not eligible.

Q: Can a single request for funding be intended for more than one program of an organization?

A: Grant awards are made for either general operating support for an organization or for support for a specific project or program. If made for a specific project or program, grant funds may only be used for that specific project or program.

Q: Are there funding limits for the different types of support the Foundation provides?

A: Funding limits are in place for the following types of grants that the Foundation makes:

- Start-up: a one time grant up to a maximum of \$25,000
- Operating Support: a maximum of \$125,000 annually for a period of up to three years
- Specific Project or Program: a maximum of \$150,000 annually for a period of up to three years
- Building Renovation or Equipment: a maximum of \$100,000 annually for a period of up to three years.

Please note that the size of funding requests should be commensurate with the size and budget of the organization.

Q: What should I keep in mind as I prepare my organization's request to the Sisters of Mercy of North Carolina Foundation?

- A:**
- Read the grant application materials given to you by the Foundation, along with the materials contained in this website.
 - Listen carefully to what program staff says to you about the process and your application.
 - Follow directions precisely as written.
 - Ask the program staff when you have a question about the process or the application requirements.
 - There are terms and conditions for every grant award, along with an evaluation process.
 - In outlining the proposed activities of the grant, plan ahead and think about what outcomes you would be able to demonstrate at the end of the grant term, and whether or not they are quantifiable and clearly measurable.
 - Decisions regarding eligibility, whether to award a grant, the amount of an award, and the terms and conditions of the grant are at the sole discretion of the Foundation.

FAQ

Q: Do I need to submit an audit?

A: Except in limited circumstances involving start-up organizations, Audits or Compilation Reports by a public accounting firm are required in support of an Application. As a rule, an Audit will be expected if an organization's annual revenues and support exceed \$300,000. Below that threshold, a Compilation Report is acceptable.

Q: What would be considered a "current" audit or 990?

A: A current audit, compilation or Form 990 is for the most recently closed fiscal year; however, if it has been fewer than six months since that fiscal year ended, the audit, compilation and 990 for the previous fiscal year would meet the submission requirements. If more than six months has passed between the end of your fiscal year and the particular application or evaluation deadline for which you are submitting your documents, the audit, compilation and Form 990 for that recently closed year will be required.

Q: What are clearly defined and measurable outcomes?

A: Clearly defined and measurable outcomes show, in numeric format, specifically *what* will change or improve for *how many* of the target population, and *how* you will document that change. Example: Reading scores will increase by 10 percentage points for 75% of the 100 children in the literacy program as measured by pre- and post-tests. See Sample Evaluation Plans in the Grant Application Tutorial section of the Foundation's web site.

Q: Can I fax or e-mail my application to the Foundation?

A: E-mailed, faxed or reproduced copies of the Application will not be accepted by the Foundation.

Q: Do you publish an annual report?

A: The Foundation does not publish an annual report.