Grant proposal guidelines: policy & Advocacy

Because California faces many challenges that need attention now, the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation and the Stephen Bechtel Fund (“The Foundation”) decided to invest all its resources by 2020 in order to spur significant, meaningful change—sooner rather than later.

The Foundation believes that policy plays an important role in systemic change and that advocacy is a key strategic tool for influencing policy. To this end, the Foundation supports issue-based policy and advocacy efforts, including raising awareness, building networks and coalitions, nurturing champions, conducting research, and the like.

The Foundation does not earmark funds for lobbying activities as defined by the Internal Revenue Code and applicable Treasury Regulations, nor for reportable lobbying activities as defined by the California Political Reform Act or the federal Lobbying Disclosure Act. It will be your sole responsibility to determine if you have any lobby reporting requirements under California state law. Should you have any questions about what advocacy activities the Foundation will or will not support, please speak with your program officer.

**PROPOSAL ELEMENTS**

Grantseekers invited to apply for funding should submit the following.

* **Cover letter:** A brief letter specifying the grant purpose, request amount, and term. The letter should be addressed to your program officer and signed by your chief executive.
* **Executive summary:** A separate 1-2-page overview of the project and target results.
* **Proposal:** A narrative addressing the following, in a sequence and with headings of your choosing. Note that there is no need to repeat yourself, should any of these questions encourage redundancy.
  + If your organization would be a first-time Foundation grant recipient, briefly describe its mission, vision, and long-term goals.
* Describe the policy and advocacy effort for which you are requesting funds. Include:
* What makes you believe the conditions are timely for this effort?
* What makes your organization well positioned to take on the challenges of a policy and advocacy effort? What past successes have you had with this issue?
* Explain how you will implement this effort, including key steps/stages, activities, and milestones, the timeline for implementation, and how it will be staffed.
* What networks and advocates do you plan to engage and influence? How?
* If applicable, what partnerships do you have or will you develop to support your effort?
* Provide a short, bulleted list of target results for this grant. These should be structured as SMART objectives (specific, measurable, attainable, results-focused, and time-specific). *Note: SMART objectives will form the basis of grant expectations and will be included in the grant agreement and reporting requirements.*
* How will you measure the success of your effort? What indicators will you track, what methods will you use, and how will you use/share what you learn?
* What opposition or challenges do you expect to encounter, and how will you address them?
* How do you expect the Foundation’s sunset to affect your organization/program/project? What, if anything, are you doing to prepare?
* **Project budget:** Detail the full cost of your project, as well as amounts and sources of funding. Specify how you would deploy Foundation funds. Your program officer will advise as to whether it is necessary to use the Foundation’s Project Budget Template.

If the project has any lobbying expenses associated with it, you should have sufficient funds—separate from those being requested from the Foundation—to cover those expenses. The project budget should include a line item for any expected lobbying expenses. For purposes of preparing this budget, lobbying expenses include all direct costs, including researching, drafting, reviewing, copying, publishing, mailing, or otherwise distributing lobbying communications. Should you need assistance determining how to calculate lobbying expenses, please consult your tax advisor.

* **Additional required attachments:**
* Organization budget and year-to-date actuals for the current fiscal year
* Audited financial statements for the three most recent fiscal years
* List of your organization’s top 5-7 funders, including the most recent grant amount and term
* Bios of key staff, and name(s) of legal counsel
* List of board of directors with affiliations, and if applicable, list of advisory board members
* **Other attachments that may be requested by your program officer, if appropriate:**
  + Work plan (e.g., Gantt chart or other tabular format)
* Strategic plan
* Theory of change and/or logic model(s) for organization/program(s)
* Recent organization/program evaluation(s)

**formatting instructions**

* Use standard serif or non-serif fonts (e.g., Times New Roman, Calibri) and font size (10-12).
* Include page numbers and the date in the footer.
* For the final proposal, remove any mention of “draft” in the header, footer, document title, etc.
* Submit the proposal as a Word document, not a PDF.

**submission and Approval Process**

The Foundation reviews invited proposals on a rolling basis. Once a submission is complete, decisions can be made within three months in most cases. Approved organizations will be asked to sign a grant agreement, which will specify the grant payment schedule and reporting requirements. All documents (including but not limited to the final proposal, proposal attachments, grant agreement, and reports) should be submitted online through the grants portal.

**Additional Notes**

The Foundation does not provide endowment funding and does not make international grants.

indirect costs policy

The Foundation offers funding for both direct and indirect costs for project and program support grants.

**DEFINITIONS**

**Direct costs are costs directly attributable to the design, planning, implementation, and evaluation of a project or program.** Direct costs generally include: salaries and benefits of personnel who implement the project/program, related professional services, specific facilities, materials, and equipment as well as subcontracts or sub-grants, and other resources specifically required to carry out the project/program.

The Foundation also funds, within reason, indirect costs associated with funded projects and programs. The Foundation defines **indirect costs as general or administrative costs that are necessary to implement the funded project/program but that are not captured within the direct costs** or the line-item budget of the project itself. Funding indirect costs helps to ensure that the Foundation contributes to the true cost incurred by the grantee in carrying out the funded project/program.

Indirect costs may include the following general and administrative costs: office supplies; bank, payroll processing or audit fees; liability insurance; rent; utilities; telecommunications and other IT (if not already included in the direct costs of a project/program); general equipment purchase or maintenance; and salaries and benefits of executive or administrative personnel who may not be directly engaged in the project. Indirect costs must be listed in the grant budget as a line item and identified as such.

**EXCLUSIONS**

The following are excluded from calculations of indirect costs: fees for subcontractors, re-granting, and/or major one-time capital expenditures, such as capital renovations or capital purchases. In addition, because core support grants support the organization as a whole, the Foundation does not offer a separate line item for indirect costs in connection with these grants.

**RATE AND CALCULATIONS**

The Foundation allows for an indirect-cost allocation of up to 15%. The exact percentage will be determined during the grant review and development process. In many grants, the Foundation anticipates an indirect-cost allocation less than the maximum allowable rate.

Calculations for indirect costs will be thoroughly reviewed by Foundation staff for accuracy and applicability to the project/program. Indirect costs should be contained in the total amount requested, which is generally agreed upon between your organization and Foundation staff when the proposal is invited. Indirect costs amounts are not considered in addition to the grant amount under consideration.

SPONSORED PROJECTS POLICY

Although the Foundation will not pay indirect costs on subcontracted amounts there is an exception for projects under the aegis of a legitimate fiscal sponsor. In those cases, grantees may expect the Foundation’s grant to cover a reasonable fiscal sponsor fee. According to the National Network of Fiscal Sponsors, the industry standard for comprehensive fiscal sponsor services is 10%.