

# **Central Northeast Neighbors (CNN) Grant Selection Guide** **Approved by the CNN Board of Directors**

*By Sandra Lefrancois*

The goals of the Neighborhood Small grants program are to: Increase the number and diversity of people who are involved and engaged in their communities and neighborhoods; strengthen neighborhood and community capacity to build community leadership, identity, skills, relationships and partnerships; and increase community and neighborhood impact on public decisions and community life.

## **Grant Selection Criteria**

To be considered for funding, project proposals must describe how the project will engage people in the CNN area and achieve one or more of the goals below. Proposals should also describe any engagement of historically under-served communities which include: *Communities of color, immigrants and refugees, low-income individuals and families, youth, houseless, people with disabilities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) communities.*

- Increase the number and diversity of people who are involved and engaged in their communities and neighborhoods;
- Strengthen neighborhood and community capacity to build community leadership, identity, skills, relationships and partnerships; and
- Increase community and neighborhood impact on public decisions and community life.

## **Grant Selection Process**

- A grant-making committee made up of two members from the CNN board and two members from CNN-area community-based organizations (CBOs) will review and rate proposals according to the relative weight placed on the questions in the application narrative.
- Award amounts will be based on grant-making committee ratings and recommendations.
- Grant applicants can anticipate notification of award status in January.

## **Role of the Grant Selection Committee (GSC)**

The members of the GSC are responsible for reviewing and rating the grant applications received, recommending what proposals are funded and at what amounts, and proposing partnerships when appropriate. GSC members are to disclose any known affiliation with grant proposal submissions at the orientation meeting (when you pick up your grant packet to review). This will eliminate any

conflict of interest that may result in financial gain or benefit to any member or the organization they are affiliated with.

The GSC members serve a two year term limit. CNN board members are invited to serve based on their prior participation and interest in the grant program. The CBO members are invited based on their affiliation with CNN neighborhoods and with under-served communities, being a past grant recipient, and/or their interest in the grant program.

### **Role of the Grant Program Coordinator**

CNN staff will coordinate the grant selection process and orientation, facilitate and provide guidance for the grant selection meeting, answer any questions about the grant selection process, and send grant notifications.

### **Timeline**

- Grant committee orientation in October
- Review/Rate grant proposals individually in November-December.
- Grant Selection Meeting is in December from 6 PM-9 PM. All GSC members are required to participate and be there on time.

### **How to Rate the Grant Proposals**

The goal of the review/rating process is to have members review all eligible proposals, with exception of proposals they are affiliated with. GSC members will assign a numeric score according to the relative percentage weight placed in all the sections of the application narrative. For each proposal GSC members will add up the scores of the narrative sections to reach a total score out of 100. CNN will provide the GSC members with a form to rate each proposal. GSC members will bring their completed forms to the grant selection meeting at the end of November.

Please note: In a highly competitive grant cycle higher consideration will be given to proposals which respond to the engagement of historically under-represented and under-served communities.

- You must supplement your scores with a brief explanation of why you choose a high, moderate, or low score in the space allocated on the rating form. This information will be used in the discussion at the grant selection meeting. You can also write notes on the grant proposal copy to use as a reference.
- It is important to rate grant proposals consistently. For example, if you give a score of 70/100 as a high rating, please maintain this way of rating throughout all your scoring. This will help to balance out the scores when CNN tabulates the totals for each proposal.

- Evaluate objectively.
- Review the proposal for content and not necessarily for the professional presentation as grant writing experience may vary.

### **Grant Selection Meeting**

Grant award amounts will be based on GSC ratings and recommendations. Each eligible grant proposal will be discussed. GSC members with conflicts of interest will be asked to leave the room when the proposal(s) with whom they have an affiliation with are up for discussion. They will continue to participate when scores are finalized.

- Review each proposal and discuss section by section reasons for high, moderate and low scores within the proposed time allotment.
- Actual numeric values, scores given by each GSC member will not be discussed.
- Each GSC member will be given an opportunity to comment in turn.
- GSC members will have the opportunity to review and change their scores during the discussion.
- At the end of the reviews, the GSC members will provide CNN staff with their final scores, in a sheet signed by them to indicate their commitment to their scores. Staff will then tabulate the scores and rank the applications based on the GSC members' final scores. Staff will show the GSC members a final ranking of the proposals.
- GSC members will then use the final ranking of applications to make recommendations for funding. GSC members are to allocate the entire amount requested in each funded application as much as possible.
- If the GSC members feel it is necessary to allocate less than the requested amount, consideration will be given to how the decreased funds may affect meeting proposed project goals. Suggested project amendments may be discussed.
- GSC members will have the opportunity to suggest partnerships to groups that have submitted similar proposals. GSC members will vote to approve the suggestion of partnerships.
- Committee members must keep final rankings confidential until CNN publicly announces grant awards.