NCCF
Northwest CT Community Foundation

> **Our Mission:**
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> Our mission is to enrich the quality of life for residents of our 20 town service area* in Connecticut's Northwest Corner through the generosity of fundholders by inspiring local philanthropy, convening stakeholders in community welfare, strengthening the regional nonprofit network and fostering collaborative funding partnerships.

Grant Guidelines

Online application available on our website www.yournccf.org

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The Northwest CT Community Foundation, Inc. (NCCF) is the community foundation located in and serving Northwest Connecticut. NCCF enhances life for citizens in its 20-town service area by:

- Awarding grants to nonprofit organizations and scholarships to students
- Helping donors create lasting, local legacies
- Encouraging local philanthropy and volunteerism
- Building endowments for future generations

NCCF serves the following communities:

Barkhamsted, Bethlehem, Canaan (Falls Village), Colebrook, Cornwall, Goshen, Hartland, Harwinton, Kent, Litchfield, Morris, New Hartford, Norfolk, North Canaan, Salisbury (Lakeville), Sharon, Torrington, Warren, Washington, and Winchester/Winsted.

This guide describes how a nonprofit organization serving one or more communities within our 20-town service area can apply for a grant NCCF.

About This Guide

This guide is designed to maximize your organization's chances of receiving a grant from NCCF. It includes information about grant process, eligibility requirements, what we are most inclined to fund, what we will likely decline, and specifics about what is required in all grant applications. The "Frequently Asked Questions" section may address specific issues that you don't see elsewhere in this guide.

Before you begin the online application, we recommend that you read this guide carefully. Chances are that your questions will be answered in these pages.

After reading this guide, if you have questions, please contact:

Julia Scharnberg
Vice President of Community Engagement
Northwest CT Community Foundation
PO Box 1144
33 East Main Street
Torrington, CT 06790
Phone: (860) 626-1245

The Grant Review Process

Because many nonprofit organizations meet the basic requirements for applying for a grant from NCCF, the application process is highly competitive. Not all grant proposals are funded, and it is not uncommon for a partial award to be made.

All complete applications that are received by the due date and meet our basic requirements (see page 4, "What We Fund") are considered for funding. NCCF has five areas of concentration:

- **Arts & Culture**
- **Civic & Education**
- **Environment**
- **Health**
- **Social Services**

Applications are reviewed and grants are awarded three times per year.

Once the grant award decisions have been made, applicants are promptly notified in writing of the outcome of their grant request and receive a grant agreement (contract). Once the signed agreement is returned to NCCF, instructions are provided for how to request a grant payment.

When to Apply for a Grant

The following are NCCF's annual application deadlines and <u>approximate</u> decision dates.

Due Dates	*Est. Decision Dates*
January 31st	March 31st
April 30th	June 30th
September 30th	November 30th

Funding decisions are made <u>approximately</u> two months after the application due dates, and it may take up to two weeks to send out notifications. The intervening time is spent carefully reviewing each proposal in order to make the most effective use of available grant funds. During the review period, the applicant will likely be contacted by the Vice President of Community Engagement additional information or clarifications.

At the time of submission, applications must be complete. Applications must be submitted online by midnight on the due date. Incomplete or late applications will not be considered. Late applications may be resubmitted for consideration during the following grant cycle.

We regret that the high volume of grant applications received NCCF prohibits our reviewing them before submission.

Applications that are denied may not be re-submitted for consideration until one year has elapsed. Applicants may, however, apply for funding for a separate, distinct request during the same year.

NCCF regrets that it is unable to fund all of the grant applications that it receives. Applicants are always encouraged to pursue other funding sources.

Grant Payments

Grant payment requests must include NCCF's *Grant Payment Request Form*, as well as documentation showing that the grant expenses have been incurred, such as receipts, invoices, contracts, etc. Applicants receive the Grant Payment Request Form after NCCF has received the fully executed Grant Agreement.

Grantees should allow up to three weeks for the receipt of their grant checks. (Note: Payment requests received on or after December 15 will be processed in January.)

As a rule, NCCF does not make partial, or interim, grant payments unless the terms at the outset dictate that installment payments will be made. A request for payment may be submitted once there is evidence that all expenses related to the grant-funded project have been incurred. If the grantee is unable to fund the project in advance, please call NCCF to discuss what arrangements can be made.

Grant awards must be expended within nine months of the approval date, or a grant extension request must be submitted and approved. In very rare circumstances, NCCF will approve a multi-year grant, which will have its own payment schedule and documentation requirements.

What We Fund

To qualify for a grant from NCCF, an applicant must:

- Qualify per the Internal Revenue Code as a tax-exempt organization.

Most grantees qualify under Section 501(c)(3), although there are other eligible nonprofits such as schools or governmental agencies, for certain projects. Organizations may contact NCCF to discuss eligibility;
- Serve residents in one or more of the 20 towns within NCCF's service area (see page 1);
- Provide a service that meets one of NCCF's five focus areas of concentration (see page 3).

NCCF is also interested in funding innovative projects and/or programs that promote collaboration among nonprofit organizations within its service area.

Grants are designated as:
- Small ($1,500 and under); or
- Traditional (over $1,500).

In addition, application requests are grouped into three categories:
- Program (funding a new program or an expansion of existing programs);
- Furniture, fixtures or equipment;
- Capital/renovation projects.

The online grant application is designed to ask fewer questions for small grant applications, and questions are tailored to ask for pertinent information relevant to the different categories.

When considering how much to request in traditional applications, be aware that NCCF's average grant amount is $5,000. It is not uncommon for a grant award to be lower than the amount requested. The amount awarded may be greater for major capital expenditures, significant new programs with a solid plan for long-term support,

bold expansion of existing programs, or large capacity building efforts.

Capital Campaigns

NCCF does, on occasion, fund contributions to capital campaigns. A capital campaign is considered to be a time-limited project that has as its goal the construction of buildings or parts of buildings (including remodeling or additions), or other infrastructure.

NCCF will not contribute to a capital campaign once the building or other construction project is complete.

Please direct questions about funding capital campaigns to NCCF.

Donor-Advised Funds

In addition to unrestricted funds, NCCF manages a number of restricted funds, primarily in the form of donor-advised funds. These funds are distributed solely at the discretion of the donor. While NCCF does not accept unsolicited proposals for grants from donor-advised funds, there are occasionally circumstances where a grant proposal fits the philanthropy of a donor-advised fund. In the application, we ask whether NCCF has permission to share the grant application with the advisors to one or more donor-advised funds.

NEW: REPEAT APPLICATIONS

If NCCF has funded the same program in three consecutive calendar years, it will require that the applicant take a full calendar year off before submitting an application to fund that same program. Organizations are free to submit applications for other programs or projects.

What We Decline to Fund

NCCF will not consider requests to fund the following:

- Organizations that, in their constitution, bylaws or practice, discriminate against or show favoritism toward a person or group on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status;
- Grants to schools for programs that would be included in the operating budget of most schools;
- Grants to governmental agencies for programs that should be part of their operating budget;
- Debt retirement;
- Endowments or other reserve funds *(with the exception of applications to the Edwards Community Endowment Project)*;
- Membership or affiliation campaigns;
- Grants that further political or religious doctrine;
- Grants to individuals;
- Individual medical procedures;
- Grants requested for the purpose of re-granting;
- Activities, projects, or programs that will be completed before funding becomes available (in general, no retroactive funding);
- Staff positions for which long-term funding has not been established or planned.

Other Factors

In addition to evaluating each proposal's alignment with the funding priorities and focus areas explained above, NCCF also considers the following factors when evaluating grant requests:

- Does the applicant's balance sheet reflect a fund balance deficit in its most recently completed fiscal year?
- Does the applicant have an endowment? If so, how is it used to further the mission of the organization?
- Will the proposed activities strengthen the organization's ability to carry out its mission effectively and efficiently?
- Does the proposal assist or promote collaboration among nonprofits?
- Does the organization avoid duplication of programs or services? Does it collaborate with others providing similar services?
- Does the program request help to prevent or address a community-wide problem?
- Does the proposal request address community needs efficiently and cost-effectively?
- Does the organization operate with optimal staff and make maximum use of volunteers?
- Does the proposal serve low-income or otherwise disadvantaged populations?
- Do the organization's board and staff broadly reflect the diversity of the community served?
- Does the applicant demonstrate sound fiscal management practices?

- Does the organization have a plan for evaluating its work?
- Does the organization provide equal access to its services, in the recruitment and utilization of volunteers, in the hiring of employees, and in all other areas?
- Do all members of the Board of Directors contribute to the organization financially to the best of their ability?

How to Apply for a Grant from NCCF

Applicants are encouraged to carefully read and follow the instructions in this section. If this is the first time you are applying to NCCF, you may find it helpful to contact the Vice President of Community Engagement prior to submitting an application.

Nonprofit Profile Information

The first section of the online grant application is designed to establish a nonprofit profile. Once you have entered your profile, the information in this section will remain linked to your organization and it will show up in your application. If there are any changes (e.g., new address, new phone number, etc.), please log in to your nonprofit profile and update it.

NCCF would like to share the nonprofit profiles on our website. Our goal is to maintain a comprehensive database of the nonprofit organizations in the 20 towns that we serve. On the application, you will be asked for your

permission to share your nonprofit profile.

Grant Application

The online application is designed to gather the information that NCCF requires to evaluate each request. The application form will automatically open questions based on your responses to previous questions.

Required Attachments:
(Documents to be uploaded)

Board of Directors: Current board of directors list, including occupations and affiliations.

Annual Report: Include this only if your organization publishes a report that is shared with donors or other constituents.

Financial Information: NCCF recognizes that not all organizations maintain the same financial protocol. However, regardless of size, there is an expectation of sound financial management. All financial information is closely reviewed when evaluating grant packages.

All grant applications must include the following financial attachments:

1) Applicant's **Annual Operating Budget** for the current fiscal year. Budgeted revenue and expenses should be itemized.

2) The **Program or Project Budget** for the grant proposal. It must include the sources of all revenue sought to complete the project, as well as the breakdown of the anticipated expenses.

3) Most recent **Interim Financial Statements**. Provide year-to-date profit & loss statement (through the most recently completed month end or quarter end), and balance sheet as of the same month end or quarter end date.

4) **Year-End Financial Statements** for most recent completed fiscal year end. Provide balance sheet, income statement and footnotes. The requirements for audit or internally prepared documents are as follows:
   a) For revenues greater than $1,000,000, an AUDIT by an independent Certified Public Accountant (CPA);
   b) For revenues less than $1,000,000, if an audit by an independent CPA is not routinely performed, we will accept an internally prepared balance sheet as of the most recent completed fiscal year-end date, and a profit and loss statement for the same period.

The CPA used must be independent of the organization (e.g., a board member who is a CPA is not considered independent).

(Note: An organization that includes in-kind donations in its end-of-year financial reporting can disallow [not count] the amount of those in-kind donations when calculating its revenues to determine which End-of-Year Financial Statement format is required).

5) The most recent **IRS Form 990, 990 EZ or 990-N**, per IRS filing requirements. If your organization is tax exempt by law (e.g., public school system) or not required by the IRS to file Form 990 (e.g., faith-based organizations), please provide a statement to that effect.

6) **Bids** If the grant request is for a capital item or professional fees or consultant fees for a capacity building grant, submit no less than two bids. Include a written narrative stating which vendor was chosen and the selection rationale. Note: NCCF does not require the lowest priced bid to be chosen, but when another is selected, the written narrative should clearly explain the rationale. Although unusual, at times only one bid may be available. If that is the case, the narrative should explain how that vendor was selected, and why only one was considered.

Questions concerning the requested financial information are best reviewed first with the person(s) in your organization responsible for financial reporting. Additional questions about requested financials may be directed to the Vice President of Community Engagement.

Frequently Asked Questions

"What if we don't have end-of-year financial statements?"

If your organization has been in business for less than one year and,

consequently, there are no end-of-year financial statements, please include that explanation in your application. Please note, however, that you must submit the remainder of the required financial information.

"If another organization is acting as our fiscal agent, do we include financial information for both organizations?"

Yes, you must include both organizations' financial information, as well as the fiscal agent's IRS letter, board list, and signatures of the fiscal agent's board chair and executive director, as well as a letter from the fiscal agent verifying fiscal sponsorship of the organization's application.

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