



2017 Strengthening Systems Concept Paper Guidelines

The Community Foundation invites concept papers for its Strengthening Systems grant track. Our goal is to work with partners to strengthen the capability of formal and informal systems to deliver services and activities and/or improve access to systems by individuals or community groups. While funding provided will vary according to program requirements, we anticipate awarding grants in the range of \$75,000-\$100,000, annually, for 2-3 years.

How is system defined?

For the Community Foundation, we define a “system” as the network of actors, policies and practices affecting the provision of services and activities. Generally speaking, systems are the environment in which activities take place and they can shape how well those activities have an impact on the beneficiaries they seek to reach. Systems occur in every sector and in various forms. Additionally, they may be formal or informal.

An underlying principle of this grant track is that the community is stronger when the systems in which services and activities occur are functioning well and community members can readily access them. This grant track is focused solely on improving systems delivery for the community, and not on strengthening internal systems within a single organization.

What is a program?

The Foundation defines a “program” as a defined course of action that involves a series of inputs, outputs and strategies that are designed to achieve a specified goal. Programming is working toward the achievement of goals, using grant funding or other revenue sources. Through this grant track, we aim to work with partners to clarify their systems strengthening goals and outline the course of action, or program, needed to achieve them in a 2-3 year period. We hope to provide thought partnership and guidance through the proposal development phase, and for those selected for funding, we actively find ways to help you achieve program success.

What has been funded through this grant track before?

We have awarded 4 grants to date. They include:

Piedmont Virginia Community College - To work with the Charlottesville Albemarle Technical Education Center (CATEC) to align curriculum, engage stakeholders and design a career pathway in the field of cybersecurity so that students can obtain middle skill jobs. The process will serve as a model for developing career pathways in other industry sectors.



Louisa County Resource Council – To partner with the University of Virginia Center for Survey Research to design and conduct a household-based survey that will map food insecurity and other needs in the County. The results of the mapping will be then used with key stakeholders to make changes to the food distribution system so that it can better address households’ un-met need for food across the county.

Charlottesville Works Initiative – To establish the pilot program that supports low-income job seekers on a pathway to obtain and retain a sustainable wage job and to scale up the program to reach an estimated 200 people. The grant will establish a system of support that doesn’t currently exist in this form.

Charlottesville Redevelopment and Housing Authority, Public Housing Association of Residents and City of Charlottesville – To conduct resident-led engagement that strengthens the relationship between residents, the Housing Authority, and the City. The grant will lead to actionable plans that prepare the community for public housing redevelopment.

Guidelines to Submit a Concept Paper

The Community Foundation welcomes prospective partners to submit 2-page concept papers that provide an initial overview of a Systems Strengthening opportunity. The concept papers do not need to be a perfect or thorough analysis of a system or the opportunities to strengthen it. These papers are meant to serve as a way for us to identify potential opportunities so that we can follow up with you to further develop the initial thinking and ideas together. It is important, however, to validate that any identified partners in your concept are willing to participate if it is selected to advance.

Please share the following in your concept paper:

- What issue or challenge are you seeing in the community and over a 2-3 year period, what do you want to change?
- To the extent that you can, describe the system that touches this issue. Think about any stakeholders, processes and policies that affect the environment in which the services or activities occur.
- If possible, share the area(s) in which you think the system could be strengthened and your best understanding of what might be a good approach.
- Share a list of unanswered questions that you would want the Foundation team to help you explore and answer during further due diligence of this concept.

The deadline to accept concept papers is February 1, 2017. Submit your 2-page concept paper to Brennan Gould, Director of Programs, at bgould@cacfonline.org. The email should include the following subject line: Strengthening Systems Concept Paper Submission.



Criteria

The Grants Portfolio Committee uses the following criteria when evaluating proposed opportunities:

- The presence of a system to be strengthened and how well the concept being presented fits with the goals of the grant track.
- The size and scope of the system to be strengthened and whether this grant track could have an impact on the identified system.
- The anticipated timeline and the partner's current capacity to develop and implement the program proposed in the concept.
- The potential for a program to be designed to address a particular strengthening opportunity in the identified system.

Next Steps

The Foundation will review all concept papers and respond to applicants by March 2017. In 2017, the Foundation team will conduct further due diligence on a small group of finalists with a goal to ultimately select 1-2 programs to support.

If your concept is selected as a finalist, you will be asked to participate in at least one meeting with the Foundation team to discuss your goals, strategy and the details of the full proposal package. We are available to hold subsequent meetings to help you flesh out your concept idea and proposal if you would find that helpful. The full proposal will be due on May 15, 2017 and we will communicate final decisions by June 15, 2017.

Please contact Brennan Gould, Director of Programs, at (434) 296-1024 or bgould@cacfonline.org with additional questions.