THE PLUS COLLECTIVE

Charlotte-Mecklenburg's LGBTQ+ Community Fund

A Collective Giving and Endowment Fund of the Foundation For The Carolinas

GRASSROOTS GRANTS – APPLICATION GUIDE

The Plus Collective (TPC) will award grants to Charlotte-area organizations serving the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) community. This document is meant to guide applicants through the application process.

Grassroots Grants are intended to build capacity and strengthen the effectiveness of startup organizations (<u>with or without</u> 501(c)(3) nonprofit status) whose <u>primary</u> objective is to serve the Charlotte-Mecklenburg LGBTQ+ community, allowing TPC to reach organizations with unmet needs that fall outside of the current Basic Operating and Programs, Projects, and Events (PPE) Grant parameters. As such, there is no formal grant cycle. All applications will be reviewed by the TPC Grants Committee and decisioned by the TPC Board as received. Grassroots Grants will be awarded to support general operations as specified in the grant application that exemplify the vision of The Plus Collective: *Guided by principles. Inspired by diversity. Supported by community.*

TPC has limited discretionary funds and frequently receives requests for more funds than are available to grant. Therefore, there may be many exemplary applications that receive partial or no funding. The organization may request feedback on the decision, if desired.

To conduct a fair and ethical grants program, all TPC volunteers and staff are required to follow a Conflict-of-Interest Policy for the grant process when an organization with which they are affiliated is a grant applicant. Please do not lobby Board or Grants Committee members on behalf of your organization.

For questions, contact Tiara Miles at Foundation For The Carolinas (tmiles@fftc.org).

Please do not submit a grant application for the following purposes, as they will not be funded:

- Capital campaigns and endowment funds
- Hardware, software, or other similar forms of technology infrastructure
- Requests in which funds will be re-granted to other organizations
- Events from which the proceeds will benefit other organizations
- Debt retirement/deficit funding
- Projects that promote policy advocacy, political activity, or religious views
- Activities occurring prior to grant decision
- Projects that are typically the funding responsibility of federal, state, or local government
- New proposals that duplicate existing or established programs or services
- Strategic planning in "ordinary course of business"
- Publication of books (paper or digital) unless being published to be sold to raise additional funding for the organization

GRANT REQUIREMENTS

- Grassroots Grants cannot exceed $2,000.
- Applicants may apply for ONE Grassroots Grant per calendar year.
- Applications from organizations applying for a second Grassroots Grant will be evaluated by these and other criteria established by TPC:
    - The organization's progress toward meeting the mission over the prior period
    - Progress toward self-sufficiency including status of 501(c)(3) application
    - Success in fundraising over the prior period
    - Available funds within the parameters set by the TPC Board
- Grassroots Grants are only awarded to organizations whose primary objective is to provide services or benefits to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg LGBTQ+ community. Applicant organizations must attest that at least 75% of their services are provided in and at least 75% of their budget is utilized within the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area and must agree to use grant funds solely within Mecklenburg County.
- Grant awards will be made to organizations with or without 501(c)(3) nonprofit status.
- Grassroots applicants with 501(c)(3) status should have received nonprofit designation within the last 12 months.
- Organizations without 501(c)(3) status must partner with an established local organization with 501(c)(3) nonprofit status that will serve as a fiscal sponsor. Please refer to the fiscal sponsor requirements below.
- The TPC Board of Advisors and Grants Committee reserve the right to request additional information at any time. Failure to respond to requests for additional information may result in denial of the application and/or disqualification from future grant opportunities.
- Applicants are expected to return funds to TPC if the organization is unable to utilize the funds for the purposes specified in the application or by the grant use deadline.
- Previous recipients of TPC's Basic Operating or Projects, Programs & Events (PPE) Grants are not eligible for Grassroots Grants.

FISCAL SPONSOR REQUIREMENTS

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure the fiscal sponsor understands and agrees to the following requirements:

- The fiscal sponsor must attest that at least 75% of their own services are provided in, and at least 75% of their budget is utilized within, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area; and will be required to certify that grant funds were used as outlined in the grantee's application.
- A letter of agreement from the sponsor is required and must be uploaded to the application.
- Additionally, the sponsor must attest to the following:
  - The sponsor organization and its board of directors agree to choose to further its tax-exempt purposes indirectly by giving financial support to the applicant because the project will advance their charitable goals;
  - The sponsor agrees to have complete discretion and control over the funds and be legally responsible to verify that payments to the project further their tax-exempt purposes. All expenses must be paid directly by the sponsor;
  - The sponsor understands and agrees to being responsible for ensuring completion of timely reports and submission of necessary financial statements to Foundation For The Carolinas and understands that failure to ensure timely reporting will also result in a loss of good standing;
  - The sponsor organization ensures the applicant's financial activities will be accounted for as a program of the sponsor for IRS auditing and financial reporting purposes;
  - The sponsor understands that this agreement will be in effect from the date of a grant award until the grant funds are expended and the final report has been submitted and approved by Foundation For The Carolinas.

FUNDING PRIORITIES

Applicant organizations should exemplify TPC's vision: *Guided by principles. Inspired by diversity. Supported by community.* The organizations' services should support the following:

- Building understanding and appreciation, as well as promoting the value of inclusion within the organization's circle of influence, for LGBTQ+ populations.
- Cultivating leadership opportunities for LGBTQ+ people.
- Engaging and including people with diverse backgrounds, sexual orientations, and gender identity in programs, services, and organizational values.

FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

As you complete your application, give special consideration to documenting the following criteria which will be used in making grant decisions:

- **Scope of impact**: The organization has a positive impact on its audience and the Charlotte LGBTQ+ community.
- **Nurtures individuals to actualize their potential**: The organization supports individuals within the LGBTQ+ community in their personal journey through acceptance, pride, support of community and leadership.
- **Presents a positive image of LGBTQ+ people to the community**: The organization presents a fair and positive understanding of people who are LGBTQ+.
- **Effectiveness**: The organization is effective at utilizing resources to provide the services and benefits it offers.

- **Budget**: The organization's budget presents reasonable costs for services performed and an efficient way to achieve the objectives.
- **Diversity**: The organization engages and includes people of color, trans individuals and others typically underserved within the LGBTQ+ community.
- **Defined measures**: The organization identifies clear objectives and uses relevant metrics and measures to define a successful outcome.
- **Organizational experience**: This organization has the appropriate talent, skills, and experience to execute on its objectives and effectively utilize grant funds.

HOW TO APPLY FOR A GRASSROOTS GRANT

- Send a letter of interest including a brief overview of your organization and primary contact information via email to info@thepluscollective.org
- A representative from The Plus Collective or Foundation For The Carolinas will contact you to discuss next steps.

GRANT APPLICATION REVIEW

- The TPC Grants Committee reviews the application and may meet with the applicant organization. If there are questions on an application, a member of the Grants Committee will reach out to the primary contact listed on the application. Please respond promptly to any questions received.
- The Grants Committee makes a funding recommendation to the TPC Board of Advisors. The Board will then make a final funding decision, and the applicant will be notified of the decision.

Before You Begin: Strategies for a Successful TPC Grassroots Grant Application

> **TIP**
> Share your passion, your organization's strengths and how you will make a difference through your work. Differentiate yourself from similar organizations.

WHERE TO START?

- Clarify your organization's priorities before doing anything else
- Know your purpose for submitting the application. Grassroots Grants are intended for general operating support.
- If there is already a similar organization or program in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area, be prepared to discuss the potential impacts in your application. Consider: Does your organization represent an expansion or duplication of services in your area? How is your organization different or better suited to meet the needs of the LGBTQ+ community?

PREPARING YOUR APPLICATION

- Carefully review the application guidelines, and confirm that your organization's purpose aligns with TPC's vision and priorities.
- **Review all application questions before beginning and decide how to use the questions to tell your organization's story.**

- **Be specific and answer the questions in the application thoroughly. The application should stand on its own and include all the information necessary for evaluation without a need for explanation or follow up questions.**
- **Identify clearly defined goals and measurements, including quantitative metrics (e.g., numbers, counts, percentages, etc.) that will be used to track progress and measure success**.
- Content from past applications should only be reused when it appropriately answers an application question. **Do not simply copy and paste content from past applications.**

ENSURE THE APPLICATION IS COMPLETE

The Foundation For The Carolinas provides a dashboard to help applicants plan ahead for the information that will be required for the application and to help identify missing information.

Generally, the following information is required:

> **TIP**
> Almost all funders request at least two fiscal years of financial statements that include budgeted vs. actual dollars. Profit and loss or bank statements alone will not meet this requirement.

- Basic information on the organization(s):
  - Mission statement
  - Legal name or DBA
  - Federal Tax ID number
- Financial information:
  - Include budget vs. actual dollars and total income and expenses for the fiscal year, including salaries and other overhead expenses whenever possible. **Use the example provided below and ensure that all information is provided. Failure to provide the requested information in the proper format may result in your application being denied.**
  - Include a breakdown of the organization's income sources (e.g., board contributions, member dues, individual donations, corporate sponsorships, foundation grants, ticket sales, etc.).
  - Include an explanation for any substantial changes in income or expenses year over year and how the organization is addressing the changes.

- Narrative or needs statement: Knowing your organization's priorities and your programmatic needs before beginning will help with this section. Describe not only why your organization is requesting support from TPC, but also **how and why it aligns with TPC's priorities**.
  - Be clear and succinct in your responses.
  - Identify the problem to be addressed and the needs to be met with the funding. What unique service(s) would the community be deprived of if funding is not received? Provide supporting data whenever possible.
  - Describe the objectives, activities, strategies, staffing, partners and timelines, and explain how the design will enable you to address the problem or need.
  - Consider specifying your plans for ongoing progress at the termination of the grant, particularly if operating expenses are projected to increase and/or if overall funding for the organization has or is expected to decrease. List other financing sources or strategies that are being sought or developed.

- Goals and metrics: What does the organization plan to achieve? Describe the goals and overall impact of the organization, and **include quantitative metrics (e.g., numbers, counts, percentages, etc.) that will be used to track progress and measure success** of the organization. Be specific and minimize subjectivity wherever possible.
- Attachments: Budgets, IRS 501(c)(3) determination letters, NC Solicitation License letters, Board of Director and/or staff list, letters of support from project partners (if applicable), etc.
   - **Use the example provided below and ensure that all information is provided. Failure to provide the requested information in the proper format may result in your application being denied.**
   - Board and staff list should provide the office held for board members and titles for staff members.

TEMPLATE FOR PROVIDING ORGANIZATION'S OPERATING BUDGET

Below is a sample template for providing financial information for your organization's operating budget. You are required to provide financial information for your organization in a budget vs. actual format such as this for your two previous fiscal years, and your current fiscal year. You may also consider providing the projected budget for your coming fiscal year. A few tips on presenting your financials are as follows:

- **Clearly label your period of performance for the budget information you are providing. Is it a whole fiscal year, or in the case of the current year, is it less than a complete year?**
- **Current fiscal year budget and year-to-date (YTD) actual results should include clearly labeled period of performance, income/expense category, annual budget, YTD actuals.**
- **Prior two fiscal years' budget compared to actual results should include clearly labeled period of performance, income/expense categories, annual budget, year-end actuals. You may also include variance (+/-) information.**
- **Logically group your revenue and expense categories so that reviewers can clearly understand your income sources and expenditures.**
- **Do not present your financial information by month.**

Your Nonprofit Name Here
Sample Budget vs. Actual
July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023

	Total	
	Actuals	**Budget**
Revenue		
Earned Revenue		
Ticket Sales	14,289.00	17,000.00
Product Sales	5,175.26	6,000.00
Total Earned Revenue	$ 19,464.26	$ 23,000.00
Contributed Support		
Contributions - Individual	20,000.00	25,000.00
Contributions - Corporate	7,825.52	10,000.00
Grants	50,000.00	45,000.00
Fundraising Events	20,000.00	17,000.00
Total Contributed Support	$ 97,825.52	$ 97,000.00
Total Revenue (Earned + Contributed)	$ 117,289.78	$ 120,000.00
Expenditures		
Administrative Expenses		
Salary & Benefits	53,840.00	46,455.00
Insurance	926.00	2,200.00
Postage & Supplies	656.22	300.00
Technology/Website	700.00	652.00
Other Administrative Expense	628.00	1,300.00
Total Administrative Expenses	$ 56,750.22	$ 50,907.00
Marketing & Development Expense		
Advertising & Printing	5,125.58	6,000.00
Fundraising Expense	201.15	500.00
Total Marketing & Development Expense	$ 5,326.73	$ 6,500.00
Equipment Expense		
Equipment	7,716.03	15,000.00
Total Equipment Expense	$ 7,716.03	$ 15,000.00
Program Expense		
Counseling	$ 23,500.00	$ 25,000.00
Youth Support Group	$ 5,930.00	$ 4,400.00
Total Program Expense	$ 29,430.00	$ 29,400.00
Occupancy Expense		
Rent	17,000.00	16,000.00
Total Occupancy Expense	$ 17,000.00	$ 16,000.00
Total Expenditures	$ 116,222.98	$ 117,807.00
Net Revenue	$ 1,066.80	$ 2,193.00

GRANT EVALUATION REPORTS

- TPC takes its governance role very seriously and must ensure that grant award funds are spent appropriately and as intended. With limited funds to award, TPC also monitors the effectiveness of funds spent to ensure grants are prioritized effectively and meet community needs.
- Each grant recipient is therefore required to submit an evaluation report, outlining the results and effectiveness of how the funds were spent.
- Evaluation Reports are also used for TPC communications and may be considered in future grant decisions for your organization. This "state of the organization" summary helps TPC understand the results and impact that were achieved using the Grassroots Grant funds.
- **Evaluation reports are due 30 days after the date of full use of funds. Failure to provide an evaluation report as required may jeopardize future grant participation and may result in a request to return the funds.**

DEADLINE FOR USING GRANT FUNDS

- Grassroots Grant funds must be used within six months of receipt. Funds not used within six months of receipt must be returned to TPC unless an extension is approved.
- A Grants Committee member will be assigned to each grantee for monitoring purposes.