



Grantseekers Frequently Asked Questions

We have created a series of frequently asked questions on various topics with the hope that this will help you navigate the Discretionary Grant program of The Community Foundation. There are three sections below: **General Questions**, **GivingMatters.com Questions**, and **General Grant Questions**.

SECTION 1: General Questions

1. What is a 501(c)(3) designation and how can I get one?

A 501(c)(3) designation refers to the specific section of the Internal Revenue Code that defines a nonprofit organization as a public charity. For more information on the Code and how to obtain a 501(c)(3) designation, contact the Internal Revenue Service.

2. Does my nonprofit organization need a 501(c)(3) designation from the IRS before I can apply for and receive grant funding?

Yes. Your organization must have a 501(c)(3) designation or be an entity of government in order to apply for and receive funding.

3. We are an entity of government (public educational institutions, departments of government, etc.). Do we need a 501(c)(3) designation?

No, entities of government will not have 501(c)(3). It is suggested that you contact The Community Foundation for eligibility. Private schools are not eligible to apply for discretionary grants.

4. I'm not a nonprofit organization; I'm just a person who needs some extra help. Can I apply for a grant?

No. The Community Foundation makes grants to qualified 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations. We are unable to award grants to individuals, except in the case of scholarships, which are awarded directly to the educational institution on behalf of the student. If you are a student, please go to the Scholarship Section. If your family is in need of help, you should contact 211 for assistance.

SECTION 2: GivingMatters.com Questions

1. What is GivingMatters.com?

In 2005, The Community Foundation launched GivingMatters.com – a powerful online resource to inform, empower and enrich charitable giving in the region – benefiting donors, nonprofits and the community at large. GivingMatters® provides access to information about local nonprofits, including financial, operational, governance, and programmatic details.

GivingMatters® helps us fulfill our mission of connecting generosity with need by giving your organization an opportunity to communicate with prospective donors. GivingMatters® streamlines the process of applying for discretionary grants by integrating your organization's information into our grantmaking process.

2. Does having a GivingMatters.com profile guarantee that my organization will receive funding?

No, it does not.

3. Do I have to have a GivingMatters.com profile?

All 501(c)(3) public charities who wish to be considered for a Discretionary Grant from The Community Foundation, must have a full and updated profile in GivingMatters.com. Please be sure your profile is updated and complete before the grant deadline. Only organizations with full and up-to-date profiles will be eligible to apply. Governmental entities are exempt from GivingMatters.com and do not require a profile.

4. Why is having a GivingMatters.com profile important?

GivingMatters.com profiles contain information about the mission and history of your organization, your other programs, organizational finances, and more, that is not requested in the grant application. The grants committee will use this information to gather more context while reviewing your application. In addition to its use for the CFMT grant, your profile will make your organization eligible for a host of other grant opportunities in Middle Tennessee, and will place your nonprofit in a searchable database used by donors and volunteers in the area.

5. How do I start my profile in GivingMatters.com?

The first step is simple – complete a Placeholder Form which is located in the Grantee Toolkit on our website and return it to The Community Foundation with all

the required documentation by the deadline found in the grant timeline. When the required documents have been submitted, a coach from The Community Foundation will contact you and guide you through the process of completing your profile.

6. I've completed the Placeholder Information Form. Is my profile complete now?

No, this is only the first step in completing a nonprofit profile. When the initial documents have been received, a coach from The Community Foundation will contact you and guide you through the process of completing your profile online. Please allow yourself ample time to complete your profile before the deadline.

7. My nonprofit already has a profile. Am I done? What else do I need to do?

If your organization already has a completed profile, begin by reviewing it for accuracy. Pay particular attention to the following sections, to ensure they are fully updated.

- *Governance: Board List, Demographics, and Term Dates*
- *Financials: Fiscal Year Dates, Income/Expense Projections, Tennessee Charitable Solicitations Permit Expiration Date, Form 990s, Current Organizational Budget.*

Make sure that your profile is fully updated AT LEAST one week prior to the application deadline to ensure that any updates you make can be approved and published by the GivingMatters.com staff before the August 1 grant deadline.

SECTION 3: General Grant Questions

1. Who is eligible for a grant?

We welcome grant proposals from nonprofit organizations and entities of government located in and serving within the following 40 counties of Middle Tennessee: Bedford, Cannon, Cheatham, Clay, Coffee, Cumberland, Davidson, DeKalb, Dickson, Fentress, Franklin, Giles, Hickman, Houston, Humphreys, Jackson, Lawrence, Lewis, Lincoln, Macon, Marshall, Maury, Montgomery, Moore, Overton, Pickett, Perry, Putnam, Robertson, Rutherford, Smith, Stewart, Sumner, Trousdale, Van Buren, Warren, Wayne, White, Wilson, and Williamson.

If you have questions about eligibility, review the Discretionary Grant Guidelines and Eligibility or you may contact the Grants Coordinator by email at grants@cfmt.org or by phone at 615-321-4939.

2. Do you fund new organizations?

Yes, we can as long as you have the 501(c)(3) designation and comply with all our grant requirements.

3. Does my organization have to be located within the 40 counties of Middle Tennessee?

Yes, it does.

4. If my organization has received grants in the past, are there limitations to how many years we can receive grants?

No, there is no limit to the number of grants an organization may receive. We do, however, strongly recommend that your organization does not seek continuous funding for the same program year after year. The Community Foundation should not be viewed as a source of permanent funding.

5. Does The Community Foundation make multi-year grants?

No, we do not.

6. What sort of programs does The Community Foundation's Discretionary Grant support?

The Community Foundation is particularly interested in ideas that shed new light on the needs and aspirations of Middle Tennesseans with emphasis on providing long-term solutions. The Community Foundation has identified several broad categories in which needs exist and for which grant requests are encouraged: Animal Welfare, Arts and Humanities, Civic Affairs and Community Planning, Conservation and

Environment, Education, Employment and Training, Health, Historic Preservation, Housing and Community Development, and Human Services for citizens of all ages.

7. Does The Community Foundation fund faith-based organizations?

The Community Foundation has the ability to fund faith-based organizations. Through the Discretionary Grant program, we generally will not fund any programs of a religious nature or programs requiring participation in religious activities or adherence to a particular set of beliefs as a condition for receiving services.

8. How often may I apply for a grant, and how many applications can I submit?

The Community Foundation accepts applications once a year in August. Your organization may only submit one application.

9. If I know members of The Community Foundation's Board of Directors, staff or a donor, does it increase the likelihood that my proposal will be funded if I contact them?

No, it does not.

10. Who decides which applications are awarded grants?

The Board of Directors has created a committee of its members who contribute time, thought, and knowledge of our community to the process of reviewing applications. Their recommendations are presented to The Community Foundation's Board of Directors for final approval. The Community Foundation staff assists the Board committee by conducting preliminary research and site visits, where necessary.

11. When is the deadline for grants and when are awards announced?

The Discretionary Grant deadline is on or before August 1 each year. The Community Foundation awards grants in mid-November. You will have one year (December 1 – November 30) to complete your program and expend the awarded funds.

12. Will you review a draft of my proposal and offer comments?

*If time permits, we would be happy to review your proposal. We cannot promise that we will be available to help you if it is too close to the deadline. **Please note that any suggestions or recommendations made by staff DOES NOT guarantee or constitute funding.** Contact the Grants Coordinator by email at grants@cfmt.org or by phone at 615-321-4939.*

13. What happens if my budget changes or there is a shift in the program from what was originally proposed?

*If there are changes, large or small, to your proposal either during the consideration of your proposal or after a grant is awarded, you will need to contact The Community Foundation's Grant Coordinator who will discuss the changes with you and advise you on how to proceed. **DO NOT ASSUME** that you are able to change the purpose of your grant without first consulting with the Grants Coordinator by email at grants@cfmt.org or by phone at 615-321-4939.*

14. What happens after my organization's proposal is funded?

Nonprofits who are awarded grant funding will receive a grant agreement to sign and return before a check can be issued. You will have to accomplish what was described in the grant proposal. You may receive a site visit from The Community Foundation within that grant period.

15. Will I need to submit reports?

*Yes. As an organization that has contributed funding to your program, The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee **requires an interim and final report from you**. These reports are an accounting of the program and fiscal results that were outlined in your organization's grant request. The reports are part of your responsibility to The Foundation as defined by the grant agreement that was given at the time of the grant award. Failure to submit your reports on time will affect consideration of future requests. We encourage you to share your insights into what worked and what did not. Through your candor and open feedback, we can learn more about the ingredients for program success. This, in turn, helps both your organization and ours meet our common goal of service to the community.*

16. The Community Foundation declined to fund our proposal. Why? Will we be able to submit another application next year?

The decision to decline a grant proposal is not necessarily a reflection on the value of the program. As a general rule, it only indicates that The Community Foundation's funds are limited. We receive many more requests to support programs than our relatively limited resources will permit. Feel free to reapply the following year and as always The Community Foundation staff is available to answer questions. Contact the Grants Coordinator by email at grants@cfmt.org or by phone at 615-321-4939.