



Evaluation Criteria & Questions to Consider in Grant Review

Updated: September 2020

Below are the descriptions of the criteria for Commissioners to use in evaluating and scoring the pre-applications. It's important for every Commissioner to evaluate and score proposed projects using the same criteria so that funding decisions are made within the context of the specific criteria established for the grant program.

The information provided below under each evaluation criteria contains:

1. The instructions provided to applicants in order to complete the pre-application; and
2. Questions for Commissioners to consider in evaluating the applicant's proposed project under each criterion.

PUBLIC BENEFIT

1. Pre-App Instructions

Public Benefit Areas. The MHCRC only funds projects which provide a public benefit in one of the four areas listed below. While it is clear that some projects will encompass or touch upon more than one public benefit area, please select the primary area that constitutes the "best fit" for your project.

- **Disparities:** A proposed project in this area focuses on supporting eligible applicants which are led by, informed by, and directly benefitting Black, Indigenous, Latina/o, and/or other racial and ethnic communities facing current and historical policies and practices that have resulted in disparities. Projects that support individuals that are facing disparities for reasons of gender, gender expression, disability, age, or economic status are also eligible to apply under this area. The proposed projects should address barriers that limit or prevent individuals and communities from accessing services, information, communication tools and/or training. These barriers may be technological, geographic, economic, physical, linguistic and/or cultural.
- **Community Involvement:** A proposed project in this area focuses on supporting and encouraging improved community involvement in issues of importance to a community. The project should enable a broad range of community residents and/or organizations in order to, for example, communicate, share information, provide increased transparency, promote community economic development, decide livability issues or promote involvement in local decision making.
- **Cost Reduction:** A proposed project in this area focuses on providing not-for-profit or public services or functions less expensively. The applicant must be able to demonstrate how the project results in direct cost reduction or cost avoidance. Proposed projects may entail services or functions that are internal or external to an organization or agency. For example, updates to modernize equipment, create more efficient workflows, and streamline digital services where reduced costs are passed to community members.
- **Service Delivery:** A proposed project in this area focuses on improving the delivery or increasing the effectiveness of public or non-profit services to the general public or to targeted individuals, groups or organizations. Service delivery improvements could include quality, effectiveness and/or accessibility of the service. The project may focus on services that are internal or external to an organization.

2. Questions for Commissioners to Consider:

- Does the proposed project support at least one of the public benefit areas established for the grant program?
- Has the applicant selected a “best fit” public benefit area for the proposed project?
- (The applicant is required to identify a ‘best-fit’ public benefit area from a drop-down list. Refer to Pre-App Project Purpose Section for explanation of best fit selection.)

PRIMARY COMMUNITY/BENEFICIARIES SERVED

1. Pre-App Instructions

Primary Community/Beneficiaries Served. Briefly describe the community or the beneficiaries (end-users) the project intends to serve. The community or beneficiaries identified should reinforce your selected public benefit area. For example, if the project focuses on reducing disparities for an underserved community, you should specifically identify the community’s technological, geographic, economic, physical, linguistic and/or cultural characteristics in addition to estimating the total number of people you expect to serve (i.e. Metro-area homeless youth specifically 35 youth enrolled in the program.). You should also describe the steps you have taken to include your identified community or targeted beneficiaries in the planning or development of the project. For example, did you hold meetings? conduct surveys? employ focus groups? meet with representatives of different community groups? develop a steering committee or advisory panel that involves end users and other key stakeholders?

2. Questions for Commissioners to Consider:

- Has the applicant clearly identified the community to be served or the targeted beneficiaries (end-users) of the project?
- Has the applicant demonstrated involvement of the targeted beneficiaries or community in the development or planning of the proposed project?
- Is there a clear link between the applicant’s chosen public benefit area and the targeted beneficiaries?
- (Refer to Pre-App Public Benefit Area and Primary Community/Beneficiaries Served Sections)

PROJECT PURPOSE

1. Pre-App Instructions

Project Description. A compelling project clearly defines problems or needs that the project seeks to address and describes the strategies to address the need through use of technology. You should clearly describe the service or function so that its importance to the organization or your targeted beneficiaries is clear. This will include identifying the needs and requirements of the community or beneficiaries you intend to impact and specifically how the use of the technology will address your identified public benefit area. There may be specific economic, cultural, or geographic issues that will be the focus of your project. Include in your description how technology will be used specifically and the type of proposed technology to be deployed.

Identify realistic, measurable outcomes* that you expect to result from implementation of the project for the identified community or targeted beneficiaries through the use of the proposed technology. These outcomes should be reasonably achievable and measurable within the grant award period. There should be a compelling reason to believe that the project you propose will make a difference; the nature of that difference can best be described by the outcomes you expect to result from the project. Some useful questions to consider include: What do you expect to change for your community? Who will be impacted? What specific, realistic outcomes do you expect to

occur within the grant award period? Do not include process outcomes related to installation or setup of technology (ie. The equipment will be installed by June 30); the MHCRC is interested in outcomes related to use of the technology.

*If your project has more than four anticipated outcomes, please include only your top four.

2. Questions for Commissioners to Consider:

- After reading the Primary Community/Beneficiaries Served and Project Purpose Sections, do you generally understand:
 - what the project is;
 - why it's being proposed;
 - who will benefit; and
 - how technology will be used to reach anticipated outcomes?
- Has the applicant identified realistic, measurable outcomes that, hopefully, will result from implementation of the proposed project?
- Do the anticipated project outcomes link to the identified public benefit area and targeted beneficiaries for the project?
- Do the anticipated project outcomes relate to use of the technology?
- Does the project budget seem to include the resources necessary to implement the proposed project (i.e. personnel, consultants, equipment, etc.)? (Refer to Pre-App Budget Section)

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (DEI) MEASURES

1. Pre-App Instructions

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Measures. Describe how you plan to integrate DEI measures into your project, or alternatively, how your project is supported by DEI-focused work within your organization as a whole. In line with the MHCRC's ongoing commitment to integrating equity into our grantmaking, additional indicators are monitored throughout our grant review process. You can view them here.

2. Questions for Commissioners to Consider:

Reference the MHCRC published equity indicators in your review of this section, particularly looking for:

- Is the applicant a first-time applicant?
- Does the applicant have a fiscal sponsor?
- Is the applicant led by, informed by, and/or directly benefitting Black, Indigenous, Latinx and/or other racial and ethnic communities facing current and historical policies and practices that have resulted in disparities? In what ways?
- Does the project purpose include support of racial equity or individuals/communities that are facing disparities for reasons of gender, gender expression, disability, age, or economic status?
- Does the applicant include DEI measures in their work as a whole? How so?

EDUCATION & TRAINING

1. Pre-App Instructions

Education & Training: Proposed projects may expand upon technology already in use in your organization or may deploy new, updated or innovative technologies that will require education and training for your staff or end users.

If the proposed technology is currently used by your organization, describe:

- ◆ how your organization currently uses the technology;
- ◆ how the grant-funded technology changes or enhances current use; and
- ◆ what, if any, additional training or education is needed by those who will use the technology.

If the proposed technology is new to your organization, describe how you plan to learn how to use the technology and which staff might need additional education/training.

2. Questions for Commissioners to Consider:

- Has the applicant clearly described the general type of technology to be deployed and how it's used in the proposed project?
- Does the proposed technology seem to have reasonable potential to support the project as described by the applicant?
- Has the applicant demonstrated organizational capacity to successfully integrate the technology into the organization (i.e. organizational experience using the proposed technology or identified training needed)?
- Does the project budget seem to include the resources necessary to deploy the proposed technology?
- (Refer to Pre-App Project Purpose, Education & Training and Budget Sections)

LINE ITEM BUDGET ESTIMATES

1. Pre-App Instructions

The Line Item Budget should include estimates of all line item categories and totals listed in the corresponding columns of total expenditures for both grant funds and matching resources.

Please note that you will be asked to complete a budget narrative to describe the line item budget table if invited to complete a full application. In addition, your final application budget should not increase more than 10% from the pre-application budget without staff approval.

A FEW REMINDERS:

Matching Resource Requirement: Applicant matching resources must provide a minimum of fifty percent (50%) of the total project cost.

Overhead Costs: The Grant Program allows project budgets to include overhead cost from grant funds in a total amount of up to ten percent (10%) of the grant funded part of the project budget. The overall project budget may include overhead cost of up to ten percent (10%) of the total project budget, but the remaining amount must be provided under the match.

2. Questions for Commissioners to Consider:

- Review the estimated total project budget and the anticipated grant request.
- Review the line item budget estimates.
- Does the proposed budget generally include the resources descriptions necessary for the applicant to implement the proposed project?